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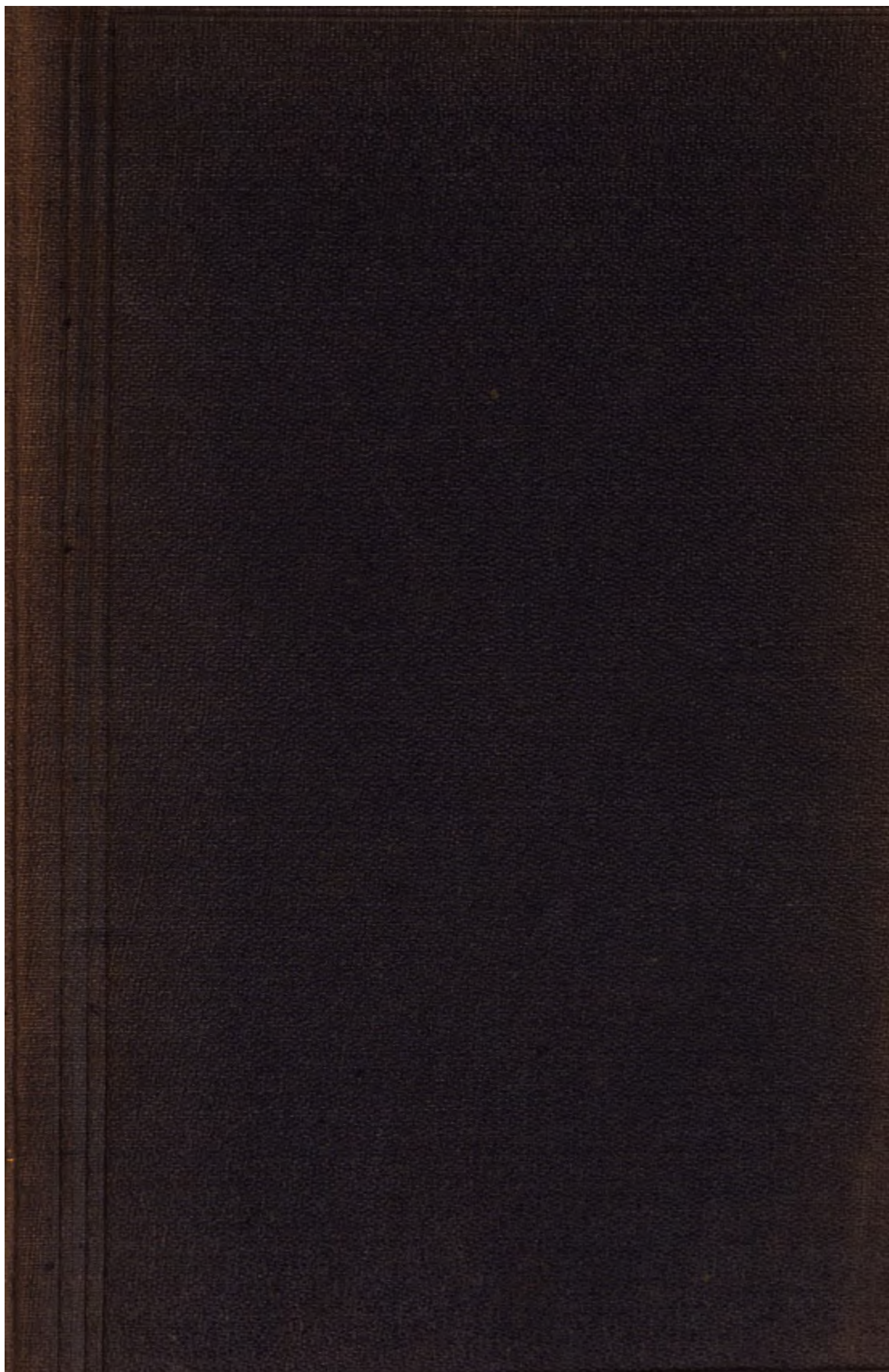
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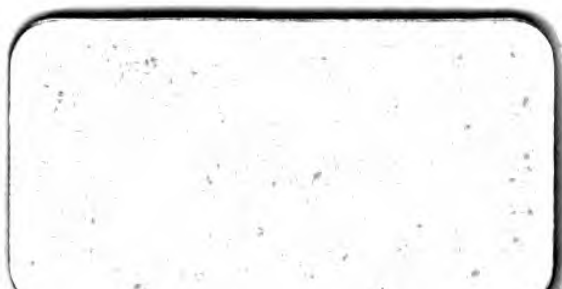


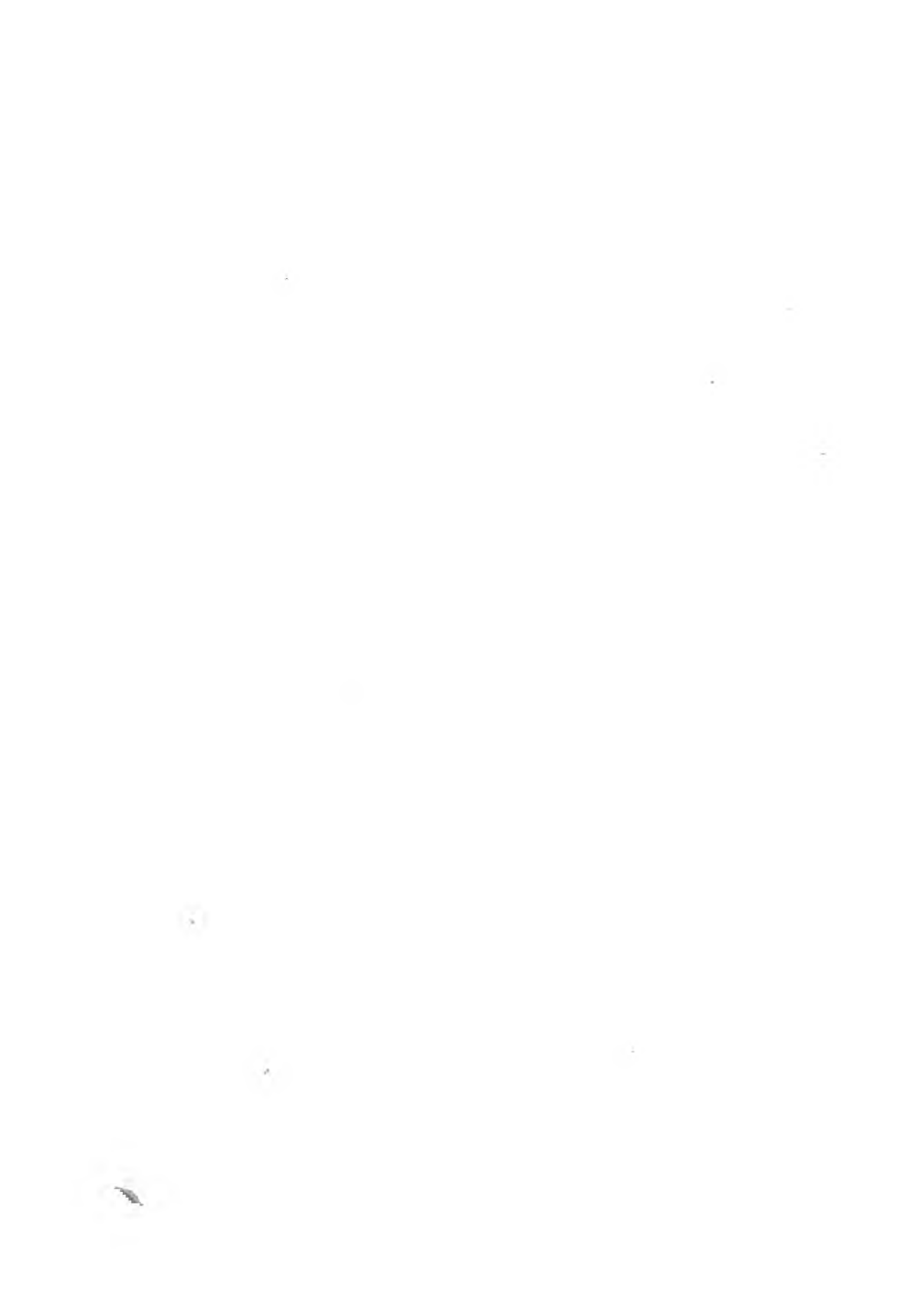
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SPIRITUAL READING

FOR EVERY DAY.

Ballantyne Press
BALLANTYNE, HANSON AND CO.
EDINBURGH AND LONDON

SPIRITUAL READING

For Every Day:

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE INTERIOR
AND PERFECT LIFE,

*FOR THE USE ALIKE OF PERSONS IN THE WORLD
AND IN RELIGION,*

Arranged in Fifty-three Lessons,

MADE UP FROM HOLY SCRIPTURE, THE DEVOUT LIFE, AND
THE IMITATION OF CHRIST.

BY THE

REV. DOM. INNOCENT LE MASSON,

FORTY-NINTH GENERAL OF THE ORDER OF CARTHUSIANS.

1677.

TRANSLATED, AND SLIGHTLY ABRIDGED,

BY

KENELM DIGBY BESTE,

PRIEST OF THE ORATORY OF ST. PHILIP NEERI



LONDON: BURNS AND OATES.

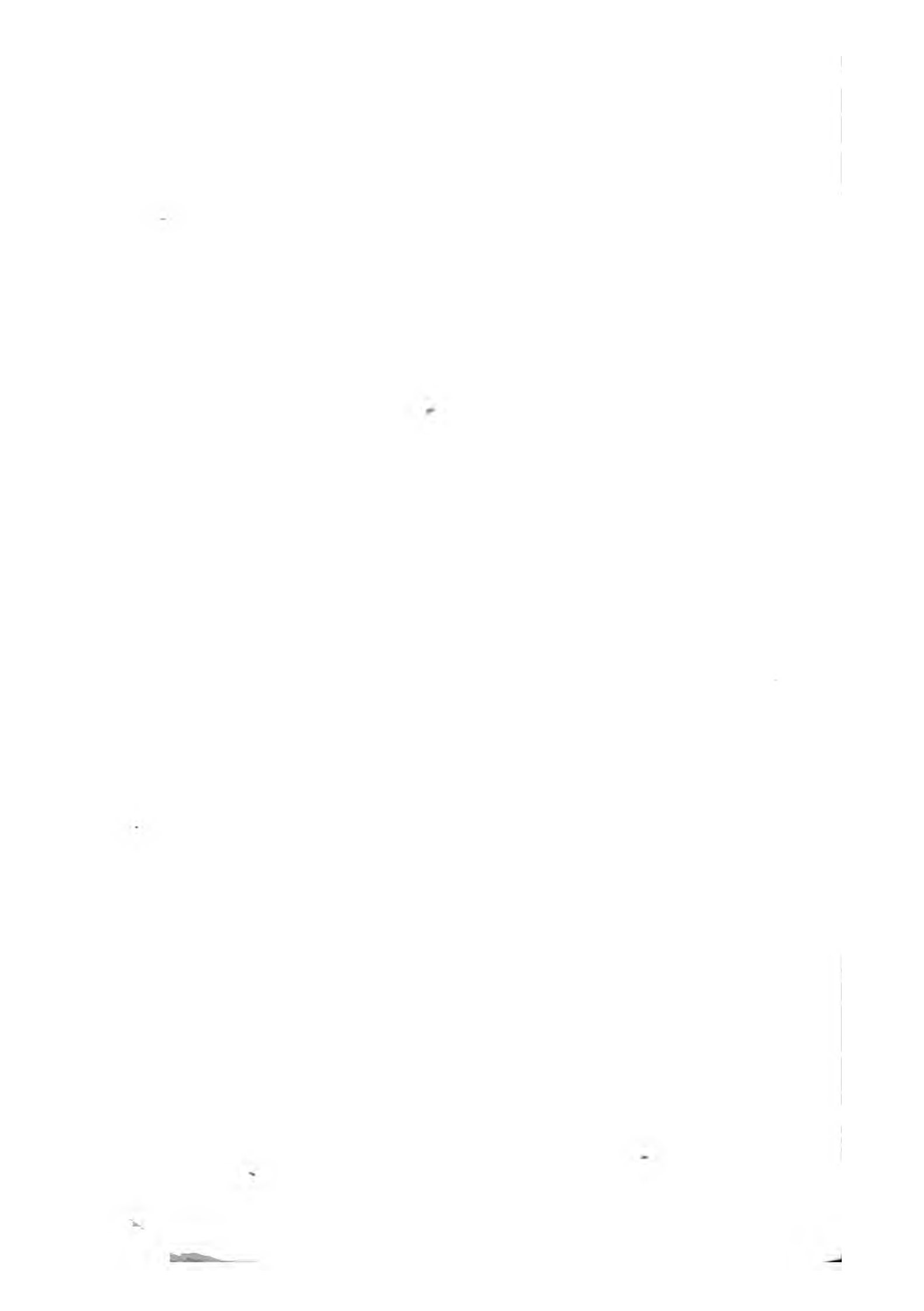
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HENRICUS EDUARDUS,
Card. Archiep. Westmon.

This Translation
OF
SPIRITUAL READING
IS
AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED
TO THE AUTHOR
OF
HOLY READINGS.



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P R E F A C E.

DIRECTORS of souls are often asked:—What book do you recommend for Spiritual Reading? It is difficult to name in reply any one single volume which will be amply and permanently useful, and withal, not too expensive. This Introduction to the Interior and Perfect Life seems just the sort of book that is required. It has been compiled by a master of spirituality, one who worked in Carthusian solitude and prayer, aided by experience, and enlightened by deep study of Holy Scripture and Theology. Dom Le Masson limits himself to three Books, from which with judgment and method he chooses Texts and makes copious Extracts. And in fact, this work is—The Devout Life, illustrated by Holy Scripture, and augmented by the Imitation. His readers cannot but be delighted with the beautiful way in which he has blended the illuminating truths of the Word of God, the gentle and cheerful hopefulness of St. Francis of Sales, and the pathetic love which finds such holy and plaintive utterance in the Imitation of Christ.

PREFACE.

The Compilation was first written in French, and published at Lyons, A.D. 1677, and afterwards in Latin, that it might be useful to all Carthusians and to others in every country. It is the Latin edition, given to me years ago by Father Faber, that I have translated. I have shortened it, chiefly by the omission of various notes explanatory of certain questions in the doctrine of grace and points of mystical theology, where Jansenists and Quietists equally went astray. The annotations which are now left out were made by him to warn his Order against their errors. For the same purpose he composed other more important treatises. It is the opinion of Bossuet that the Carthusians must thank Le Masson for their having kept to the true doctrine of grace in those perilous times. His writings were all approved at Rome: in his own country, however, they drew upon him the hatred of the heretics. According to Feller, he was “ennemi zélé des disciples de Jansenius, qui ne l’ont pas épargné dans leurs écrits, et l’ont traité de mauvais theologien, de faux mystique—Si, en se déclarant pour une secte, on peut être exalté jusqu’aux nues par ses partisans, il faut s’attendre aussi d’être ravalé jusqu’au néant lorsqu’on se déclare contre.”

Le Masson was born at Noyon, March 10, 1628, and when nineteen years of age he became a Carthusian. He was a Religious of great piety and learning, and was chosen successively Vicar, Prior, Visitor of the Province of Picardy, and lastly General of the Order, at the age of forty-seven. On him fell the additional duty of rebuilding the Grande Chartreuse, almost

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entirely destroyed by an accidental fire. He died happily, May 8, 1703, aged seventy-five.

My thanks must be offered to the Reverend Fathers of S. Hugh's Monastery, Park Minster, Sussex, whose kindness has enabled me to find out these details.

It ought to be stated that our Author has himself abridged the *Devout Life*, by omitting a few chapters and passages, which clearly are not useful alike to persons in the world and in religion. I have found nothing so good as the old English Translation, which therefore I reproduce, making a few corrections, and modernising the spelling. The recent recognition of St. Francis of Sales by the Church as one of her Doctors must be not only an increase of the dear Saint's heavenly happiness, but also a fresh recommendation to us of his writings. And I cannot refrain from reminding those who frequent the School of St. Philip, that we claim the Founder and Superior of the Thonon Oratory as almost one of St. Philip's Sons.

In conclusion, I would ask my readers to weigh well the following extracts from Father Faber's Conference on a Taste for Reading :—

. . . . “ Although I am not treating here of the right method of managing our spiritual reading, I cannot resist quoting for the reader's benefit a passage from Dacrianus, which deserves to be written in letters of gold. ‘ *Noli eos imitari, qui nullum legendi ordinem servant ; sed quod forte occurrerit, quodque casu repererint, legere gaudent ; quibus nihil sapit, nisi quod novum est, et inauditum. Consueta enim, et vetera omnia, quantumlibet utilia, fastidiunt. Tanta in-*

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stabilitas procul a te sit : ipsa enim non promovet, *sed dispergit spiritum ; et periculose laborat, qui hoc morbo vitiatus est,* ' * yet how many are there whose spiritual reading is a luxury, rather than a spiritual exercise !”

K. D. B.

THE LONDON ORATORY,
Feast of St. Francis of Sales,
1879.

* Do not imitate those who observe no order in their reading, but like to read whatever they come across, whatever they chance to find : who have no relish except for what is new or unusual. Indeed they loathe everything that is ordinary and written long ago, however useful. Far from thee be such fickleness, *for it does not help the soul but scatters all its powers, and he who has succumbed to this vice labours amidst perils.*

SPIRITUAL READING FOR EVERY DAY.



HOW TO MAKE SPIRITUAL READING.

SUCH is the misery of the human mind enfeebled with the wound of sin, that not only are its ideas unsettled and its lights uncertain, but it finds the way of truth almost inaccessible, and arrives at the full knowledge of truth slowly and step by step. Ere the goal is reached, most serious difficulties must be overcome, and mental struggles must be sustained, and things which escape the failing memory have to be repeated often and learned anew. Nor can the mind, amid the many variances of conflicting ideas, decide anything for certain, till taught by long and manifold experience to follow the light of right reason and form correct judgments.

When occupied with matters that are sublime and far beyond the experience of the senses, it more than ever stands in need of great help to gain a perfect knowledge of such things, and to be able to apply that knowledge to itself and its own acts. The first principles from which the knowledge has been deduced must often be repeated, lest they drop from memory or become altered by error or change.

In the spiritual questions on which, Theotime, we are about to enter, we have every need of the grace of the Holy Ghost ; it will be our lamp, whereby we may discover those deep truths which are contained in the grand Book of Christians, written within and without, the sacred humanity of Jesus Christ. The rays of this grace dispose our hearts and minds to learn them well, and to retain them tenaciously. But since grace disposes of all things sweetly, and, as an ordinary rule, does not work wonders and miracles in supernatural and

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spiritual operations more than in the natural order, where all things are brought to perfection little by little, with time and trouble, we have to proceed in the same way now. We must make use of our own resources, of means provided by nature and suitable to the capacity of our mind, to learn thoroughly the maxims of Christ ; we must follow step by step the light of Divine grace and the footprints of our Lord ; and thus beginning with what is easiest, we are prepared to understand things more sublime.

It is very certain, Theotime, that numbers who do not observe this method get involved in the greatest mental distress. They start with sublime treatises of mystical theologians and spiritual writers, and suddenly find themselves brought to a standstill by some insuperable obstacle or unexpected idea, which it would cost him who begins prudently nothing to dispel.

Hence it also comes that they can neither solve such difficulties themselves, nor accept the solutions of others. Indeed, by the ready fluency of their words and the loftiness of their conceptions, they are better at causing perplexity and doubt in the minds of others than at taking in a notion of the real truth. For though their way of explaining first principles, which they misunderstand, is quite wrong, still they disturb and upset the minds of their listeners, who for the most part are unequal to the task of extricating them from more subtle difficulties and bringing them back to what is real and genuine ; just as we see that students in philosophy cannot detect nor refute the falseness of an ingenious argument, which gives, however, no trouble to their seniors.

Hence arise anxieties and doubts. Thus do opinions full of error take possession of the mind, and remain fixed firmly there. Spiritual men of this sort, eager for piety, noble in their aims, but full of care and anxiety, are frequently met with. But, weighing well their state, their doubts and the causes (to despatch at once certain people prone more than others to this evil), I clearly ascertained that their instability came from this, that they did not adhere in the commencement to known and certain maxims, that they ran through indiscriminately any books they came across, and that they sought out only those matters which seemed sublime and most in accordance with their own mental taste. Thus they had filled their minds with a jumble of various things, and had

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imitated the unwise method of those scholars, who, contenting themselves with reading and translating Latin authors, know Latin, it is true ; but if set a theme, or called upon to parse, stick fast at once, because they never studied in the beginning how to do so.

Thus, spiritual men of this sort, without perceiving it, inscribe themselves in the number of those who, according to the Apostle, "*are always learning, yet never arrive at the knowledge of the truth*" (2 Tim. iii. 7). For although on account of the time they have given to the reading of spiritual books, they ought to be teachers, they require to be brought back to the very elements of the spiritual life, and to be taught what they should have learnt in the very beginning, what the same Apostle calls "*the elements of the beginning of the words of God*" (Heb. v. 12), what should have been their milk diet in those early days, before they came to the solid food of the perfect. Above all, timid souls of this description ought to beware of presumption, for should this also chance to be mixed up with their sublime and involved notions, the evil becomes well-nigh irremediable. Constant experience proves this, and shows how much harm is done to ascetics by this sort of presumption, especially when it is become habitual. If you try to treat souls infected with this disease, your labour will be almost vain and useless ; because, when recalled from one unsuitable opinion they at once adopt another. And thus in matters which appear sublime and perfect, and in harmony with their own spirit, they get accustomed to cling tenaciously to their private judgment, and quite despise the counsels of the prudent. In short, when presumption is added to these anxieties, they remain united with an indissoluble bond till the last breath. Only the humble and those who follow the counsels of others, and begin again at the elements of the spiritual life, are able to free themselves from these chains. Of this I subjoin an example well known to myself.

A certain man, endowed with singular virtue, and adorned with very many gifts both of grace and of nature, had spent many years in his monastery, oppressed with mental anxieties that were nearly continual ; and from searching through the most sublime books of mystical writers he kept on perpetually slipping from error to error. Too little attentive to himself, he condemned in others what appeared different to that idea

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of perfection which he had formed in his mind. But in order to be rid of this hidden malady of his soul he opened his heart to a friend, asking advice. He received this one counsel. He was to abstain entirely from poring over these sublime books, and was to devote himself to the daily reading of the *Introduction to the Devout Life*, by St. Francis of Sales, leaving out everything which has reference only to persons living in the world. He followed this advice, and soon found himself possessed of the proper remedy; he used it regularly, and he felt the anguish of his soul diminish; self-contempt, like balsam on a wound, soothed his pains, and his eyes were opened to a new light. At last, by reading and re-reading this excellent work, he became detached, mortified, tranquil, patient in his sicknesses, and enriched with so many gifts of grace, that I, who knew intimately what the Almighty had done in him through this remedy, was quite filled with joy. Nor does the happy issue of that affair ever recur to my memory without causing me an unwonted consolation.

Weighing this well, O Theotime! if we pass from the causes of the evil to its remedy, you will perceive that this entirely consists in establishing souls eager for piety in true and right first principles, as a solid groundwork of spiritual training. Since the remedy is also the antidote, the evil may easily be guarded against, if beginners, carefully instructed in the solid and sure knowledge of the principles of the Christian and religious life, will observe that order, measure, and method of exercise, which boys who are taught Latin by rules are accustomed to follow. For, firstly, they begin with rudiments, and then go on to rules of construing, and gradually becoming proficient in their studies, by assiduous practice in composition, and with the explanations and corrections of masters, they are taught and are fit to teach others. They advance by degrees, they go through the same book more than once, lest their knowledge of letters should be only superficial, and lest what was easily committed to memory should also easily be forgotten.

From this example of scholars, and their method of acquiring their knowledge, you will perceive without trouble, O Theotime! what has been my purpose in compiling this directory of spiritual reading for the use of beginners. My only intention has been to smooth the way for them to learn the rules of Christian life, and withdrawing their minds from

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vague ideas beyond their comprehension, to apply them to the study of the principles of the religious life. And thus, giving themselves up to learning as if at school, in order, measure, and method, they may reach the sublime science of the Saints, which is awarded by God only to those who are lowly in their own eyes, who submit to the guidance of masters, who follow not the curiosity of the human mind, who avoid variety and multiplicity, so clearly opposed to that solitude which our spirit needs—who give themselves up to the study of one thing alone in order that they may learn well, and who, in fine, have one only purpose, to know and to follow Jesus Christ as the *one thing needful*.

Let the time taken by the scholastic in learning anything be, then, an example to the student of spirituality, and let it prove to him that he should not pass lightly from one lesson to another, nor overload his mind, since he cannot master many things at once. And it is for this reason that I have thought it advisable to make the lessons distinct from one another, as I shall explain later in some general hints to masters and disciples.

I must now say something concerning the matter of the lessons.

We take them, Theotime, from three sources :—

1. From *Sacred Scripture*, which is written Truth, and in which the rules of our actions are contained.

2. From the *Introduction to the Devout Life*, by Saint Francis of Sales, a truly great master, if ever there was one, in teaching and explaining spiritual matters.

3. From the *Imitation of Christ*, which book, after the Holy Scriptures, has scarcely an equal.

But perhaps you will object that, since the *Introduction to the Devout Life* was written for persons in the world, it is not so suitable for those who have said farewell to the world. For, since they have chosen a more austere and perfect life than that of other Christians, their state would seem to demand holier and more sublime rules. If such is your opinion, Theotime, in order that you may get rid of it, I must try and make known to you the profit you can derive from this admirable book.

It is evident that no one can be a true religious without first being an upright Christian; for the edifice of religious observance is to be built up on those Gospel rules

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which are the foundation of Christian life. Whoever, therefore, would tend to the perfection of the religious life must necessarily begin with those principles of piety which are common to all Christians; that when he is thoroughly instructed therein, he may for the construction of his spiritual edifice superadd religious observance, whereby the Temple of the Holy Ghost within him may arise the more loftily as his religious observance is the more solidly founded on these Gospel maxims. And, among those who have expounded the maxims of Christian piety, and who have given us a practical knowledge of the Gospel with order and method, St. Francis of Sales has always appeared to me most eminent, whether we regard his clear and frank style of writing, in which he treats of sublime things yet without ambiguity, or consider the prudence and moderation with which he explains and insinuates the most important truths. Whatever in the Gospel may appear hard and difficult he clearly demonstrates to be possible for all, and shows that nothing is more easy and consonant with right reason than that every power of the soul should be employed upon its attainment. So gently does he allure the will, that he obliges the most lawless to confess that no one is exempt from the observance of the law of the Gospel, nor able to dispense himself on any pretext, since it is a "*law undefiled, converting souls, and conciliating unto itself the hearts of all*" (Ps. xviii. 8).

So conformably to reason and virtue does this admirable servant of God propound the Decrees of the Divine Law, so utterly does he avoid every suspicion of exaggeration or compulsion, that no one who has not taken leave of reason and virtue, can doubt his truth and excellence, or help admitting that the discipline of the Gospel is suitable to every state of life.

For this reason, Theotime, when I decided to put forth a kind of Course of Holy Readings, to teach by rule the practice of Christian virtue and religious profession, I chiefly made use of the *Introduction*, and although it may seem to be only suitable for seculars, in whose behalf this saintly Bishop wrote it, still, if the application of its principles to secular duties be omitted, the same principles, as though drawn anew from their source, may be applied to the observances of the religious life. And this, it is clear, can easily

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be done. A man of judgment will assuredly think it likely ; but experience proves, and will always prove, how great is the wisdom displayed by this holy writer in decoying and piously deceiving the natural inclinations ; so that whoever shall observe the instructions given to *Philothea*, will find that he has reached, as it were of his own accord, and constrained by no one, perfect self-denial ; and so long as this self-denial, which is the very centre of perfection, is reached, what signifies the way—whether it be by maxims laid down for persons in the world, in which the prudent writer has his lancet hidden as it were under the lint, or by sterner precepts which propound only what is arduous, and which, unsheathing the sword before the eyes of nature, may by raising her alarms, increase her repugnance.

We require to be encouraged rather than frightened, and those generals who, on the eve of a battle, speak only of dangers and difficulties to their troops, ought to expect a shameful flight rather than a glorious victory. Indeed, soldiers ought to be cheered with the certain hope and prospect of glory ; and nothing should be left untried that may lessen fear and enkindle courage. And, in the same way, recruits in the spiritual army ought to be cheered on, and reminded that since they have the help of an invincible Leader, they cannot be conquered by the foe, unless they choose to yield.

To the *Introduction* I have added various texts of Sacred Scripture, and, as already stated, the golden book of the *Imitation of Christ*. But the *Introduction* is the chief groundwork. I have followed its arrangement, and, as will appear, have incorporated nearly the whole of it in this volume.

After texts of *Scripture*, appropriate to the subject, and serving also as the foundation of the whole work, I select chapters of the *Introduction*, and then add extracts from the *Imitation*, which bear on the same matter and make its explanation practical and more detailed. After my Scripture texts I always put some short remarks, and often add reflections at the end of the chapters, sometimes also making intertextual notes, and out of all this I compose the Lesson. And proceeding thus to the fifty-third and last, I make a collection wherein the right road is shown to souls that aspire to the interior and perfect life. Instructed by these Lessons,

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they may hold themselves ready for things more sublime, and conduct themselves with order and discretion, with true internal and external submission of spirit, without too much solicitude, care, and anxiety, so that at last they may understand with all the saints what is the breadth and the length, the height and the depth, of Christian truths and practical charity.

Too often beginners are overwhelmed rather than assisted by a multiplicity of maxims, and are perplexed rather than instructed by reading what is too vague and abstract. They easily become incapable of healthy thought, and fall into anxiety and then into sloth, or a sort of spiritual despair. Hence it happens, for the most part, that their intellect does not sufficiently persist in holding to the right first principles of truth, but they follow their own ideas without rule or method, and never gain the knowledge of those things which are necessary. If, however, they were to begin with what is easily understood, and were first to practise that, the Spirit of God would aid them to make daily progress, would give them intelligence to understand the Scriptures; and thus, according to the order of His Divine providence, whereby all things gradually increase from little to great, they would make such progress, that at last they would develop into the good trees which bring forth fruit in their season with patience.

However, that they may the more easily understand these Lessons, I give some hints which may be considered as general rules, and to which they may refer in order to escape from any difficulties which present themselves during the reading.

RULE I.—Things must be understood in so far as they are possible to man, and therefore not always literally.

I will begin with this rule, of which at present we have most need. At times we feel somewhat angry with our own heart; but if we have to go on with it for life, is it not better to bear with our heart's inordinate movements, and wisely calm them, rather than blame it wrongfully, and for that very reason exasperate it the more? For although the heart is material, earthly, and animal, and by its natural tendencies is capable of perceiving only those pleasures and pains which strike the senses, still, in our body, it is the first to live, the

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last to die, and a soul that has empire over it can control its motions, and apply them to clearly rational and holy uses. But this mysterious heart of ours requires further explanation, for this will greatly conduce to tranquillity of mind and conscience.

When Christ asserts that God is to be loved with the whole heart, the whole mind, and the whole strength, unless we understand His words rightly, we shall feel disturbed, and judge that we cannot possibly put them in practice. If we allow ourselves to think that Divine love ought to exclude every single affection or motion of our soul towards creatures, and every thought from our mind that is not entirely of God, we shall never in this life love God. Plainly, not one, however highly adorned with sanctity, except perhaps the Blessed Virgin, has fulfilled this precept, if it is to be taken literally, and in the extremest sense of which it is capable. For no one has ever been completely free from thoughts or natural motions of the heart contrary to his will.

These words *with the whole heart* are then to be understood in so far as they are possible to man, and with due regard for the state in which God has created the rational soul; for He has willed that it should be exposed to the motions of the heart, the thoughts of the mind, and be agitated by them in this life, but He commands the soul to restrain them by subjecting them as much as possible to reason. This possibility consists, therefore, in ever preferring God with your reason and the firm purpose of your will to all the affection of your heart, the thoughts of your mind, and your own interests. He is loved *with the whole heart*, so far as is possible for man, when all the movements of the heart are raised up to the Divine love, and nothing opposed to that love is permitted to yourself in your actual conduct. He is loved *with the whole mind*, when no thoughts opposed to His love are willingly consented to or cherished, but all are made conformable to the laws of that Divine love. He is loved *with the whole strength*, when resistance is made to everything contrary to the love of God, and when all is diligently referred to His greater glory. And this also must be carried out in practice according to possibility; that is, with a daily and a gradual progress, and without being discouraged because of falls into some faults, for it is decreed by God that so long as we live we shall be liable to sin.

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You should know, therefore, O Theotime ! that when the priest in the Mass says *Sursum corda : Lift up your hearts*, this means the reason and the will, rather than the heart of flesh itself. For the heart is mentioned precisely, because, being the first and chief organ of natural life, and therefore the central home of the soul and her faculties, also being that which is noblest and most excellent in our animal organisation, it fitly represents that which in the rational life is the noblest and most excellent, the will of the soul. Therefore are we admonished at Mass to lift up our will and offer it to God, giving the heart too, as far as we can. But if, at this word, it seems to you dry, and hard, and deaf, let there be no anxiety in your soul, for it is enough if she herself be raised up to God.

By thus looking into the mystery of the heart, we shall take it for what it really is ; and we shall not think that we can bend it or change it by useless efforts of the soul, by fervour violently excited, by over-zealous energy ; for these devices and attempts, on the contrary, only cause more trouble and disturbance for the soul. The heart must be looked on as an animal chained to another animal, discomforting the other with its impetuous motions, whose struggles must indeed be borne with ; but at the same time the motions must be checked, and as far as can be, repressed by the will and reason.

A mother heeds not the laughter, the tears, the anger, or the prattle of her little one ; satisfied to hold its hand and prevent a fall, she goes her way : thus must we disregard the unruly feelings of our heart, and go bravely on, heedless of the heart's weakness, the mind's silliness, and the murmurings of nature. But, remembering ever that without Divine grace we can do absolutely nothing, let us seek with confidence and continual prayer His help, Who will give a good spirit to those who ask it.

RULE II.—Things which must be distinguished in words, must also be completely distinguished in the mind ; nor should they be confused together.

This rule is a sequel to the first, and explains it more. For although at first sight it seems to refer only to those who write books, or instruct others orally, still it is just as

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necessary for those who read what others write, or listen to what they say. We are largely indebted to the Holy Fathers of the first ages, on account of their splendid writings. Still, those who have been given to us in subsequent ages have illustrated what the Fathers wrote, with a new light derived from the same fountains to which they first went. They judged it well to treat separately and singly what had been treated at first only generally and indefinitely. And matters which the first Fathers had expressed in confused, equivocal, or over-vague language, they have more lucidly explained by appropriate and distinct terms. And they have prudently employed a distinct terminology in treating of things which were specifically distinct. And thus propounding to us separately the thoughts of the mind, the agitations of the heart, and the acts of the will, they have taught that only these acts of the will are at the free disposal of the soul ; the rest may be approved or disapproved by the will as it chooses, but cannot be entirely prevented. To preserve the peace of the soul, and to banish anxiety and pusillanimity in the combats and contradictions which we experience within us, it is most needful to make these distinctions. Therefore we must go by what is given us by recent writers, since they have received it from the ancients, and give expression to it in new modes of speech, which lessen difficulties, and make it easier for us to understand aright not only the old authors, but Sacred Scripture itself ; and in this St. Francis of Sales most excels.

RULE III.—Read little, but with an attentive mind digest that little well.

Omitting various sorts of reading, to which, when at leisure, we might piously apply ourselves, we are now speaking only of spiritual reading, which we should consider as a daily task, to be done at an hour fixed by our Director, as a lesson might be fixed for students ; and in this reading, observe the following regulations :—

1. This kind of reading is to be only for half an hour each day, because the spirit might be fatigued with more. For what food is to the stomach that knowledge is to the mind ; and therefore I have divided this book into a certain number of lessons, not indeed to tie you down to reading one every

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day, but to remind any who may use it, that whatever be the spiritual reading, this same order should be observed ; and that, for fear of loading the soul, method and a certain measure must be adhered to.

2. You should set yourself to the reading with a tranquil mind and without too much eagerness : like one who in watering a plant allows the water to trickle slowly and drop by drop, lest, by pouring too fast and copiously, before the root gets moistened he might wash the earth away.

3. Do not insist too earnestly on at once mastering what you read, but omit what is difficult ; and after a while return, if necessary twice or thrice, to understand it better.

4. Prayer should always precede the reading ; and so also should occasional ejaculations accompany it.

RULE IV.—*The weariness of the mind, because its curiosity is not gratified, must be overcome.*

The human mind delights in what is new, and grows weary of what is customary. He who has read a book, wants another, and will not read the same over and over again. But if he looks for solid instruction and not a passing pleasure, he must mortify his curiosity, and conquer his weariness. One book is quite enough for a beginner until he has thoroughly mastered it, and till the knowledge of its sum and substance seems quite natural to him. This, for the most part, is not the case, unless the same things are often read and re-read. To know once for all the sum of the spiritual books from which our first principles are drawn is not sufficient. The identical books must be read over again, and our ideas must from time to time be compared with them, that if anything has been changed, or lost through forgetfulness, it may be restored in accordance with those principles, from which the human mind, liable to such various kinds of thoughts and ideas, easily goes astray.

If this sort of mortification of the intellect is useful, in order to acquire solid erudition ;—so that it is a common saying, Beware a man of one book ;—it is most necessary for one who desires to acquire spirituality. A knowledge of sublime truths is not enough, but their real and essential connection with the fundamental maxims of Christian life must be weighed, and then practically applied to a man's

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moral conduct ; certain sublime ideas, which may come of the spiritual reading, being entirely neglected, unless so far as they agree with those fundamental maxims and suit his present state. Moreover, when this curiosity is overcome, he will abound in consolation ; for he will not disdain to read over many times whatever is really best, and mastering his own desires, he will acquire solid knowledge, and with much mental pleasure will perceive how great is the difference between that which is skimmed through lightly, superficially, and from mere curiosity, and that which is thoroughly learned, when self is conquered, curiosity checked, and those things alone studied which are suitable and useful.

RULE V.—Many things in Spiritual reading appear ordinary, which, however, in practice are sublime ; many seem familiar which in reality are not.

For instance, St. Francis of Sales asserts that persons living in the world ought to aim at passing from prayer to the duties of their state, and from their duties back again to prayer, with the same ease as if they were one and the same thing. Now this appears very ordinary and easy, but if only considered, it is evidently impossible without complete indifference to everything, and without having gained the daily denial of one's self. Likewise, when he asserts that nothing is to be avoided, nothing to be sought, this might be esteemed a light task, but actually it cannot be well discharged except by one who is completely dead to self.

RULE VI.—Mistrust your own judgment, and avoid extremes.

The mind flooded and enraptured with the light of truth is easily carried away to excesses of zeal. It judges all things with the utmost rigour, it often exceeds the bounds of moderation, and indeed may well be gently admonished by borrowing the words of the Apostle, "*Nolite peregrinari in fervore*" (1 Pet. iv. 12). At these times the counsels of the prudent must be borne in mind, and private judgment renounced, lest anything beyond what is duly proportionate should be attempted. Look upon Perfection as a most beautiful city, built on a mountain, which you behold from afar ; strive continually to arrive at it, and do not count the cost. But do

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not, because you behold it, think that you will get there all at once, for both time and trouble and perseverance are necessary for the journey, and courage too; and you will be able to enjoy the rest that is in it only after having endured the fatigues of the road. When you meet in your spiritual reading difficulties which you cannot solve, put nothing into actual execution without having sought the assistance of a prudent person and of your own superior.

After these rules, I end by repeating the warnings with which I began this Lesson, that all sorts of books are not suitable for all, and a choice is to be left to those only who are thoroughly skilled in the application of the first principles of the spiritual life, and who by long experience have acquired singular prudence. "*All things are lawful to me, but all are not expedient*" (1 Cor. x. 10-22), says the Apostle.

How many things are found in spiritual books having reference to one manner of life; all very excellent, but utterly unfit for another! Great discernment must be exercised in choosing what to adopt; nor should all good things be resolved on for one's self; for the same things are not suitable for all.

However, Theotime, hope, pray always, learn, practise, persevere, and God will enable you to acquire the spirit of discernment necessary for your own guidance and that of others. But remember that only by patience and experience can a Master be trained for either sort of guidance.

With these cautions let us now begin.

LESSON I.

Of True Devotion, and in what it consists: How the soul ought to love Christ, and aspire to familiar friendship with Him.

TEXTS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

Not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doth the will of my Father who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.—Matt. vii. 21.

But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true adorers shall adore the Father in spirit and in truth. For the Father also seeketh such to adore Him.—John iv. 23.

For bodily exercise is profitable to little: but godliness is profitable to all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.—1 Tim. iv. 8.

Jesus said to him: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. And the second is like to this: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments dependeth the whole law and the prophets.—Matt. xxii. 37.

If I speak with the tongues of men, and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. And if I should have prophecy, and should know all mysteries, and all knowledge, and if I should have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. Charity is patient, is kind: charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely, is not puffed up.—1 Cor. xiii. 1.

These words teach us that neither long prayers, nor austerities, nor bodily penances, make the true servant and adorer of God, unless animated with the spirit of charity, whereby you love God above all, and your neighbour, for the sake of God, and bring forth abundantly the fruits of charity enumerated by the Apostle. To love in deed and in truth, in charity and in the order of charity, when dealing with God

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and with your neighbour, to seek God above all things—herein consists true godliness, which is profitable to all things. Now note carefully what the two great masters, St. Francis of Sales and the author of the *Imitation of Christ*, say upon this.

INTRODUCTION.—PT. I., CH. I.—A DESCRIPTION OF TRUE DEVOTION.

1. You aspire to devotion, my dearest *Philothea*, because, being a Christian, you know that devotion is a virtue most acceptable to the Divine Majesty. But since small faults committed in the beginning of any enterprise, in the progress grow infinitely greater, and in the end become almost irreparable, you must, in the first place, learn what the virtue of devotion is : for since there is but one kind of true devotion, and many sorts of forged and false, if you know not which is true, you may easily deceive and amuse yourself in the pursuit of some impertinent and superstitious devotion.

2. *Arelius* painted all the faces of his pictures to the air and resemblance of the women he loved ; and every one paints devotion according to his own passion and fancy. He that is given to fasting thinks himself very devout if he fast often, be his heart never so full of rancour, and not daring to moisten his tongue in wine or water for sobriety's sake, yet makes no difficulty to drink deep of his neighbour's blood by calumny and slander. Another will account himself full of devotion for huddling over a multitude of prayers every morning, though afterwards he give his tongue liberty to utter offensive, arrogant, and reproachful speeches amongst his neighbours and family. One willingly draws an alms out of his purse to give the poor, but cannot draw clemency out of his heart to pardon his enemies. Another forgives his enemies, yet never cares to satisfy his creditors but by constraint. All these people are by the vulgar esteemed devout, when indeed they are nothing so.

3. *Saul's* servants sought *David* in his house ; but *Michol*, having laid a statue in his bed, covered it with *David's* apparel, and made them believe it was *David* himself sick in bed : so many persons cover themselves with certain external actions belonging to devotion, and the world believes them

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truly devout and spiritual, whereas indeed they are but statues and phantoms of devotion.

4. True and lively devotion, O *Philothea*, presupposes the love of God : nay, rather, it is nothing else but a true love of God, yet not every sort of love ; for inasmuch as the love of God adorns our souls, it is called grace, making us acceptable to His Divine Majesty: inasmuch as it gives us strength to do good works, it is called charity ; but when it has arrived at that degree of perfection by which it not only makes us do well, but also work diligently, frequently, and fervently, then it is called devotion.

5. Ostriches never fly ; hens fly leisurely, low, and seldom ; but eagles, doves, swallows, fly high, often, and swiftly : so sinners fly not all towards God, but make all their courses on the earth and for earthly delights : good people, who are not yet arrived at the height of devotion, fly towards God by their good works, yet slowly, heavily, and seldom ; but devout souls fly to God assiduously, cheerfully, and vigorously.

Briefly, devotion is nothing else but a spiritual sweetness and vigour by means of which charity works in us, or we by her, with diligence and affection ; and, as it is the office of charity to make us put in practice God's commandments generally and universally, so it is the part of devotion to make us observe them cheerfully and diligently.

Wherefore, he who observes not all God's commandments can neither be esteemed good nor devout ; since to be good he must have charity, and to be devout, besides charity, he must have a great liveliness and cheerfulness in charitable actions.

6. And forasmuch as devotion consists in a certain degree of transcendent charity, it makes us not only vigorous, active, and diligent in the observance of God's holy commandments, but it also provokes us to perform, with cheerfulness and affection, all manner of good works, though they be not at all commanded, but only counselled or inspired. For as a man, newly recovered from some infirmity, walks as much as is necessary for him, but yet leisurely and faintly ; so a sinner, lately reclaimed from his iniquity, walks so far as God commands him, yet slowly and faintly, till such time as he attains to devotion ; for then, like a sound man, he not only walks, but even runs and springs forward in the way of God's commandments ; and besides, hastens on and advances cheerfully in the paths of heavenly counsels and inspirations.

LESSON I. THE PROPERTIES OF TRUE DEVOTION.

7. To conclude, charity and devotion differ no more one from the other than fire from flame ; for charity is a spiritual fire, which, when it is well kindled, is called devotion ; so that devotion adds nothing to the fire of charity but the flame, which renders charity cheerful, active, and diligent, not only in the observance of God's commandments, but also in the practice of heavenly counsels and inspirations.

IMITATION—BK. III., CH. IV.

. . . Some only carry their devotions in their books, some in pictures, and some in outward signs and figures.

Some have Me in their mouths, while there is little of Me in their hearts.

Others there are, who, enlightened in their understanding and purified in the affection, always pant after the things eternal ; are unwilling to hear of earthly things, and grieve to be subject to the necessities of nature : and such as these perceive what the Spirit of Truth speaketh in them ; for it teacheth them to despise the things of the earth, and to love the heavenly things ; to disregard the world, and day and night to aspire after heaven.

INTRODUCTION—PT. I., CH. II.—THE PROPERTIES AND EXCELLENCES OF DEVOTION.

1. They who discouraged the *Israelites* from going into the Land of Promise told them it was a country which destroyed its inhabitants, having an air so contagious that it was impossible to live long there ; and further, that the natives were such monsters that they ate up other men like locusts. So the world, my dear *Philothea*, defames holy devotion, representing devout persons with an angry, sad, and grim countenance ; pretending devotion engenders melancholy and unsociable humours. But, as *Josue* and *Caleb* protested not only that the Promised Land was good and fair, but also that the acquisition and possession of it would be easy and pleasant, so the Holy Ghost, by the mouths of all the Saints, and our Saviour by His own, assures us that a devout life is pleasant, happy, and amiable.

2. The world sees devout people pray, fast, suffer injuries, serve the sick, give to the poor, watch, moderate their anger, restrain their passion, deprive themselves of sensual

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pleasures, and do such other acts as are in themselves sharp and rigorous ; but the world sees not the inward cordial, devotion, which renders all these actions agreeable, pleasant, and easy. Consider the bees upon the thyme ; they find there very bitter juice, yet in sucking it they turn it into honey, because such is their property. O worldlings ! it is true devout souls find much bitterness in these exercises of mortification, but in performing them they are converted into sweetness and delight. Fire, flames, racks, swords seemed flowers and perfumes to the martyrs because they were devout. If, then, devotion can give a sweetness to cruel torments, and even to death itself, what will it do to the actions of virtue ? Sugar sweetens green fruits and tempers the crudity and unwholesomeness of the ripe ; now devotion is the true spiritual sugar, which takes away bitterness from mortification and offensiveness from consolation ; it takes away discontent from the poor man and solicitude from the rich ; desolation from the oppressed and insolence from the exalted ; sadness from the solitary and dissoluteness from the merry companion ; it serves for fire in winter and for dew in summer. It knows how to abound and how to suffer want ; it renders equally profitable honour and contempt ; it entertains pleasure and pain almost with the same cheerfulness, and it replenishes our souls with admirable sweetness.

3. Contemplate *Jacob's Ladder*, for it is the true emblem of a devout life. The two sides, between which we ascend and to which the rounds are fastened, represent prayer, which obtains the love of God, and the Sacraments, which confer it. The rounds are nothing but divers degrees of charity, by which we advance from virtue to virtue ; either descending, by action, to the help and support of our neighbour, or ascending, by contemplation, to a blessed union with God. Now look, I beseech you, upon those who are on this ladder ; they are either men who have angelical hearts or angels who have human bodies. They are not young, yet they seem so because they are full of vigour and spiritual activity. They have wings to fly and soar upward to God by holy prayer ; but they have feet also, to walk with men by a holy and friendly conversation. Their faces are fair and pleasant because they receive all things with sweetness and contentment. Their legs, arms, and heads are all uncovered because their thoughts, affections, and

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actions have no other design or motive than to please God. The rest of their body is covered only with a fair and light robe, to show that they make use indeed of the world and worldly things, yet in a most pure and sincere manner, not touching more of them than is necessary for their condition. Such are devout persons. Believe me, dear *Philothea*, devotion is the pleasure of pleasures, the queen of virtues, and the perfection of charity. If charity be milk, devotion is the cream. If charity be a plant, devotion is its flower. If charity be a precious stone, devotion is its lustre. If charity be a rich balm, devotion is its odour; yea, the odour of sweetness, which comforts men and rejoices angels.

(But since devotion is incomplete unless founded on true love, listen to what your other master has written):—

IMITATION—BK. I., CH. VII.—OF THE LOVE OF JESUS ABOVE ALL THINGS.

1. Blessed is he who understandeth what it is to love Jesus, and to despise himself for the sake of Jesus. We must quit what is beloved for the sake of the Beloved; for Jesus will be loved alone and above all things. The love of things created is deceitful and inconstant; the love of Jesus is faithful and enduring. He that clingeth to the creature shall fall with its falling. He that embraceth Jesus shall stand firm for ever. Love Him, and keep Him for thy friend, who, when all forsake, will not leave thee, nor suffer thee to perish finally. Sooner or later thou must be separated from all, whether thou wilt or no.

2. In life and in death keep thyself near to Jesus, and entrust thyself to His fidelity, who alone can help thee when all others fail. The nature of thy Beloved is such, that He will not admit of a rival, but He will have thy heart for Himself alone, and sit as King upon His own throne. If thou couldst empty thy heart of every creature, Jesus would willingly make His dwelling with thee. Whatsoever thou reposest in men out of Jesus, thou wilt find to be well-nigh lost. Trust not, nor lean upon, a reed full of wind. *For all flesh is grass, and all the glory thereof shall fade like the flower of grass* (Isa. xl. 6).

3. Thou wilt soon be deceived if thou regard only the external appearance of men. Indeed, if thou seek in others thy comfort

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and thy profit, thou wilt more often meet with loss. If in all things thou seekest Jesus, truly thou shalt find Jesus; but if thou seek thyself, thou shalt find thyself also, but to thy own ruin. For if a man seek not Jesus, he doth himself more harm than the whole world and all his enemies can do him.

CH. VIII.—OF FAMILIAR FRIENDSHIP WITH JESUS.

1. When Jesus is present, all is well, and nothing seems difficult; but when Jesus is absent, everything is hard. When Jesus speaketh not within, consolation is little worth; but if Jesus speak only one word, we feel great consolation. Did not Mary Magdalen instantly rise up from the place where she wept, when Martha said to her, *The Master is here, and calleth for thee?* (John xxii. 29). Happy hour when Jesus calleth thee from tears to joy of spirit. How dry and hard art thou without Jesus! How foolish and vain if thou desire anything out of Jesus! Is not this a greater loss to thee than if thou shouldst lose the whole world?

2. What can the world give thee without Jesus? To be without Jesus is a grievous hell; to be with Jesus a sweet paradise. If Jesus be with thee, no foe can harm thee. Whoever findeth Jesus findeth a good treasure, yea, a good above every good. And he that loseth Jesus loseth much, yea, more than the whole world. He that liveth without Jesus is in wretched poverty, and he who is with Jesus is exceeding rich.

3. It is a great art to know how to converse with Jesus, and to know how to keep Jesus is great wisdom. Be humble and peaceable, and Jesus will be with thee. Be devout and calm, and Jesus will abide with thee. Thou mayest soon drive away Jesus, and lose His grace, if thou wilt turn aside after outward things. And if thou drive Him from thee and lose Him, to whom wilt thou fly? and whom, then, wilt thou seek for thy friend? Without a friend thou canst not live happily; and if Jesus be not a friend to thee above all, thou wilt indeed be sad and desolate. Thou dost foolishly, therefore, to trust in any other, or to rejoice in any other. We ought rather to choose to have the whole world against us than to offend Jesus. Of all, therefore, that are dear to thee, let Jesus be thy special beloved.

4. Let all be loved for Jesus' sake, but Jesus for His own

LESSON I. OF FAMILIAR FRIENDSHIP WITH JESUS.

sake. Jesus Christ alone is singly to be loved ; for He alone is found good and faithful above all friends. For His sake, and in Him, let enemies as well as friends be dear to thee ; and for all these thou must pray to Him, that all may know and love Him. Never desire to be singly praised or beloved ; for this belongeth to God alone, who hath none like unto Himself. Neither desire that any one's heart should be much taken up with thee ; nor do thou be much taken up with the love of any one ; but let Jesus be in thee, and in every good man.

5. Be pure and free interiorly, without being entangled by any creature. Thou must be naked, and bear a pure heart towards God, if thou wilt be free, and experience how sweet the Lord is. And, indeed, thou wilt never attain to this, unless thou be prevented and drawn by His grace, that so thou mayest be united to Him alone, when thou hast cast out and dismissed all others. For when the grace of God cometh to a man, then is he powerful for all things ; and when it departeth, then is he poor and weak, and left only as it were to scourgings. In these circumstances, he must not be dejected nor despair ; but calmly remain, awaiting the will of God, and bear, for the glory of Jesus Christ, whatever shall befall him ; because, after the winter cometh summer, after the night the day returneth, *after the storm cometh a great calm* (Tob. iii. 22).

(Here observe, and bear in mind throughout, that where these terms, *grace departeth*, *grace is wanting*, or other words of the sort occur in the *Imitation*, they are not to be understood of that grace which is necessary to keep from mortal sin, but, according to the author's meaning, of the withdrawal of the interior consolation with which God, when He pleases, fills the soul. Grace deserts us, in the sense that it does not always prove to us the beauty of virtue in a way that impresses our feeling, nor are we sensibly drawn to love it ; and it withholds the sensible feeling in order to make trial of us. Grace deserts us, in the sense that it does not supply us with the strength to do all of the good that we desire, or to avoid entirely all and every sin. But if grace thus leaves us to ourselves, this must be attributed to the design of Divine Wisdom, that we may be kept humble, and have occasions for energy and fidelity.)

LESSON II. DEVOTION IS SUITABLE FOR ALL.

LESSON II.

That Devotion is suitable for all Vocations and Professions: Of the Joy of a Good Conscience: Of the Wonderful Effects of Divine Love: Of the Mean Estimation of One's Self in the Sight of God.

TEXTS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

Come to me, all you that labour, and are burdened, and I will refresh you. Take up my yoke upon you, and learn of me, because I am meek, and humble of heart: and you shall find rest to your souls. For my yoke is sweet and my burden light.—Matt. xi. 28.

And the publicans also came to be baptized, and said to him: Master, what shall we do? But he said to them: Do nothing more than that which is appointed you. And the soldiers also asked him, saying: And what shall we do? And he said to them: Do violence to no man, neither calumniate any man; and be content with your pay.—Luke iii. 12.

The things which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, these do ye, and the God of peace shall be with you.—Phil. iv. 9.

I desire therefore first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all men: for kings, and for all that are in high stations: that we may lead a quiet and a peaceable life in all piety and chastity. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth.—1 Tim. ii. 1.

The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hidden in a field. Which a man having found, hideth and for joy thereof goeth, and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.—Matt. xiii. 44.

Lord, what is man, that thou art made known to him? or the son of man, that thou makest account of him? Man is like to vanity: his days pass away like a shadow.—Ps. cxliii. 3.

Now the end of the commandment is charity from a pure heart, and a good conscience, and an unfeigned faith.—1 Tim. i. 5.

By these words of Holy Scripture you are taught that it is by the help of God alone you are supported in the toils and perils of this life, and that you are invited by Jesus Christ

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Himself to bear His yoke, which He promises to lighten for you by His grace. And therefore you must choose one of two things ; either to lead a wretched life, deprived in it of those special helps of grace here so necessary for us—or else to take up the yoke of Christ, which is nothing but true devotion, for which all should strive, since neither publicans nor soldiers are rejected. You are taught that, in order to attain peace with God and within yourself, the footsteps of the Apostles and other Saints must be walked in by true devotion ; that she makes her clients courteous to all, and is not only peaceable, but conciliates the good-will of all by her readiness to render services to all ; that by her the soul is filled with holy joy and sweet consolation, from the anticipation of the delights of the heavenly kingdom, and from the comparison between our miseries and the goodness and mercy of God. Lastly, you are taught that the perfection of devotion consists in charity alone, and in sincere self-denial, by which being made meek and humble of heart, you become a true disciple of Christ. Hear the doctrine of both our masters on this point.

INTRODUCTION—PT. I., CH. III.—THAT DEVOTION IS SUITABLE WITH ALL SORTS OF VOCATIONS AND PROFESSIONS.

I. In the creation, God commanded the plants to bring forth their fruits, every one according to its kind ; even so He commands all Christians, who are living plants of the Church, to bring forth the fruits of devotion, every one in his quality and vocation. Devotion ought to be differently exercised by the gentleman, by the tradesman, by the servant, by the prince, by the widow, by the maid, and by the married person. And not only so, but the practice also of devotion must be accommodated to the capacity, the employments, and the obligations of each one in particular. For I pray thee, *Philothea*, would it be fit for the bishop to be solitary like the *Carthusian* ? and, if married persons should store up no more than the *Capuchin* ; if the tradesman should be all day in the church like the monk, and the religious person continually exposed to all manner of encounters for the service of his neighbour, as the bishop ; would not this devotion be ridiculous, preposterous, and insupportable ? This fault, nevertheless, happens very often, and the world, which dis-

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cerns not or will not see a difference between devotion and the indiscretion of those who pretend to be devout, blames and murmurs at devotion which cannot help these disorders.

2. No, *Philothea*, devotion, when it is true, prejudices nothing, but rather makes all things perfect; and when it is not suitable to the lawful vocation of any person, then without doubt it is false. The bee, says *Aristotle*, gains honey from the flowers without hurting them, leaving them as entire and fresh as it found them; but true devotion goes yet farther, for it not only does not prejudice any sort of vocation or employment, but, on the contrary, adorns and beautifies it.

3. All sorts of precious stones cast into honey become more glittering, each one according to its colour, and all persons become more acceptable in their vocation joining it with devotion. The care of the family is thereby rendered less burdensome, the love of the husband and wife more sincere, the service of the prince more faithful, and all sorts of business more easy and tolerable.

4. It is an error, or rather a heresy, to endeavour to banish a devout life from the companies of soldiers, the shops of tradesmen, the courts of princes, or the affairs of married people. It is true, *Philothea*, that devotion merely contemplative, monastical, and religious, cannot be exercised in those vocations. But besides these three sorts of devotion there are divers others, proper to make perfect those who live in secular conditions. *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, David, Job, Tobias, Sarah, Rebecca, and Judith* bear witness of this in the Old Testament; and in the New, *S. Joseph, Lydia, and S. Crispin* were perfectly devout in their shops; *S. Anne, S. Martha, S. Monica, Aquila, Priscilla* in their families; *Cornelius, S. Sebastian, S. Maurice* in the wars; *Constantine, Helen, S. Lewis, S. Ann, and S. Edward* on their thrones. Nay, it has happened, that many have lost perfection in solitude, which notwithstanding is so much to be desired for perfection, and have preserved it in company, which seems so little favourable to perfection. *Lot*, says *S. Gregory*, who was so chaste in the city, in solitude fell shamefully. Wheresoever we are, we may and ought to aspire to a perfect life.

(In these few words all are taught how each one should conduct himself in his own state of life, and become all things to all men according to the right order of charity.

LESSON II. THE JOY OF A GOOD CONSCIENCE.

Each one has in his own state the materials for well-doing, it is only necessary that the form should be properly given to these materials. But in order to conceive a higher esteem for your own state, in which so many means are to be found of tasting the sweetness of God and acquiring perfection, follow the advice, yield to the persuasiveness, of the master who now speaks.)

IMITATION—BK. II., CH. VI.—OF THE JOY OF A GOOD CONSCIENCE.

1. The good man's glory is the testimony of a good conscience. Have a good conscience, and thou shalt always have joy. A good conscience can bear very much, and is joyful in the midst of adversity. An evil conscience is always fearful and uneasy; sweetly shalt thou rest, if thy heart upbraid thee not. Never rejoice except when thou hast done well. The wicked never have true joy, nor feel interior peace; for *there is no peace to the wicked*, saith the Lord (Isa. lvii. 21). And if they say, We are in peace, and there shall no evil come upon us, and who is there shall dare to harm us; believe them not; for suddenly the anger of God shall arise, and bring their deeds to nought, and all their thoughts shall perish. To glory in tribulation is not hard to him that loves; for so to glory is to glory in the cross of the Lord. Short-lived is the glory that is given and received by men. Sadness ever accompanieth the glory of this world. The glory of the good is in their own consciences, and not in the mouth of men. The joy of the just is from God and in God, and their rejoicing is in the truth. He that longeth after true and everlasting glory careth not for temporal. And he that seeketh temporal glory, or doth not from his soul despise it, shows himself to have little love for that which is heavenly. He hath great tranquillity of heart who careth neither for praise nor blame.

2. He will easily be contented and at peace whose conscience is undefiled. Thou art not more holy for being praised, nor worse for being blamed. What thou art, that thou art; nor canst thou be said to be greater than God seeth thee to be. If thou attend diligently to what thou art interiorly, thou wilt not regard what men say of thee. *Man looketh on the face, but God seeth into the heart* (1 Kings xvi.

LESSON II. THE EFFECT OF DIVINE LOVE.

7). Man considereth the actions, but God weigheth the intentions. Always to do well, and to esteem one's self of small account, is the mark of a humble soul. To refuse consolation from any creature is a sign of great purity and of an interior confidence.

3. He that seeketh no outward testimony for himself, showeth plainly that he hath wholly committed himself to God. *For not he that commendeth himself, saith blessed Paul, is approved, but he whom God commendeth* (2 Cor. x. 18). To walk with God within, and to be bound by no affection from without, is the state of the man of interior life.

IMITATION—BK. III., CH. V.—OF THE WONDERFUL EFFECT OF DIVINE LOVE.

1. I bless Thee, O Heavenly Father, Father of my Lord Jesus Christ, because Thou hast vouchsafed to be mindful of me, poor as I am. O Father of mercies, and God of all consolation, I give thanks to Thee, that sometimes Thou art pleased to cherish with Thy consolations me, who am unworthy of any consolation. I bless and glorify Thee evermore, together with Thy only-begotten Son and the Holy Ghost the Comforter, for ever and ever. O Lord God, my holy Lover, when Thou shalt come into my heart, all that is within me shall be filled with joy. Thou art my glory and the very joy of my heart. Thou art my hope and my refuge in the day of my tribulation.

2. But because I am as yet weak in love and imperfect in virtue, therefore do I stand in need of being strengthened and comforted by Thee. Wherefore do Thou visit me often, and instruct me in Thy holy discipline. Free me from evil passions, and cure my heart of all disorderly affections; so that, inwardly healed and well purified, I may become ready to love, courageous to suffer, and steadfast to persevere.

3. A great thing is love, a great good every way; which alone lighteneth all that is burthensome, and beareth equally all that is unequal: for it carrieth a burden without being burdened, and maketh all else that is bitter sweet and savoury. The noble love of Jesus impelleth us to do great things, and exciteth us always to desire that which is the more perfect. Love will tend upwards, and not be detained

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by things beneath. Love will be at liberty, and free from all worldly affection, that its interior vision be not hindered; that it suffer not itself to be entangled with any temporal interest, or cast down by misfortune. Nothing is sweeter than love, nothing stronger, nothing higher, nothing wider, nothing more pleasant, nothing fuller or better in heaven or in earth: for love is born of God, and cannot rest but in God, above all created things.

4. The lover flieth, runneth, and rejoiceth; he is free and cannot be restrained. He giveth all for all, and hath all in all; because he resteth in one sovereign Good above all, from Whom all good floweth and proceedeth. He looketh not at the gifts, but turneth himself, above all goods, to the Giver. Love often knoweth no measure, but grows fervent above all measure. Love feeleth no burthen, thinketh nothing of labours, would willingly do more than it can, complaineth not of impossibility, because it conceiveth that it may and can do all things. It can achieve anything; and it doth perform and effect many things, where he that loveth not fainteth and falleth prostrate.

5. Love watcheth, and sleeping slumbereth not. When weary it is not tired; when straitened it is not constrained; when frightened it is not disturbed; but like a vivid flame and a burning torch, it mounteth upwards, and securely passeth through all. Whosoever loveth knoweth the cry of this voice. A loud cry in the ears of God is that ardent affection of the soul which saith, O my God, my Love, Thou art all mine, and I am all Thine.

6. Enlarge Thou me in love, that I may learn to taste with the interior mouth of the heart how sweet it is to love, and to be dissolved and to bathe in love. Let me be possessed by love, mounting up above myself through excess of fervour and ecstasy. Let me sing the canticle of love, let me follow Thee my Beloved on high, let my soul quite lose herself in Thy praises, rejoicing exceedingly in Thy love. Let me love Thee more than myself, and myself only for Thee, and all others in Thee, who truly love Thee, as the law of love commandeth, which shineth forth from Thee.

7. Love is swift, sincere, pious, pleasant, and delightful; strong, patient, faithful, prudent, long-suffering, courageous, and never seeking itself. For where a man seeketh himself, there he falleth from love. Love is circumspect, humble,

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upright ; not soft, nor light, nor intent upon vain things ; is sober, chaste, steadfast, quiet, and keepeth a guard over all the senses. Love is submissive and obedient to superiors : in its own eyes mean and contemptible, devout and thankful to God, always trusting and hoping in Him, even then when it tasteth not the relish of God's sweetness ; for there is no living in love, without some sorrow.

8. Whosoever is not ready to suffer all things, and to stand resigned to the will of his Beloved, is not worthy to be called a lover. He that loveth must willingly embrace all that is hard and bitter for the sake of his Beloved, and never suffer himself to be turned away from Him by any contrary occurrences whatsoever.

IMITATION—BK. III., CH. VIII.—OF THE MEAN ESTIMATION OF ONE'S SELF IN THE EYES OF GOD.

I will speak to my Lord, whereas I am but dust and ashes (Gen. xviii. 27). If I repute myself greater than this, behold, Thou standest against me ; and my sins bear a true testimony, and I cannot contradict it. But if I abase myself and bring myself down to very nothingness, and divest myself of all self-esteem (as I really am), and account myself to be mere dust, Thy grace will be favourable to me, and Thy light will draw nigh to my heart ; and all self-estimation, how little soever, will be sunk in the depth of my own nothingness, and there lose itself for ever. It is there Thou showest me to myself, what I am, what I have been, and what I am to come to ; for I am nothing, and I knew it not. If I am left to myself, behold, I am nothing, and all weakness ; but if Thou suddenly look upon me, I presently become strong, and am replenished with new joy. And truly wonderful it is that I am so quickly raised up and so graciously embraced by Thee ; I who, by my own weight, am always sinking down to the lowest depths.

2. It is Thy love that effects this, gratuitously preventing and assisting me in so many necessities, preserving me also from grievous dangers, and, as I may truly say, snatching me from innumerable evils. For, by a perverse loving of myself, I lost myself ; and by seeking Thee alone, and purely loving Thee, I found both myself and Thee ; and by this love have more profoundly annihilated myself. Because

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Thou, O most sweet Lord, dost deal with me above all my desert, and above all that I dare hope or ask for.

3. Blessed be Thou, O my God ; for though I am unworthy of all good, yet Thy generosity and infinite goodness never cease to do good even to those that are ungrateful, and that are turned far away from Thee.

Oh, convert us unto Thee, that we may be thankful, humble, and devout ; for Thou art our salvation, our courage, and our strength.

LESSON III. OF THE NECESSITY OF A GUIDE.

LESSON III.

Of the Necessity of following the Guidance of a Pious and Prudent Director : Of the Doctrine of Truth : Of Obedience and Subjection : Of Four Things which bring much Peace.

TEXTS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

For every one that doth evil hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, that his works may not be reprov'd. But he that doth truth cometh to the light, that his works may be made manifest, because they are done in God.—John iii. 20.

If then the light that is in thee be darkness : the darkness itself how great shall it be ?—Matt. vi. 23.

And if the blind lead the blind, both fall into the pit.—Matt. xv. 14.

Dearly beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits if they be of God.—1 John iv. 1.

And he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and other some evangelists, and other some pastors and doctors. For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ ; until we all meet into the unity of faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the age of the fulness of Christ ; that henceforth we be no more children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the wickedness of men, by cunning craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive.—Eph. iv. 11.

And now send men to Joppe, and call hither one Simon, who is surnamed Peter : he lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side : he will tell thee what thou must do.—Acts x. 5.

These words teach the necessity of not following your own judgment, and of avoiding self-direction. The light of nature within you is darkness, and you know by experience how greatly mental pre-occupation obscures reason. God Himself, not without cause, has given to Christians Pastors and Doctors, nay, has sent to men on trial like themselves even those whom He miraculously converted, in

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order to be taught what they should believe and do. You will do well to heed the Apostle's warning : *Believe not every spirit*, for even Satan transforms himself into an angel of light. Men's opinions, by their variety and peculiarity, prove how needful, in order to proceed rightly and safely, are the counsels and warnings of a wise director, or the guidance of superiors, who receive a certain heavenly mission to direct us. Let us hear both our teachers on this point.

INTRODUCTION—PT. I., CH. IV.—OF THE NECESSITY OF A GUIDE TO ENTER INTO AND PROCEED IN DEVOTION.

Young *Tobias* being commanded to go to *Rages*, answered, I know no part of the way. Go then, replied his father, and seek some man to conduct thee. I say the same to you, my *Philothea* ; would you in good earnest walk towards devotion ? seek some good man who may guide and conduct you. This is the advice of advices. Though you search, says the devout *Avila*, you shall never so assuredly find the will of God as by the way of this humble obedience so much recommended and practised by the Saints of old. The blessed Mother *Teresa*, seeing the Lady *Catherine* of *Cordova* perform such great penances, desired much to imitate her, against the advice of her confessor, who had forbidden her, and whom she was much tempted to disobey in that particular. But God said to her : Daughter, thou art in a good and secure way ; seest thou her penances ? But I value more thy obedience. Hence she so highly esteemed this virtue that, besides the obedience due to her superiors, she vowed a particular one to a man of excellent perfection, obliging herself to follow his direction and conduct, by which she was infinitely comforted, as well as many devout souls, before and after her, who, for the more entire resignation of themselves to God, have submitted their wills to that of His servants, which *S. Catherine* of *Siena* highly applauds in her Dialogues. The devout princess *S. Elizabeth* submitted herself with exemplary obedience to *B. Conrad* ; and one of the advices given by the great *S. Louis* to his son, a little before his death, was this :—Confess oft ; choose an able and upright confessor, who can instruct thee to do those things which are necessary.

2. *A faithful friend*, says the Holy Scripture, *is a strong protection, he that has found him has found a treasure.* A

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faithful friend is a medicine of life and immortality: those who fear God find Him (Eccli. vi. 14). These Divine words point chiefly, as you may see, at immortality, for which it is principally necessary to have this faithful friend, who, by his directions and counsels, may watch over our actions, and by this means secure us from the ambushes and wiles of our ghostly enemy. He will be to us a treasure of wisdom in our afflictions, discontentments, and relapses. He will serve us as a cordial to refresh and comfort our hearts in spiritual diseases; he will preserve us from evil, and make what is good better; and, when any infirmity shall befall us, he will hinder it from being mortal, for he will recover us.

3. But who shall find this friend? The wise man answers: *They that fear God*, that is, the humble, who earnestly desire their spiritual advancement. Since, then, it is so important for you, *Philothea*, to go with a good guide in this holy voyage of devotion, beseech God with great fervour to grant you such an one as may be according to His heart; and doubt not, for He will rather send you an angel from heaven, as He did to young *Tobias*, than fail to give you a good and faithful one.

4. Now, he ought always to be an angel to you; that is to say, when you shall have found him, consider him not as man only, neither confide in him or his human knowledge, but in God, who will favour you by the means and meditation of this man, putting in his heart and in his mouth whatsoever shall be requisite for your happiness; so that you ought to hear him as an angel descending from heaven to conduct you thither. Treat with him with an open heart, in all sincerity and fidelity, manifesting to him clearly your good and your ill, without feigning or dissimulation; and by this means your good shall be tried and more assured, and your ill shall be corrected and amended. You shall be relieved and strengthened in your afflictions, and moderated and tempered in your consolations. Place in him an entire confidence, mixed with a holy reverence, so that the reverence may not diminish the confidence, nor the confidence prejudice the reverence due to him. Confide in him with the respect of a daughter towards her father, respect him with the confidence of a son towards his mother. Briefly, this friendship ought to be firm and sweet; all holy, all sanctified, all divine, all spiritual.

LESSON III. OF THE DOCTRINE OF TRUTH.

5. To this end choose one among a thousand, says *Avila*, and I say one among ten thousand; for there are fewer than can be imagined who are capable of this office. He must be full of charity, knowledge, and prudence; if any one of these three qualities be wanting in him there is danger. And, therefore, I say again, ask him of God, and having obtained him, bless His Divine Majesty, remain constant and seek not others, but rather go on with him, innocently, humbly, and confidently, for so you will make a most happy voyage.

(Having such need of a director's counsels, you ought faithfully to follow them; and must, therefore, learn to abandon your own will and judgment. Weigh well, then, the following motives for obedience and subjection, and, by means of this devout submission, you shall acquire great peace.)

IMITATION—BK. I., CH. III.—OF THE DOCTRINE OF TRUTH.

Happy is he whom truth teacheth by itself, not by figures and passing words, but as it is in itself. Our own way of thinking and our sense often deceive us, and see but little. What profiteth to make a great dispute about hidden and obscure things which we shall not be reprov'd in the judgment for having been ignorant of? Wonderful folly! that, neglecting the things that are useful and necessary, we willingly give our attention to such as are curious and mischievous! Having eyes, we see not.

2. And what does it concern us about questions of philosophy? He to whom the Eternal Word speaketh is delivered from a multitude of opinions. From the One Word are all things, and all things speak this One; and this is the Beginning which also speaketh to us. Without Him no man understandeth or judgeth rightly. He to whom all things are one, who referreth all things to one, and seeth all things in one, may be steadfast in heart, and abide in God at peace. O Truth! my God! make me one with Thee in everlasting charity. I am oftentimes wearied with reading and hearing many things: in Thee is all I wish or long for. Let all teachers hold their peace, and all created things keep silence in Thy presence; do Thou alone speak to me.

3. The more a man is united within himself, and interiorly

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simple, so much the more and deeper things doth he understand without labour; for he receiveth the light of understanding from on high. A pure, simple, and steadfast spirit is not distracted by the multitude of things he hath to do; for he doeth all for the honour of God, and striveth within himself to be free from all self-seeking. Who doth more hinder thee and trouble thee than thine own heart's unmortified affection? A good and devout man first arrangeth interiorly the works he hath to do exteriorly; nor do they lead him to the desires of an evil inclination, but he bendeth them to the judgment of right reason. Who hath a stronger conflict than he that striveth to overcome himself? And this ought to be our business—namely, to overcome self, and every day to get more the mastery over self, and to grow better and better.

4. All perfection in this life is attended by some imperfection, and all our far-seeing is not without a certain obscurity. The humble knowledge of one's self is a surer way to God than deep researches after science. Science is not to be blamed, nor the simple knowledge of anything good in itself and ordained by God; but a good conscience and a virtuous life are always to be preferred. But because many take more pains to know much than to live well, therefore they often go astray, and bear no fruit at all, or but little.

5. Oh, if men would be as diligent in the rooting out of vices and grafting in of virtues as they are in mooted questions, there would not be so many evils and scandals among the people, nor such laxity in monasteries. Truly, when the day of judgment cometh, it will not be asked of us, what we have read, but what we have done; not what fine discourses we have made, but how religiously we have lived. Tell me—where now are all those doctors and masters with whom thou wast well acquainted while they were yet alive, and in the glory of their learning? Others now hold their preferments, and I know not whether they ever think of them. In their lifetime they seemed to be something, and now they are not spoken of.

6. Oh, how quickly passeth away the glory of the world! Oh, that their life had been in keeping with their learning! Then would they have studied and read to good purpose. How many perish in the world by vain learning who take little care about the service of God; and because they love rather to be great than humble, therefore *they are lost in their*

LESSON III. FOUR THINGS WHICH BRING PEACE.

own imaginings (Rom. i. 22). He is truly great who hath great charity. He is truly great who is little in his own eyes, and counteth for nothing all the heights of honour. He is truly prudent who esteemeth all earthly things as dung that he may win Christ. And he is truly most learned who doth the will of God and forsaketh his own will.

CH. IX.—OF OBEDIENCE AND SUBJECTION.

It is a very great thing to be in a state of obedience, to live under a superior, and not to be one's own master. It is much safer to be in subjection than in authority. Many are under obedience rather out of necessity than charity; and such as those suffer and are apt to murmur. Neither will they acquire liberty of mind unless they submit themselves with their whole heart for God's sake. Run hither or thither, thou wilt find no rest but in humble subjection under the government of a superior. A fancy for places and change hath deluded many.

2. It is true every one is desirous of acting according to his own liking, and is most inclined to such as are of his own mind. But if God is amongst us, we must needs sometimes give up our own opinion for the blessing of peace. Who is so wise as to be able fully to know all things? Be not over-confident, therefore, in thine own sentiments, but be ready also with pleasure to hear those of others. Although thine opinion be right, yet if for God's sake thou leavest it, and followest another man's, thou wilt profit the more by it.

3. For I have often heard that it is safer to listen and to take advice than to give it. It may also happen that each one's opinion may be good; but to be unwilling to acquiesce in other men's, when reason or occasion requires it, is a sign of pride and obstinacy.

BK. III., CH. XXIII.—OF FOUR THINGS WHICH BRING MUCH PEACE.

Son, now will I teach thee the way of peace and of true liberty.

2. Do, Lord, as Thou sayest, for I shall be very glad to hear it.

3. Study, my son, to do rather the will of another than thy own. Ever choose rather to have less than more.

LESSON III. A PRAYER.

Always seek the lowest place, and to be subject to every one. Desire always and pray that the will of God may be entirely fulfilled in thee. Behold such an one entereth within the borders of peace and rest.

4. Lord, this Thy short address containeth in itself much perfection. It is short in words, but full in meaning, and abounding in fruit. If I could but faithfully observe it, I should not be so easily troubled. For as often as I find myself disquieted and disturbed, I am sensible it is because I have gone back from this doctrine. But Thou, O Lord, who canst do all things, and always lovest the profit of the soul, increase in me a greater grace, that I may fulfil this Thy word, and accomplish my salvation.

A PRAYER

AGAINST EVIL THOUGHTS.

5. *O Lord my God, depart not far from me ; O my God, have regard to help me* (Ps. lxx. 12); for divers evil thoughts have risen up against me, and great fears afflict my soul. How shall I pass through them without hurt? How shall I break them in pieces?

6. *I, saith the Lord, will go before thee, and will humble the great ones of the earth* (Isa. xlv. 2). I will open the gates of the prison, and will reveal to thee hidden secrets.

7. Do, Lord, as Thou sayest, and let all wicked thoughts fly from before Thy face. This is my hope and my only comfort, to fly to Thee in all tribulations, to confide in Thee, to call on Thee from my inmost heart, and patiently to wait for Thy consolation.

A PRAYER

FOR THE ENLIGHTENING OF THE MIND.

8. Enlighten me, O good Jesus, with the brightness of internal light, and cast out all darkness from the dwelling of my heart. Restrain my many wandering thoughts, and destroy the temptations that violently assault me. Fight strongly for me, and overcome these evil beasts,—these alluring concupiscences—that peace may be made in Thy power, and the abundance of Thy praise may resound in Thy holy court,

LESSON III. A PRAYER.

that is, in a clean conscience. Command the winds and storms ; say to the sea, Be still ; to the north wind, Blow thou not ; and there shall be a great calm.

9. *Send forth Thy light and Thy truth* (Ps. xlii. 3), that they may shine upon the earth ; for I am an earth that is empty and void till thou enlightenest me. Pour forth Thy grace from above ; water my heart with the dew of heaven ; supply fresh waters of devotion, to irrigate the face of the earth, to bring forth good and perfect fruit. Lift up my mind, oppressed with the load of sins, and raise my whole desire towards heavenly things ; that having tasted the sweetness of supernal happiness, I may have no pleasure in thinking of the things of earth.

10. Snatch me away, and rescue me from all unstable comfort of creatures ; for no created thing can fully quiet and satisfy my desire. Join me to Thyself with an inseparable bond of love ; for Thou alone art sufficient for the soul that loveth Thee, and without Thee all other things are frivolous.

(See also No. 2, and No. 3, Book III., Ch. 7 of the *Imitation*, *infra*, Lesson 41.)

LESSON IV. OF CLEANSING THE SOUL.

LESSON IV.

Of the Purifying of the Soul : Of the Imitation of Christ and the Contempt of the Vanities of the World : Of having a Humble Opinion of One's self: Of Interior Conversation.

TEXTS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

First make clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, that the outside may become clean.—Matt. xxiii. 26.

For I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you do also.—John xiii. 15.

Love not the world, nor the things which are in the world. If any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him.—1 John ii. 15.

Being of one mind one towards another. Not minding high things, but consenting to the humble. Be not wise in your own conceits.—Rom. xii. 16.

For I judged not myself to know anything among you, but JESUS CHRIST, and Him crucified.—1 Cor. ii. 2.

But thou when thou shalt pray, enter into thy chamber, and having shut the door, pray to thy Father in secret ; and thy Father who seeth in secret will repay thee.—Matt. vi. 6.

From these words of the Holy Ghost you should gather—
1, That no one can please God without the interior purification of the soul ; 2, that violence must be used to one's self in doing this, in order to obtain the kingdom of heaven ; 3, that the life and acts of Christ are to be proposed to one's self for imitation ; 4, that our wishes and curiosity should be checked, and our too good opinion of ourselves lessened ; 5, that vain and idle intercourse with men should be taken leave of, in order that we may learn to converse with God ; 6, that our conversation should be held on high, by meditation on heavenly things and prayer, in order that we may learn to lead on earth a life that is heavenly. Weigh well the holy maxims of your masters hereon.

INTRODUCTION—PT. I., CH. V.—THAT WE MUST BEGIN WITH THE CLEANSING OF THE SOUL.

1. *Flowers appear in our land, says the Spouse, the time of cleansing and pruning is come (Cant. ii. 12).* What are the

LESSON IV. OF CLEANSING THE SOUL.

flowers of our hearts, O *Philothea*, but good desires? Now as soon as they appear the hand must be put to the knife to prune off from our consciences all dead and superfluous works. The alien maid who was to marry with an Israelite was to put off the robe of her captivity, to pare her nails and shave her hair; and the soul that aspires to the honour of being spouse to the Son of God ought to put off the old man, and clothe herself with the new, casting off sin, and then to pare and shave away all manner of impediments which may divert her from the love of God. The beginning of our health is to be purged from offensive humours. *S. Paul*, in a moment, was cleansed with a perfect purgation; so was *S. Catherine of Genoa*, *S. Mary Magdalen*, and *S. Pelagia*, and some others; but this sort of purgation is wholly miraculous and extraordinary in grace, as is the resurrection of the dead in nature, and therefore we must not pretend to it. Ordinary purifying and healing, be it of the body or mind, is not effected but by little and little, by going on from degree to degree with pains and leisurely.

2. The angels upon *Jacob's* ladder have wings, yet they fly not, but ascend and descend in order from step to step. The soul which rises from sin to devotion is compared to the dawning of the morning, which rising, drives not away the darkness in an instant, but by degrees. The cure, says the aphorism, which is made leisurely is ever the most assured. The diseases of the soul, as well as those of the body, come posting on horseback, but depart leisurely on foot. Courage and patience, then, O *Philothea*, are necessary in this enterprise. Alas! how much are those souls to be pitied, who, seeing themselves subject to many imperfections, after having exercised themselves a little in devotion, begin to be troubled, disquieted, and discouraged, suffering their hearts almost to yield to the temptation of forsaking all and turning back! But, on the other side, is it not exceedingly dangerous for those who, by a contrary temptation, make themselves believe that they are cleansed from their imperfections the first day of their purgation, and, esteeming themselves perfect, being scarcely yet initiated, take upon themselves to fly without wings?

3. O *Philothea*, in what danger are they of relapsing for being taken too soon out of the physician's hands? *Rise not before it be light*, says the Prophet; *rise after you have rested*

LESSON IV. OF THE IMITATION OF CHRIST.

(Ps. cxxvi. 2), and he himself practising this lesson, and having been already washed and purified, yet desires to be cleansed again.

4. The exercise of purging the soul neither can nor ought to end but with our life. Let us not then afflict ourselves with our imperfections, for our perfection consists in our resisting them, and we cannot resist them without seeing them, nor vanquish them without encountering them. Our victory lies not in not being sensible of them, but in not consenting to them. Nay, it is necessary for the exercise of our humility that we be sometimes wounded in this spiritual combat ; but we are never to be accounted conquered unless we either lose our life or courage. Now imperfections or venial sins cannot deprive us of spiritual life, for that is not lost but by mortal sin. It then only remains that they daunt not our courage. *Deliver me, O Lord,* said David, *from cowardice and faint-heartedness* (Ps. lix. 9). It is a happy condition for us in this war if, by fighting, we may always be conquerors.

(Humility and patience are shown to be necessary, for the work is life-long: and the three following chapters will explain the motives and means of obtaining purity of heart as far as is possible in this life.)

IMITATION—BK. I., CH. I.—OF THE IMITATION OF CHRIST, AND THE CONTEMPT OF THE VANITIES OF THE WORLD.

1. *He that followeth Me, walketh not in darkness* (John viii. 12), saith the Lord. These are the words of Christ, whereby we are admonished how we must imitate His life and conversation, if we would be truly enlightened and delivered from all blindness of heart. Let it, then, be our chief study to meditate on the life of Jesus Christ.

2. The teaching of Christ surpasseth all the teachings of the Saints ; and he that hath His Spirit, will find therein a hidden manna. But it happeneth that many, from the frequent hearing of the Gospel, feel little emotion ; because they have not the Spirit of Christ. But he that would fully and with relish understand the works of Christ, must study to conform his whole life to Him.

3. What doth it profit thee to dispute deeply about the Trinity, if thou be wanting in humility, and so be displeasing to the Trinity ? In truth, sublime words make not man holy

LESSON IV. A HUMBLE OPINION OF ONE'S SELF.

and just ; but it is a virtuous life that maketh him dear to God. I would rather feel compunction than know how to define it. If thou didst know the whole Bible outwardly, and the sayings of all the philosophers, what would it profit thee without the love of God and His grace? *Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity* (Eccles i. 1), but to love God and serve Him alone. This is the highest wisdom ; by despising the world, to make progress towards the kingdom of heaven.

4. It is vanity, therefore, to seek perishing riches, and to trust in them. Vanity, also, it is to court honours, and to lift up one's self on high. Vanity is it to follow the desires of the flesh, and to desire that for which hereafter there must be a heavy penalty. Vanity is it to wish a long life, and take but little pains about a good life. Vanity is it to attend only to the present life, and not to look forward to the things that are to come. It is vanity to love what is passing away with all speed, and not to be hasting thither where endless joy abideth.

5. Oftentimes call to mind the proverb : *The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor is the ear filled with hearing* (Eccles. i. 8). Study therefore to wean thy heart from love of visible things, and to betake thee to the things unseen ; for they that follow the pleasure of their senses sully conscience and lose the grace of God.

CH. II.—OF HAVING A HUMBLE OPINION OF ONE'S SELF.

1. Every man naturally desireth to know ; but what doth knowledge avail without the fear of God? Truly, a lowly rustic that serveth God is better than a proud philosopher who pondereth the courses of the stars, and neglecteth himself. He that knoweth himself becometh vile to himself, and taketh no delight in the praises of men. If I knew all things that are in the world, and were not in charity, what would it profit me in the sight of God, who will judge me according to my deeds?

2. Cease from overweening desire of knowledge ; because many distractions are found therein, and much delusion. Learned men are very willing to seem wise, and to be called so. Many are the things which it is of little or no profit to the soul to know. And he is very unwise who attendeth earnestly to other things than those which may minister to

LESSON IV. OF INTERIOR CONVERSATION.

his salvation. Many words do not satisfy the soul; but a good life giveth ease to the mind, and a pure conscience affordeth great confidence towards God.

3. The more thou knowest, and the better, so much the heavier will thy judgment be, unless thy life be also more holy. Be not, then, puffed up for any skill or learning thou hast; but rather fear for the knowledge that is given thee. If it seem to thee that thou knowest many things, and understandest them well enough; yet know, that there are many more things of which thou art ignorant. *Be not high-minded*, but rather acknowledge thine ignorance. Why wouldst thou prefer thyself to another, when many more learned than thou may be found, and better skilled in the law? If thou wouldst know and learn anything to the purpose, love to be unknown, and to be esteemed as nothing.

4. This is the highest and most profitable lesson, truly to know and despise ourselves. To think nothing of ourselves, and always to judge well and highly of others, is great wisdom and perfection. If thou shouldst see another openly do wrong, or commit some grievous sins, thou needest not think thyself better; for thou knowest not how long thou mayest be able to persevere in well-doing. We are all frail; but none is more frail than thyself.

BK. II., CH. I.—OF INTERIOR CONVERSATION.

1. *The kingdom of God is within you* (Luke xvii. 21), saith the Lord. *Turn thee unto the Lord with thy whole heart* (Joel ii. 12), and quit this miserable world, and thy soul shall find rest. Learn to despise exterior things, and to give thyself to interior things, and thou shalt see the kingdom of God come within thee. *The kingdom of God is peace and joy in the Holy Ghost* (Rom. xiv. 17); which is not given to the wicked. Christ will come to thee, and discover His consolation to thee, if thou wilt prepare for Him a fit dwelling within thee. All His glory and beauty are from within; and there it is that He taketh delight. Many are His visits to the man of interior life, and sweet His communication with him. His consolation is delightful; plenteous His peace, and His familiarity astonishing beyond measure.

2. Come, then, faithful soul, prepare thy heart for this thy Spouse, so that He may vouchsafe to come to thee and to

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dwell within thee. For so He saith, *If any man love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him; we will come to him, and make our abode with him* (John xiv. 23). Give, therefore, a dwelling-place to Christ, and refuse entrance to all beside. When thou hast Christ, thou art rich, and He is sufficient for thee. He will provide for thee, and be thy faithful procurator in all things; so that thou needest not to trust in men. For men soon change and quickly fail; but *Christ abideth for ever* (John xii. 34), and standeth by us firmly to the end. We must not put any great confidence in frail and mortal man, useful and beloved though he be; nor should we be much grieved if he sometimes oppose and contradict us. They that to-day are with thee, to-morrow may be against thee; and men often change to the contrary side, like the wind. Put thy whole trust in God, and let Him be thy fear and thy love. He will answer for thee, and will graciously do for thee as shall be best. Here thou hast no abiding city; and wherever thou mayest be, thou art a stranger and a pilgrim; nor wilt thou ever have rest, except thou be interiorly united with Christ.

4. Why standest thou looking about thee here, since this is not the place of thy rest? Thy abode must be in heaven, and thou shouldst look upon all earthly things as it were in passing. All things pass away, and thou too along with them. See thou cleave not to them, lest thou be ensnared and perish. Let thy thoughts be with the Most High, and let thy prayers be sent forth unto Christ without ceasing. If thou knowest not how to meditate on high and heavenly things, rest in the passion of Christ, and love to dwell within His sacred wounds. For if thou devoutly betake thyself to the precious wounds of Jesus, thou shalt feel great comfort in tribulation; thou wilt not care much for being slighted by man, and wilt easily bear the speeches of detractors.

5. Christ also was despised by men in the world, and in His greatest need He was forsaken amidst insults by His acquaintance and friends. Christ was willing to suffer and to be despised, and darest thou complain of aught? Christ had enemies and detractors, and wouldst thou have all to be thy friends and benefactors? How shall thy patience be crowned if thou meet with no adversity? If thou wilt suffer no contradiction, how canst thou be the friend of Christ? Endure with Christ and for Christ, if thou wouldst reign with Christ.

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6. If thou hadst once perfectly entered into the interior of Jesus, and tasted a little of His ardent love, then wouldst thou care but little for thy own convenience or inconvenience ; but wouldst rather rejoice at reproach ; for the love of Jesus maketh a man despise himself. A lover of Jesus and the truth, a true interior person, who is free from inordinate affections, can freely turn himself to God, elevate himself above himself in spirit, and enjoy a delightful repose.

7. He whose taste discerneth all things as they are, and not as they are said or accounted to be, is truly a wise man, and taught rather of God than of men. He that knoweth how to walk interiorly, and to make but little account of things external, doth not look for places, nor wait for seasons, to perform exercises of devotion. The man of interior life soon recollecteth himself, because he never wholly poureth forth himself upon exterior things. Exterior labour is no prejudice to him, nor any employment which for a time is necessary ; but as things happen, so he accommodateth himself to them. He who is well disposed and orderly in his interior is not concerned about the strange and perverse doings of men. In proportion as a man draws things to himself, just so much is he hindered and distracted.

8. If all were right within thee, and thou wert well purified, all things would tend to thy good and thy profit. The reason why many things displease thee, and oftentimes disturb thee, is, that thou art not yet perfectly dead to thyself, nor detached from earthly things. There is nothing that so defileth and entangleth the heart of man as an impure attachment to created things. If thou wilt refuse exterior consolations, then shalt thou be able to apply thy mind to heavenly things, and experience frequent interior joy.

LESSON V. OF THE FIRST PURGATION.

LESSON V.

Of the First Purgation, which is of Mortal Sin ; and of the Second, which is of the Affection to Sin : Of the Inconstancy of our Heart, and of directing our Final Intention to God : That he who loves God relishes Him above all things and in all things.

TEXTS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.—Matt. xvi. 24.

Blessed are the clean of heart : for they shall see God.—Matt. v. 8.

If you be the children of Abraham, do the works of Abraham.—John viii. 39.

Jesus said to him : No man putting his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God. — Luke ix. 62.

For I am delighted with the law of God, according to the inward man : but I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind, and captivating me in the law of sin, that is in my members. Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death ? The grace of God by Jesus Christ our Lord.—Rom. vii. 22.

If any man love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and will make our abode with him.—John xiv. 23.

These words intimate to you—1, That in order to follow Christ it is necessary to renounce not only all external things which may displease Him, but also everything within us which we know would offend His eyes ; 2, that only the clean of heart receive divine consolations ; 3, that penance for past trespasses must be bravely undertaken ; 4, that the name of Christians and children of the Cross is given to us in vain, unless by deeds we prove that we are what we are called ; 5, that we must keep straight on for eternity, and not look back by thinking of things temporal ; 6, that the dangers and temptations of life must be borne with serene mind, because the holiest have not been exempt, and God's

LESSON V. OF THE FIRST PURGATION.

grace is sufficient for us in all we have to do or suffer ;
7, lastly, that he who loves God in deed and truth, even in
this world is rewarded. Listen now to your two masters.

INTRODUCTION—PT. I., CH. VI.—OF THE FIRST PURGATION, WHICH IS THAT OF MORTAL SIN.

1. The first purgation which ought to be made is that of sin : the means to make it is the Sacrament of Penance. Seek the most able Confessor you can ; take in hand some one of the little books which have been composed for the helping of consciences to make an entire and good confession, *Granada, Bruno, Arias, and Augerius* ; read them carefully, and observe from point to point in what you have offended, beginning from the time you had the use of reason to the present hour. If you distrust your memory write what you have observed, and having so prepared and gathered together the offensive humours of your conscience, abhor and reject them with the greatest grief and contrition your heart can conceive, well pondering these four things—That by sin you have lost the grace of God ; forsaken your part in Heaven ; incurred the perpetual pains of Hell ; and renounced the eternal love of God.

2. You see, *Philothea*, that I speak of a general confession of the whole life, which, though I admit indeed not to be always absolutely necessary, yet I consider withal that it will be exceeding profitable to you in this beginning ; and therefore I earnestly advise it. It often happens that the ordinary confessions of those who live a common and vulgar life are full of great defects ; for many times they do not prepare themselves at all, or very little, neither have they sufficient contrition ; nay, it too frequently happens that they confess with a tacit will of returning to sin, because they are not willing to avoid the occasions of sinning nor make use of the means necessary to amendment of life, and in all these cases a general confession is requisite to secure the soul. But besides, a general confession recalls us to the knowledge of ourselves ; it stirs us up to a wholesome shame and confusion for our life past, causes us to admire the mercy of God, who has so long and so patiently expected us. It quiets our hearts, refreshes our spirits, excites in us good resolutions ; gives occasion to our ghostly

LESSON V. OF THE SECOND PURGATION.

Father to prescribe us advices more suitable to our condition ; and opens our hearts that we may with more confidence express ourselves in our ensuing confessions. Speaking, then, of a general renewing of our hearts and an entire conversion of our souls to God by means of a devout life, it seems reasonable to me, *Philothea*, that I advise thee to this general confession.

INTRODUCTION—CH. VII.—OF THE SECOND PURGATION, WHICH IS THAT OF THE AFFECTION TO SIN.

1. All the Israelites departed in effect out of the land of *Egypt*, but they did not all depart in affection ; wherefore in the wilderness many of them repined that they had not the onions and fleshpots of *Egypt*. So there are penitents who in effect forsake sin, but not in affection, that is, they purpose to sin no more, but it is with a certain reluctancy of heart to abstain from the mischievous delights of sin. Their heart renounces sin and avoids it, but it ceases not to look often back that way, as *Lot's* wife did towards *Sodom*. They abstain from sin as sick men do from melons, which they forbear because the physician threatens them with death if they eat them ; but they are troubled to refrain ; they talk of them, and are unwilling to believe them hurtful, they would at least smell them, and account those happy who may eat them. So these weak and faint-hearted penitents abstain from sin for a time, but to their grief ; they would willingly sin and not be damned ; they speak of sin with a certain satisfaction and relish, and think those without remorse who commit it.

2. A man, resolved to avenge himself, will change his mind in confession ; but soon after will be found among his friends, taking pleasure to speak of his quarrel, and saying, *Had it not been for the fear of God I would have done this or that : O how hard is God's law in this point of forgiving ! I would to God that revenge were lawful.* Ah ! who sees not that although this poor man be without sin he retains notwithstanding the affection to sin, and being out of *Egypt* in effect, he is there yet in desire, longing after the garlic and onions he was wont to eat, as doth a woman who, having detested her unlawful intimacies, is pleased nevertheless in being courted and frequented ? Alas ! in how great danger are such people !

LESSON V. THE INCONSTANCY OF OUR HEART.

3. O *Philothea*, since you are willing to undertake a devout life, you must not only forsake sin itself, but also cleanse your heart from all feelings that have their source in sin. For, besides the danger of relapsing, these wretched affections will perpetually waste and deject your spirit, so that you will not be able to do good works cheerfully, diligently, and frequently, in which, nevertheless, consists the very essence of devotion. Those souls which are out of the state of sin, but still retain their affections to sin, may, in my opinion, be likened to maidens who are pale and languid; they are not really sick, yet are all their actions distempered; they eat without relish, sleep without rest, laugh without delight, and rather drag themselves along than walk. Just so do these souls do good, but with so great a spiritual weariness that it takes away all the grace from their good works, which are few in number and small in effect.

IMITATION—BK. II., CH. XXXIII.—OF THE INCONSTANCY OF OUR HEART, AND OF DIRECTING OUR FINAL INTENTION TO GOD.

1. Son, trust not to thy feeling; whatever it may be now, it will quickly be changed into something else. As long as thou livest, thou art subject to change, even against thy will, so as to be sometimes joyful, at other times sad; now at peace, again troubled; at one time devout, at another indevout; sometimes fervent, at other times sluggish; one day heavy, another elated. But he that is wise and well-instructed in spirit stands above all these changes, not minding what he feels in himself, nor on what side the wind of instability bloweth; but that the whole bent of his soul may be made conducive towards the due and wished-for end. For thus can he continue one and the self-same without being shaken, directing through all this variety of events the single eye of his intention unflinchingly towards Me.

2. And the purer the eye of thy intention is, with so much greater constancy wilt thou pass through these diverse storms. But in many the eye of pure intention is dark; for men quickly look towards something delightful as it comes in their way, and seldom will you find any one altogether free from all blemish of self-seeking. So of old the Jews came into Bethania, to Martha and Mary, *not for Jesus' sake only,*

LESSON V. OF LOVING GOD ABOVE ALL THINGS.

but that they might see Lazarus also (John xii. 9). The eye of the intention must therefore be purified, that it may be single and right ; and it must be directed unto Me, beyond all other objects that come between.

CH. XXXIV.—THAT HE THAT LOVETH GOD RELISHETH HIM ABOVE ALL THINGS AND IN ALL THINGS.

1. Behold my God and my all ! What would I more, and what greater happiness can I desire ? O sweet and savoury words ! but to him that loveth the word, not the world, nor the things that are in the world. My God and my all ! To one that understandeth, sufficient is said ; to one that loveth, to repeat it often is delightful. For when Thou art present, all things yield delight ; but when Thou art absent, all things grow loathsome. Thou makest a tranquil heart, great peace, and festive joy. Thou makest us to think well of all things, and in all things to praise Thee ; nor can anything without Thee afford any lasting pleasure ; but if it is to be agreeable and well-pleasing to us, Thy grace must be present, and it must be seasoned with the savour of Thy wisdom.

2. To whom Thou impartest a relish, what will not be rightly agreeable to him ? And to him that relisheth Thee not, what can ever yield any true delight ? But the wise of the world and the wise according to the flesh are destitute of Thy wisdom ; for in the former is found much vanity, and in the latter death. But they that follow Thee, by the contempt of worldly things and the mortification of the flesh are found to be wise indeed ; for they are translated from vanity to truth, from the flesh to the spirit. Such as these have a relish of God ; and whatever good is found in creatures, they refer it all to the praise of their Maker. But great, yea very great, is the difference between the relish of the Creator and the creature, of eternity and of time, of light uncreated and of light enlightened.

3. O Light eternal ! transcending all created lights, dart forth that light from above which may penetrate all the secret recesses of my heart. Cleanse, cheer, enlighten, and enliven my spirit with its powers, that with joyful ecstasy it may cleave to Thee. Oh, when will this blessed and desirable hour come, that Thou mayest fill me with Thy presence, and become to me *all in all* ! (Eph. i. 23, and Col. iii. 11).

LESSON V. OF LOVING GOD ABOVE ALL THINGS.

So long as this is not granted, my joy will not be full. As yet, alas! the old man is living in me; he is not wholly crucified, he is not perfectly dead. He still lusteth strongly against the spirit; he wageth war within me, neither suffereth he the kingdom of the soul to be quiet.

4. *But Thou, who rulest over the power of the sea, and assuagest the motion of its waves, arise and help me (Ps. xliii. 28). Scatter Thou the nations that delight in wars; crush them in Thy might (Ps. lxvii. 32). Show forth, I beseech Thee, Thy wonderful works, and let Thy right hand be glorified (Ps. lviii. 12; Eccli. xvii. 7). For there is no hope nor refuge for me but in Thee, O Lord my God (Eccli. xxxvi. 3; Esth. xiv. 14).*

LESSON VI. OF THE SECOND PURGATION.

LESSON VI.

How to Effect this Purification of the Affection to Sin :
Of Compunction : Of the Confession of our own In-
firmity : Of Rest in God above all Goods and Gifts.

TEXTS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

A little leaven corrupteth the whole lump? Purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new paste, as you are unleavened. For Christ our pasch is sacrificed. Therefore let us feast, not with the old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.—1 Cor. v. 6.

But Zacheus standing said to the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor : and if I have wronged any man of anything, I restore him fourfold.—Luke xix. 8.

Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before thee ; I am not now worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants : Bring forth quickly the first robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet : and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat and make merry : because this my son was dead, and is come to life again : was lost, and is found.—Luke xv. 21.

Therefore, if you be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God : mind the things that are above, not the things that are upon the earth. For you are dead ; and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ shall appear, who is your life, then you also shall appear with him in glory. Mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth.—Col. iii. 1.

Thomas answered, and said to him : My Lord, and my God. Jesus saith to him : Because thou hast seen me, Thomas, thou hast believed : blessed are they that have not seen and have believed.—John xx. 28.

These words enforce diligent application to the work of interior purification, whereby our old man with his deeds is utterly put off. The example of Zacheus shows what the soul perfectly converted to God is ready to do, and how promptly it acts. The benignity of our Heavenly Father towards sinners who return to Him will urge you to conceive a true

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sorrow for having offended so good a God. Then you see how a soul risen from the death of sin should behave. And, lastly, by the example of S. Thomas, you are taught how great is the goodness of God to those who love Him, what help He gives them, and how faith and trust make those blessed who practise them aright. We will now see what our masters teach upon the same subject.

INTRODUCTION—PT. I., CH. VIII.—OF THE MEANS TO MAKE THIS SECOND PURGATION.

1. Now the first means and foundation of this second purgation is a lively and strong apprehension of the great prejudice sin brings us, which causes us to enter into a deep and vehement contrition. For, as contrition, so it be true, be it never so little, especially being joined with the virtue of the Sacraments, cleanses us sufficiently from sin; so, when it is great and fervent, it cleanses us from all affections which depend upon sin. A weak hatred makes us loath and avoid the company of him we hate; but if it be a mortal and violent hatred, we not only fly and abhor him, but we detest the conversation even of his friends and kindred; yea, we hate his very picture and whatsoever belongs to him. So, when the penitent hates his sin only with a light but true contrition, he resolves indeed to sin no more; but when he abhors it with a powerful and vigorous contrition, he then not only detests the sin, but all the affections, consequences, and occasions of sin.

2. We must then, *Philothea*, enlarge our contrition and repentance as much as is possible, to the end it may extend to the least and meanest consequence of sin. *S. Mary Magdalen*, in her conversion so utterly lost the contentment and pleasure she had taken in sin, that she never more thought of it. *David* protested he not only abhorred sin, but also all the ways and paths of it. In this point consists the renewing of the soul, which the same prophet compares to the growing young of an eagle.

3. Now to gain this apprehension and contrition, you must diligently employ yourself in these following meditations, which, being well practised, will, by the help of God's grace, root out of your heart all sin, with its principal affections; and, indeed, it is to this end that I have framed

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them. You shall use them in order, as I have placed them, taking but one for each day, and that, if it may be, in the morning, which is the most proper time for all spiritual exercises, to the end that you may ruminare and meditate on them the rest of the day. But if you are not yet accustomed to meditation, observe that which shall be said in the Second Part.

(Remember it is to the will itself that the grace of contrition is imparted; and therefore the vehement sorrow here spoken of does not consist in sensible feelings of grief and in tears, which are not dependent on the will. And in the same way, the holy Doctor does not mean that the mind can free itself from every thought of sin, but that it never thinks of sin with complacency.)

IMITATION—BK. I., CH. XXI.—OF COMPUNCTION OF HEART.

1. If thou wouldst make any progress, keep thyself in the fear of God and be not too free: curb all thy senses under discipline, and give not thyself up to foolish mirth. Give thyself to compunction of heart, and thou shalt find devotion. Compunction opens the way to much good, which dissipation is wont quickly to lose. It is wonderful that any man can ever abandon himself wholly to joy in this life when he considereth and weigheth his exile and the many dangers of his soul.

2. Through levity of heart and neglect of our defects we feel not the sorrows of the soul, and we often vainly laugh when in all reason we should weep. There is no true liberty nor profitable joy but in the fear of God with a good conscience. Happy is the man that can cast away all the hindrance of distraction, and recollect himself in the unity of holy compunction. Happy the man who casteth away from him whatever may stain or burden his conscience. Strive manfully; habit is overcome by habit. If thou canst let men alone, they will let thee alone to do whatever thou hast to do.

3. Busy not thyself in matters which appertain to others; and entangle not thyself in the affairs of the great. Have always an eye upon thyself in the first place, and admonish thyself preferably to all thy dearest friends. If thou hast not the favour of men, be not afflicted; but let it seriously

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concern thee that thou dost not carry thyself so well and circumspectly as a servant of God and a devout religious ought to do. Oftentimes it is better and safer for a man not to have many consolations in this life, especially such as are according to the flesh. Still, that we have not Divine comfort and seldom experience it, is our own fault, because we seek not compunction of heart, and do not wholly renounce vain and outward satisfactions.

4. Know that thou art unworthy of heavenly consolation, but rather deservest much tribulation. When a man hath perfect compunction, then the whole world is burdensome and distasteful to him. A good man findeth abundant matter for sorrow and tears. For whether he considereth himself or thinketh of his neighbour, he knoweth that no man liveth here below without tribulation. And the more strictly he considereth himself, the greater is his sorrow. The subjects of just sorrow and interior compunction are our sins and vices, in which we are so enwrapt, that we are seldom able to fix our mind on heavenly things.

5. Didst thou think oftener of thy death than of a long life, no doubt thou wouldst more earnestly amend thyself. Didst thou also ponder well in thy heart the future pains of hell or purgatory, methinks thou wouldst bear willingly labour and sorrow, and fear no kind of austerity. But because these things reach not the heart, and we still love the things that flatter us, therefore we remain cold and very slothful. Oftentimes it is our want of spirit that maketh the wretched body complain for so slight cause. Pray, therefore, humbly to the Lord to give unto thee the spirit of compunction, and say with the Prophet, *Feed me, O Lord, with the food of tears, and give me to drink of tears in measure* (Ps. lxxix. 6).

BK. III., CH. XX.—OF THE CONFESSION OF OUR OWN INFIRMITY, AND OF THE MISERIES OF THIS LIFE.

1. *I will confess against myself my injustice: I will confess to Thee, O Lord, my infirmity* (Ps. xxxi. 5). It is oftentimes a small thing which casteth me down and troubleth me. I purpose to behave myself valiantly; but when even a small temptation cometh, I am brought into great straits. It is sometimes a very trifling thing whence a grievous temptation proceedeth. And when I think myself somewhat safe, then,

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when I least apprehend it, I find myself almost overcome by a light blast.

2. Behold, then, O Lord, my abjection and frailty, which are every way known to Thee. *Have pity on me, and draw me out of the mire, that I stick not fast therein* (Ps. xxv. 11; Ps. lxxviii. 15), and that I may not be utterly cast down for ever. This it is which often drives me back, and confounds Me in Thy sight, that I am so subject to fall, and so powerless to resist my passions. And although I do not altogether consent, yet their assaults are troublesome and grievous to me; and I am weary of thus always living in conflict. Hence my infirmity is made known to me; because abominable imaginations much more easily rush in upon me than they can be cast out again.

3. Oh, that Thou, most mighty God of Israel, zealous lover of faithful souls, wouldst regard the labour and sorrow of Thy servant, and stand by him in all his undertakings! Strengthen me with heavenly fortitude, lest the old man, the miserable flesh, not fully subdued to the spirit, prevail and get the upper hand; against which we must fight so long as we breathe in this most wretched life. Alas! what kind of life is this, where afflictions and miseries are never wanting, where all things are full of snares and enemies! For when one tribulation or temptation is gone, another cometh; yea, and whilst the first conflict still lasteth many others come on, and those unexpected.

4. And how is it possible that the life of man can be loved, which hath so great bitterness, and is subject to so many calamities and miseries? How, even, can it be called life, which generateth so many deaths and plagues? And yet it is loved, and many seek their delight in it. The world is censured as deceitful and vain; and yet it is with reluctance abandoned, for the concupiscence of the flesh too much prevails. Some things draw us to love the world; others to despise it. *The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life* (1 John ii. 16), draw us to the love of the world; but the pains and miseries which justly follow these things breed a hatred and loathing of it.

5. Yet, alas! evil delights prevail over a mind that is given to the world, and *under thorns she imagineth there are delights* (Job xxx. 7); because she hath neither seen nor tasted the sweetness of God nor the internal pleasure of virtue. But

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such as perfectly despise the world, and study to live to God under holy discipline, are not unconscious of that divine sweetness promised to those who forsake all; and they clearly see both how grievously the world is mistaken, and in how many ways it is imposed upon.

CH. XXI.—THAT WE ARE TO REST IN GOD ABOVE ALL GOODS AND GIFTS.

1. Above all things, and in all things, do thou, my soul, rest always in the Lord, for He is the eternal rest of the saints. Give me, O most sweet and loving Jesus, to repose in Thee above all things created; above all health and beauty; above all glory and honour; above all power and dignity; above all knowledge and subtlety; above all riches and arts; above all joy and gladness; above all fame and praise; above all sweetness and consolation; above all hope and promise; above all merit and desire; above all gifts and presents that Thou canst give and infuse; above all joy and jubilation that the mind can contain or feel; in fine, above all Angels and Archangels, and all the host of heaven; above all things visible and invisible; and above all that is not Thee, my God.

2. For Thou, O Lord my God, art supremely good above all things. Thou alone most powerful: Thou alone most full and most sufficient; Thou alone most sweet and most full of consolation. Thou alone most beautiful and most loving; Thou alone most noble and most glorious above all things; in whom are all that are both good and perfect, and always have been, and always will be. And therefore all is too little and insufficient, whatever Thou bestowest upon me, that is not Thyself; and whatever Thou revealest to me concerning Thyself, or promisest, as long as I see Thee not, nor fully possess Thee; because, indeed, my heart cannot truly rest, nor be entirely contented till it rest in Thee, and transcend every gift and every creature.

3. O my most beloved Spouse, Christ Jesus, most pure Lover, Lord of the whole creation! who will give me the wings of true liberty to fly and repose in Thee? Oh, when shall it be fully granted me to be free, and to see how sweet Thou art, O Lord my God? When shall I fully collect myself in Thee, that through Thy love I may not feel myself, but Thee alone, above all feeling and measure, in a manner not known to all?

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But now I often lament, and bear with grief my unhappiness. Because many evils happen in this vale of miseries, which frequently disturb me, afflict me, and cast a cloud over me; often do they hinder and distract me, allure and entangle me, so that I can neither have free access to Thee, nor enjoy Thy sweet embraces, which are ever present to blessed spirits. Oh, let my sighs move Thee, and this my manifold desolation upon earth.

4. O Jesus, brightness of eternal glory, comfort of the pilgrim soul, with Thee is my mouth without voice, and my silence speaketh to Thee. How long doth my Lord delay to come? Let Him come to me, His poor servant, and make me joyful. Let Him stretch forth His hand and deliver me, wretched, from all anguish. Come, oh, come; for without Thee I can never have one joyful day nor hour; for Thou art my joy, and without Thee my table is empty. I am miserable, and in a manner imprisoned and weighed down with fetters, till with the light of Thy presence Thou comfortest me, givest me liberty, and showest me Thy friendly countenance.

5. Let others seek, instead of Thee, whatever else they please; but nothing else meanwhile doth or shall please me but Thou, my God, my hope, my eternal salvation. I will not hold my peace, nor will I cease to pray, till Thy grace return, and Thou sayest interiorly to me:

6. Behold, here I am; behold, I come to thee, because thou hast called Me. Thy tears, and the desire of thy soul, thy humiliation and contrition of heart, have inclined and brought Me to thee.

7. And I said, O Lord, I have called upon Thee, and have desired to enjoy Thee, and am prepared to reject all things for Thy sake. For Thou didst first stir me up that I should seek Thee. Be Thou therefore blessed, O Lord, who hast showed this goodness to Thy servant, according to the multitude of Thy mercies. What more hath Thy servant to say in Thy presence but to humble himself exceedingly before Thee, mindful always of his own iniquity and vileness? For there is none like unto Thee amongst all the wonders of heaven and earth. Thy works are exceedingly good, Thy judgments true, and by Thy providence all things are ruled. Praise, therefore, and glory be to Thee, O Wisdom of the Father; let my tongue, my soul, and all things created, join in praising Thee and blessing Thee.

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LESSON VII.

Of our Creation, and the End for which we are Created : Of not Searching into High Matters, nor Scrutinising the Secret Judgments of God : That all Hope and Confidence is to be fixed in God alone.

TEXTS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

Because that which is known of God is manifest in them. For God hath manifested it unto them. For the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made : his eternal power also and divinity : so that they are inexcusable.—Rom. i. 19.

For the expectation of the creature waiteth for the revelation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him that made it subject, in hope : because the creature also itself shall be delivered from the servitude of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. For we know that every creature groaneth, and is in labour even till now.—Rom. viii. 19.

Thou hast forsaken the God that begot thee, and hast forgotten the Lord that created thee. The Lord saw, and was moved to wrath : because his own sons and daughters provoked him.—Deut. xxxii. 18.

O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God ! How incomprehensible are his judgments, and how unsearchable his ways ! For who hath known the mind of the Lord ? Or who hath been his counsellor ? Or who hath first given to him, and recompense shall be made him ? For of him, and by him, and in him, are all things : to him be glory for ever, Amen.—Rom. xi. 33.

For I say, through the grace that is given me, to all that are among you, not to be more wise than it behoveth to be wise, but to be wise unto sobriety, and according as God hath divided to every one the measure of faith.—Rom. xii. 3.

And Moses indeed was faithful in all his house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be said : but Christ as the Son in his own house : which house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and glory of hope unto the end.—Heb. iii. 5.

From these words it follows :—1, That all creatures join in

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bearing witness against him who withholds from his God, the supreme Creator of all, the reverence and worship due to Him ; 2, that he who misuses creatures, against the end for which God made them, does them culpable violence ; 3, that your forgetfulness of God ought to cause you more shame than forgetting your own father ; 4, that the human spirit must be kept humble and restrained, lest it try to search into the secret counsels of God, or presume on its own understanding ; 5, lastly, that all things should be expected from Christ as Master in the Father's house, who will abundantly provide what is needed if we place all hope and trust in Him. Now consider the words of our two masters.

INTRODUCTION—PT. I., CH. IX.—THE FIRST MEDITATION OF OUR CREATION.

Preparation.—1. Place yourself in the presence of God.
2. Beseech Him to inspire you.

Considerations.

1. Consider that so many years past you were not yet in the world, and that your being was a mere nothing. Where were we, O my soul, at that time? The world had then lasted so many ages, and yet there was no news of us.

2. God has framed you out of this nothing, to make you what you are, merely of His own goodness, having no need at all of you.

3. Consider the being that God has given you ; for it is the highest in this visible world, capable of eternal life and of being perfectly united with His Divine Majesty.

Affections and Resolutions.

1. Humble yourself exceedingly in the presence of God, saying in your heart with the Psalmist: *O Lord, I am in Thy sight as a mere nothing, and how hadst Thou remembrance of me to create me?* (Ps. xxxviii. 8). Alas ! my soul, thou wert engulfed in that ancient nothing ; and hadst yet been there, had not God drawn thee hence : and what couldst thou have done remaining there ?

2. *Give thanks to God.* O my great and good Creator,
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how am I obliged to Thee, since Thou hast vouchsafed to take me out of this nothing, and, by Thy great mercy, to make me what I am! What can I do to bless Thy holy name as I ought, and to render due thanks to Thy inestimable goodness?

3. *Confound yourself.* But, alas! my Creator, instead of uniting myself to Thee by love and service, I am become rebellious by my inordinate affections, wandering and straying from Thee to unite myself to sin; valuing Thy goodness no more than if Thou hadst not been my Creator.

4. *Prostrate yourself before God.* O my soul! know that our Lord is thy God; it is He that has made thee, and not thou thyself. O God, I am the work of Thy hands.

5. I will no more henceforth take pleasure in myself, since of myself I am nothing. Why dost thou magnify thyself, O dust and ashes? yea, rather O very nothing, why dost thou exalt thyself? To humble, therefore, myself, I resolve to do such and such things, to suffer such and such disgraces: I will change my life, henceforth follow my Creator, and esteem myself honoured with that condition and being which He has given me, employing it entirely in obedience to His will, by such means as shall be taught me, and as I shall learn from my ghostly Father.

Conclusion.

1. *Give thanks to God.* Bless thy God, O my soul, and let all within me praise His Holy Name (Ps. cii. 1), for His goodness has drawn me, and His mercy has created me out of nothing.

2. *Offer.* O my God, I offer to Thee the being which Thou hast given me, from my heart I dedicate and consecrate it to Thee.

3. *Pray.* O God, strengthen me in these affections and resolutions. O Holy Virgin, recommend them to the mercy of thy Son, with all for whom I ought to pray, &c. *Pater, Ave, Credo.*

4. After your prayer walk awhile, and out of these considerations which you have made gather a little nosegay of devotion to smell at all the rest of the day.

LESSON VII. OF THE END OF OUR CREATION.

CH. X., MEDITATION II. — OF THE END FOR WHICH WE WERE CREATED.

Preparation.—1. Place yourself in the presence of God.
2. Beseech Him to inspire you.

Considerations.

1. God has not placed you in this world for any need He has of you, who are altogether unprofitable to Him, but only to exercise His goodness in you by giving you His grace and glory. And, to that end, He has enriched you with an understanding to know Him; with a memory to be mindful of Him; a will to love Him; and imagination to represent to yourself His benefits; eyes to behold His wondrous works; a tongue to praise Him, and so of the other faculties.

2. Being created and put into the world with this intention, all actions contrary to it are to be avoided and rejected, and those which conduce not to this end ought to be condemned as vain and superfluous.

3. Consider the wretchedness of worldlings, who never think of this, but live as though they believed themselves created to no other end than to build houses, plant trees, heap up riches, and such like fooleries.

Affections and Resolutions.

1. *Confound yourself, reproaching your soul with her misery, which was formerly so great, as that she hath seldom or never considered this.* Alas! shall you say, how did I employ my thoughts, O God, when I placed them not upon Thee? What did I remember, when I forget Thee? What did I love, when I loved not Thee? Alas! I ought to have fed upon truth, and I have glutted myself with vanity; I have served the world, which was created but to serve me.

2. *Detest your past life.* I renounce you, O vain thoughts and unprofitable fancies. I abjure you, O frivolous and hateful remembrances. O unfaithful and disloyal friendships, degrading and wretched slaveries, ungrateful contentments and irksome pleasures, I abhor you.

3. *Return to God.* And Thou, O my God, my Saviour, Thou shalt be from henceforth the sole object of my thoughts. I will no more apply my mind to cogitations which may be

LESSON VII. OF NOT SEARCHING INTO HIGH MATTERS.

displeasing to Thee. My memory shall entertain itself all the days of my life with the greatness of Thy clemency, so mercifully exercised on me. Thou shalt be the delight of my heart and the sweetness of my affections.

4. Ah ! such and such trash and trifles to which I applied myself, such and such unprofitable employments in which I fondly squandered away my days, such and such affections which captivated my heart, shall henceforth be a horror to my thoughts ; and to this end, I will use such and such good remedies.

Conclusion.

1. *Thank God, who made you, for so excellent an end.* Thou hast created me, O Lord, for Thyself and for an eternal enjoyment of Thy incomprehensible glory. O when shall I be worthy of it ? when shall I bless Thee according to my duty ?

2. *Offer.* I offer to Thee, O my dear Creator, all these affections and resolutions with all my heart and soul.

3. *Pray.* I beseech thee, O God, to accept these my desires and vows, and to give Thy holy benediction to my soul, to the end that it may accomplish them through the merits of Thy Blessed Son's Blood shed upon the Cross, &c. *Pater, Ave, Credo.* Make your little nosegay of devotion, as aforesaid.

IMITATION—BK. III., CH. LVIII. — OF NOT SEARCHING INTO HIGH MATTERS, NOR SCRUTINISING THE SECRET JUDGMENTS OF GOD.

1. Son, beware of disputing about high matters and the hidden judgments of God : why this man is so forsaken, and that other raised to so great grace ; or why this person is so much afflicted, and that so highly exalted. Such things exceed all human comprehension, nor is any reason or disputation competent to investigate the Divine judgments. When, therefore, the enemy suggesteth such to thee, or certain curious men inquire into them, answer thou with the prophet, *Thou art just, O Lord, and Thy judgment is right* (Ps. cxviii. 137). And again : *The judgments of the Lord are true, justified in themselves* (Ps. xviii. 10). My judgments are to be feared, not to be discussed, because they are incomprehensible to human understanding.

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2. In like manner, do not be inquisitive or dispute concerning the merits of the Saints ; as to who is more holy than another, or who greater in the kingdom of heaven. Such questions oftentimes breed strifes and unprofitable contentions, and nourish also pride and vainglory ; whence arise envies and dissensions, while one man proudly prefers this Saint, and another that. Now, to wish to know and to search into such matters is of no profit, but rather displeaseth the Saints : for *I am not the God of dissension, but of peace* (1 Cor. xiv. 33), which peace consisteth rather in true humility than in self-exaltation.

3. Some by a zeal of preference are attracted with greater affection toward these or those Saints ; but this affection is rather human than Divine. I am He who made all the Saints ; I gave them grace, I have granted them glory. I know the merits of each ; I prevented them with the blessings of My sweetness. I foreknew My beloved ones before all ages. I chose them out of the world ; they did not first choose Me. I called them by grace, I attracted them by mercy ; I brought them safe through many temptations ; *I poured into them abundant consolations* (Ps. iv. 27). I gave them perseverance ; I have crowned their patience.

4. I know the first and the last ; I embrace all with an inestimable love. I am to be praised in all My Saints ; I am always to be blessed above all, and to be honoured in each, whom I have so gloriously magnified and predestinated, without any foregoing merits of their own. He, therefore, that despiseth one of the least of My Saints, honoureth not the greatest ; for I have made both little and great. And he that derogateth from any one of the Saints, derogateth also from Me, and from all others in the kingdom of heaven. They are all one through the bond of love ; they have the same thoughts, the same will, and all love themselves each in the other.

5. And, moreover, what is more exalted still, they love Me more than themselves and their own merits. For, rapt above themselves, and drawn away altogether from love of self, they live absorbed in the love of Me, in whom also they rest by a happy fruition. Nor is there anything that can turn them away or depress them ; for they who are full of the eternal truth burn with the fire of unquenchable charity. Therefore, let carnal and animal men, who know

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not how to love anything but their own selfish gratifications, forbear to dispute of the state of the Saints. They take away and add according to their own inclination, not as it pleaseth the Eternal Truth.

6. In many it is ignorance, more especially on the part of such as, being but little enlightened, seldom know how to love any one with a perfect spiritual love. They are as yet much inclined to such or such by a natural affection and human friendship; and as they are habituated with regard to things below, so they conceive the like imaginations of the things of heaven. But the distance is incomparable between the notions which the imperfect conceive and those which the illumined behold through revelation from above.

7. Take heed, therefore, son, of treating too curiously of those things which exceed thy knowledge; but make it rather thy business and aim that thou mayest be found, though even the least, in the kingdom of God. And if any one could know who were the holier or the greater in the kingdom of heaven, what would this knowledge profit him, unless he should from this knowledge humble himself in My sight, and rise to the greater praise of My name? That man is much more acceptable to God who thinketh of the greatness of his own sins, how little he is advanced in virtue, and at how great a distance he is from the perfection of the Saints, than he who disputeth which of them is the greater, which the less. It is better to supplicate the Saints in devout prayers and tears, and with a humble mind to implore their glorious suffrages, than by a vain inquisitiveness to search into their secrets.

[These words should be applied to other dangerous curiosity of the mind, such as that which ventures to reason about the mystery of predestination.]

8. They are well and perfectly contented, if men would but be contented and bridle their vain discourses. They glory not in their own merits; for they ascribe nothing of goodness to themselves, but all to Me, because I gave all to them out of My infinite charity. They are filled with so great a love of the Deity, and with joy so overflowing, that there is nothing wanting to their glory, nor can anything be wanting to their felicity. All the Saints, the higher they are in glory, the more humble they are in themselves, the nearer to Me, and the more beloved by Me. And therefore thou hast it writ-

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ten that *they cast down their crowns before God, and fell on their faces before the Lamb, and adored Him that liveth for ever and ever* (Apoc. iv. 10, v. 14).

9. Many inquire *who is the greater in the kingdom of God* (Matt. xviii. 1), who themselves know not whether they shall be worthy to be numbered among the least. It is a great thing to be even the least in heaven where all are great, because all shall be called, and shall be, the children of God. *The least shall be as a thousand, and the sinner of a hundred years shall die* (Isa. lx. 22, lxxv. 20). For when the disciples asked *who was the greatest in the kingdom of heaven*, they received this answer: *Unless you be converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little one, he is the greater in the kingdom of heaven* (Matt. xviii. 3).

10. Woe to them who disdain to humble themselves willingly with the children; for the lowly gate of the heavenly kingdom will not admit them to enter. *Woe also to the rich, who have their consolation here* (Luke vi. 24), for when the poor enter into the kingdom of God, they shall stand lamenting without. *Rejoice, ye humble, and be glad, ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God, if at least you walk in the truth* (Matt. v. 3; 3 Kings ii. 4).

CH. LIX.—THAT ALL HOPE AND CONFIDENCE IS TO BE FIXED IN GOD ALONE.

1. Lord, what is my confidence which I have in this life, or what is my greatest solace amongst all the things that appear under heaven? Is it not Thou, my Lord God, *whose mercies are without number?* (Ps. xxiv. 6). Where was it ever well to me without Thee, or when was it ever ill with me when Thou wast present? I had rather be poor for Thy sake than rich without Thee. I prefer rather to sojourn upon earth with Thee than to possess heaven without Thee. Where Thou art there is heaven, and there is death and hell where Thou art not. Thou art all my desire, and therefore I must needs sigh after Thee, and cry and pray. In short, I cannot fully confide in any one to bring me seasonable help in my necessities, save only in Thee, my God. Thou art my hope, my confidence, my comforter, and in all things most faithful.

2. *All seek the things that are their own* (Phil. ii. 21); Thou

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designest only my salvation and profit, and turnest all things to my good. And although Thou expose me to various temptations and adversities, yet all this Thou ordainest for my good, who art wont to prove Thy beloved servants in a thousand ways. Under which probation Thou oughtest not less to be loved and praised than if Thou didst replenish me with heavenly consolations.

3. In Thee, therefore, O Lord God, do I place all my hope and refuge ; on Thee I cast all my tribulation and anguish ; for I find all to be weak and inconstant out of Thee. For neither will many friends be of service to me, nor can powerful auxiliaries assist me, nor wise counsellors give me a profitable answer, nor the books of the learned give me consolation, nor any precious substance ransom me, nor any secret place secure me, if Thou Thyself do not assist, help, strengthen, comfort, instruct, and guard me.

4. For all things which seem to be for our peace and for our happiness, when Thou art absent, are nothing, and contribute nothing to our felicity. Thou, therefore, art the fountain of all good, the height of life, and the depth of wisdom ; and to trust in Thee above all things is the strongest comfort of Thy servants. *Unto Thee do I lift up mine eyes ; in Thee, O my God, Father of mercies, I put my trust* (Ps. xxiv. 1). Bless and sanctify my soul with heavenly benediction that it may be made Thy holy habitation and the seat of Thy eternal glory ; and let nothing be found in the temple of Thy dignity that may offend the eyes of Thy Majesty. *According to the greatness of Thy goodness and the multitude of Thy tender mercies, look down upon me* (Ps. lxviii. 17), and give ear to the prayer of Thy poor servant, a far distant exile in the region of the shadow of death. Protect and preserve the soul of Thy poor servant amidst so many dangers of this corruptible life, and direct him by Thy accompanying grace along the path of peace to the everlasting light. Amen.

LESSON VIII. OF THE BENEFITS OF GOD.

LESSON VIII.

Of the Benefits of God, and the Remembrance of them : Of Sin : That a Man should not think himself worthy of Consolation, but deserving of Stripes.

TEXTS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, in Christ. As he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and unspotted in his sight in charity. Who had predestinated us unto the adoption of children through Jesus Christ unto himself; according to the purpose of his will: unto the praise of the glory of his grace, in which he hath graced us in his beloved Son. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the remission of sins, according to the riches of his grace, which hath super-abounded in us in all wisdom and prudence, that he might make known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in him, in the dispensation of the fulness of times, to re-establish all things in Christ, that are in heaven and on earth, in him: in whom we also are called by lot, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things according to the counsel of his will: that we may be unto the praise of his glory, we who before hoped in Christ.—Ephes. i. 3.*

And Jesus answering, said: Were not ten made clean? and where are the nine?—Luke xvii. 17.

But God, who is rich in mercy, for his exceeding charity, wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together in Christ (by whose grace you are saved),

* It may be remarked here that when the Apostle speaks of the predestinate and of predestination, he does not refer always to predestination to glory, but to predestination to the faith. For here and elsewhere he speaks of it as of a thing evident and certain, which only predestination to the faith can be. We see a Christian, and we can with certainty say that he was predestinated to be a Christian; but it is not the same with predestination to glory: that is known to God alone: nor did the Apostle himself know if he was of the number of the predestinate when he said: "I chastise my body, and bring it into subjection; lest, perhaps, when I have preached to others, I myself should become a cast-away."

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and hath raised us up together, and hath made us sit together in the heavenly places, through Christ Jesus.—Ephes. ii. 4.

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered together thy children, as the hen doth gather her chickens under her wings, and thou wouldst not.—Matt. xxiii. 37.

Be not without fear about sin forgiven, and add not sin upon sin. And say not: The mercy of the Lord is great, he will have mercy on the multitude of my sins. For mercy and wrath quickly come from him, and his wrath looketh upon sinners.—Eccli. v. 5.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we also may be able to comfort them who are in all distress, by the exhortation wherewith we also are exhorted by God.—2 Cor. i. 3.

From these passages of Holy Scripture learn.—1, That the Divine mercies you have received far exceed all you could have hoped, and can have come only from the immensity of God's love; 2, that ingratitude is so great a vice that Christ Himself wondered at it, and felt compelled to denounce it; 3, that nevertheless His goodness is far greater than our ingratitude; 4, that His lamentation over Jerusalem reminds you how by neglect of His inspirations and abuse of His grace you have too often given Him a like occasion for sighing; 5, that you should remain always in filial fear for forgiven sin, and make amends with all faithfulness for their hurt and harm; 6, that the consolations you may receive should make you admire the Divine goodness, and more thoroughly despise yourself, rather than conceive therefrom any good opinion of yourself. Let us proceed to the thoughts of our two masters on this subject.

INTRODUCTION—PT. I., CH. XI., MEDITATION III.—OF THE BENEFITS OF GOD.

Preparation.—1. Place yourself in the presence of God.
2. Beseech Him to inspire you.

Considerations.

1. Consider the corporal graces which God has given you; what a body, what conveniences to maintain it, what health and lawful recreations to entertain it; what friends and

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assistances. But consider all this with respect to many other persons, much more worthy than yourself, who are destitute of all these blessings ; some spoiled in their bodies' health and members, others abandoned to the mercy of reproaches, contempts, and dishonours, others oppressed with poverty ; and God has not suffered you to become so miserable.

2. Consider the gifts of mind ; how many are there in the world idiotic, frantic, and mad, and why are you not of this number ? God has favoured you. How many are there who have been brought up rudely and in gross ignorance ; and by God's providence you have been educated politely and honourably.

3. Consider the spiritual graces, O *Philothea*. You are a child of the Catholic Church. God has taught you to know Him even from your youth. How often has He given you His Sacraments ? How many inspirations, internal illuminations, and reprehensions for your amendments ? How frequently has He pardoned you your faults ? How often hath He delivered you from the occasions of casting yourself away to which you were exposed ? And were not these years past given you as a time and opportunity to advance the good of your soul ? Consider, in particular, how sweet and gracious God has been to you.

Affections and Resolutions.

1. *Admire the goodness of God.* O how good is my God towards me ! O how gracious He is ! How rich is Thy Heart, O Lord, in mercy, and liberal in clemency. O my soul, let us recount for ever how many favours He hath done us.

2. *Be astonished at your ingratitude.* But what am I, O Lord, that Thou art so mindful of me ! Ah, how great is my unworthiness ! Alas ! I have even trodden Thy blessings under foot ; I have dishonoured Thy graces, converting them into abuse and contempt of Thy sovereign goodness. I have opposed the depth of my ingratitude to the height of Thy grace and favour.

3. *Stir yourself up to acknowledgment.* Well, then, my heart, be now no more unfaithful, ungrateful, and disloyal to this great Benefactor. And how shall not my soul be

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henceforth wholly subject to God, who has wrought so many wonders and favours in me and for me ?

4. Ah ! withdraw then your body, *Philothea*, from such and such sensualities, and consecrate it to the service of God who has done so much for it. Apply your soul to know and acknowledge Him by such exercises as shall be requisite for that purpose. Employ diligently the means which are in the Church to save yourself and love Almighty God. Yes, O my God, I will frequent prayer, I will hear Thy Holy Word, and put in practice Thy inspirations and counsels.

Conclusion.

1. Thank God for the knowledge He hath now given you of your duty, and for the benefits hitherto received.

2. Offer Him your heart with all your resolutions.

3. Pray Him that He will strengthen you to practise them faithfully through the merits of His Son's death. Implore the intercession of the Blessed Virgin and of the Saints. *Pater noster, Ave Maria, Credo.*

Make your little spiritual nosegay as before.

IMITATION—BK. III., CH. XXII.—OF THE REMEMBRANCE OF
THE MANIFOLD BENEFITS OF GOD.

Open, O Lord, my heart in Thy law, and teach me to walk in Thy commandments (2 Mach. i. 4). Give me to understand Thy will, and to commemorate with great reverence and diligent consideration all Thy benefits, as well in general as in particular, that so henceforward I may be able worthily to give Thee thanks for them. I know, and confess, indeed, that I am not able to return Thee due thanks of praise, not even for the least. I am less than any of Thy benefits bestowed upon me ; and when I consider Thy excellency, my spirit fainteth before the greatness thereof.

2. All things that we have in soul and body, and whatsoever outwardly or inwardly, naturally or supernaturally, we possess, are Thy benefits, and celebrate Thy bounty, mercy, and goodness, from whom we have received all good. Although one hath received more, another less, yet all are Thine, and without Thee even the least cannot be had. He who hath received greater things cannot glory of his own merit, or extol himself above others, nor insult over the lesser

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because he is indeed greater and better who attributeth less to himself, and is more humble and devout in returning thanks. And he who esteemeth himself the vilest of all men, and judgeth himself the most unworthy, is best fitted to receive still greater blessings.

3. But he who hath received fewer ought not to be saddened, nor take it ill, nor envy him that is more enriched; but attend rather to Thee, and very much praise Thy goodness, for that Thou bestowest Thy gifts so plentifully, so freely and willingly, without respect of persons. All things are from Thee, and therefore Thou art to be praised in all. Thou knowest what is expedient to be given to each; and why this one hath less, and the other more, is not ours to decide, but Thine, by whom are determined the merits of each.

4. Wherefore, O Lord God, I deem it a great benefit not to have much which outwardly and according to men might appear praiseworthy and glorious; so that a person, considering his own poverty and meanness, ought to be so far from conceiving despondency thereat, or sadness, or dejection, that he should rather take consolation and great joy. For Thou, O God, hast chosen the poor and the humble, and those that are despised by this world, for Thy familiar friends and domestics. Thy Apostles themselves are witnesses, whom Thou hast appointed rulers over the whole earth. And yet they lived in this world without complaint, so humble and simple, without any malice or guile, that they even rejoiced to suffer reproaches for Thy name; and what things the world flies from, these they embraced with great affection.

5. Nothing, therefore, ought to give so great a joy to one that loveth Thee and knoweth Thy benefits as the accomplishment of Thy will in himself, and the good pleasure of Thy eternal appointment, with which he ought to be so far contented and comforted as to be as willing to be the least as any one would wish to be the greatest: to enjoy as much peace and content in the lowest place as in the highest: and to be as willing to be despicable and mean, and of no name and repute, as to be more honourable and of greater rank in the world than others. For Thy will and the love of Thy honour ought to take precedence of all things, and to comfort and please one more than any benefits whatsoever which have been or can be given.

LESSON VIII. OF SIN.

(From this consideration of the Divine mercies pass to the meditation on the misery of sin. The contrast will help to deepen your gratitude and grief.)

INTRODUCTION—PT. I., CH. XII., MEDITATION IV.—OF SIN.

Preparation.—1. Place yourself in the presence of God.
2. Beseech Him to inspire you.

Considerations.

1. Call to mind how long it is since you began to sin, and examine how much since that beginning sins have been multiplied in your heart; how every day you have increased them against God, against yourself, and against your neighbour, by work, by word, by desire.

2. Consider your evil inclinations, and how far you have followed them. And by these two points you shall find that your sins are greater in number than the hairs of your head, yea, than the sands of the sea.

3. Consider in particular the sin of ingratitude against God, which is a general sin, and extends itself over all the rest, making them infinitely more enormous. Consider, then, how many benefits God has bestowed upon you, and how you have abused them all in prejudice of the Giver. And, in particular, how many inspirations you have despised; how many good impulses you have made unprofitable; but, above all, how many times you have received the Sacraments: and where are the fruits? What is become of all those precious jewels with which your dear Spouse adorned you? All these have been buried under your iniquities. With what preparation have you received them? Think on this ingratitude, that God having run so far after you, you have run from Him to lose yourself.

Affections and Resolutions.

1. *Be confounded at your misery.* O my God, how dare I appear before Thine eyes? Alas! I am but the corruption of the world, and a very sink of sin and ingratitude. Is it possible that I have been so disloyal as not to have left any one of my senses, nor any one of the powers of my soul, which I have not spoilt, degraded, and defiled; and that not so much as one day of my life has passed in which I have not

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brought forth such wicked effects? Is it thus that I ought to recompense the benefits of my Creator, and the precious Blood of my Redeemer?

2. *Crave pardon* and cast yourself at the feet of your Lord, like the Prodigal, like *Magdalen*, or like the woman taken in adultery. Mercy, O Lord, upon this poor sinner! Alas! living Fountain of compassion! have pity on this wretch.

3. *Resolve to live better.* No, O Lord, never more, with the help of Thy grace, never more will I abandon myself to sin. Alas! I have loved it too much; now I detest it, and embrace Thee, O Father of mercy. I will live and die in Thee.

4. To expiate my past sins, I will accuse myself of them courageously, and will not leave one unbanished from my heart.

5. I will use all possible endeavour to extirpate all the roots of sin out of my heart, and in particular such and such vices, which do most annoy me.

6. To accomplish this, I will constantly embrace the means which shall be advised me, and think I have never done enough to repair so grievous offences.

Conclusion.

1. Give God thanks for expecting your amendment till this hour, and bless Him that He has given you these affections.

2. Offer Him up your heart that you may put them in execution.

3. Desire Him to strengthen you, &c. *Pater, Ave, Credo.* Make your little nosegay of devotion as aforesaid.

[To dispose you still more to do penance, read what follows.]

IMITATION—BK. III., CH. LII.—THAT A MAN OUGHT NOT TO ESTEEM HIMSELF WORTHY OF CONSOLATION, BUT RATHER DESERVING OF CHASTISEMENT.

1. Lord, I am not worthy of Thy consolation, nor of any spiritual visitation; and therefore justly dost Thou deal with me when Thou leavest me poor and desolate. For could I shed tears like a sea, yet should I not be worthy of Thy consolation. Wherefore I deserve nothing else but to be

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scourged and punished, because I have grievously and often offended Thee, and in many things have very much sinned against Thee. So that according to just reason I do not deserve the least consolation. But Thou, O gracious and merciful God, who willest not that Thy works perish, to show the riches of Thy goodness towards the vessels of mercy, vouchsafest beyond all desert to comfort Thy servant above human measure. For Thy consolations are not like the consolations of men.

2. What have I done, O Lord, that Thou shouldst impart to me any heavenly consolation? I can remember nothing of good that I have ever done, but I know that I was always prone to vice, and very slow towards amendment. It is true, and I cannot deny it; if I should say otherwise, Thou wouldst stand against me, and there would be none to defend me. What have I deserved for my sins but hell and everlasting fire? In truth, I confess that I am worthy of all scorn and contempt; neither is it fitting that I should remain among Thy devout servants. And although I hear this unwillingly, yet for truth's sake I will against myself condemn my sins, that so I may the easier deserve to obtain Thy mercy.

3. What shall I say, guilty as I am, and full of all confusion? My mouth can utter nothing but only this one word: I have sinned, O Lord, I have sinned; have mercy on me and pardon me. *Suffer me a little, that I may mourn out my grief, before I go to the darksome land that is covered with the dismal shade of death* (Job x. 20). What dost Thou especially require of a guilty and wretched sinner, but that he should be contrite and humble himself for his sins? In true contrition and humility of heart is brought forth hope of forgiveness; the troubled conscience is reconciled; lost grace is recovered; man is secured from the wrath to come; and God and the penitent soul meet together in the holy kiss of peace.

4. Humble contrition for sins is an acceptable sacrifice to Thee, O Lord, of far sweeter odour in Thy sight than the burning of frankincense. This is also that pleasing ointment which Thou wouldst have to be poured upon Thy sacred feet: for *never hast Thou despised a contrite and humble heart* (Ps. l. 19). Here is a place of refuge from the face of the wrath of the enemy. Here is amended and washed away whatever of defilement has been elsewhere contracted.

LESSON IX. OF DEATH.

LESSON IX.

Of Death : Of the Thought of Death : Of Judgment : Of the Punishment of Sinners.

TEXTS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

This will I do : I will pull down my barns, and will build greater, and into them will I gather all things that are grown to me, and my goods. And I will say to my soul : Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thy rest, eat, drink, make good cheer. But God said to him : Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee, and whose shall those things be which thou hast provided ?—Luke xii. 18.

Take ye heed, watch and pray. For ye know not when the time is. Even as a man who, going into a far country, left his house, and gave authority to his servants over every work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye, therefore (for you know not when the lord of the house cometh : at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning). Lest coming on a sudden, he find you sleeping. And what I say to you I say to all : Watch.—Mark xiii. 33.

And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars, and upon the earth distress of nations, by reason of the confusion of the roaring of the sea and of the waves ; men withering away for fear, and expectation of what shall come upon the whole world. For the powers of heaven shall be moved.—Luke xxi. 25.

So speak ye, and so do, as being to be judged by the law of liberty. For judgment without mercy to him that hath not done mercy.—James ii. 12.

The wise man saith that the remembrance of the last things helps us not to sin, but Incarnate Wisdom here teaches you—1, That he acts like a fool who does not so live as if soon to die ; 2, that you ought to be always ready to die, because you know not the time nor the manner of your death ; 3, that even this universe, with all that is fair and beautiful therein, should at times excite you to fear and awe ; 4, that mercy must be shown to our neighbour, as it is the only way of securing for ourselves a judgment tempered with mercy. Attend now to the suggestions of your two masters on death and judgment.

LESSON IX. OF DEATH.

INTRODUCTION—PT. I., CH. XIII., MEDITATION V.—OF DEATH.

Preparation.—1. Place yourself in the presence of God.
2. Beseech Him to inspire you with His grace. Imagine yourself to be extremely sick, lying on your bed, and without any hope of your recovery.

Considerations.

1. Consider the uncertainty of the day of your death. O my soul, thou must one day quit this body; but when shall that day be? shall it be in winter or in summer? in city or in country? by day or by night? shall it be suddenly or on notice given thee? by sickness or by accident? shalt thou have the assistance of thy ghostly father? Alas! of all this we know nothing at all; only certain it is that we shall die, and that always sooner than we imagine.

2. Consider that then the world shall end in regard of you; for it will last no longer to you, it will turn upside down before your eyes; for then the pleasures, the vanities, the worldly joys, and fond affections of our life will seem to us shadows and airy clouds. Ah, wretch! for what toys and trifles have I offended God? You shall then see that for a nothing we have forsaken Him. On the contrary, devotion and good works will then seem to you sweet and delightful. Oh why did I not follow this fair and pleasant path? Then, sins which seemed very little will appear as big as mountains, and your devotion very small.

3. Consider the long languishing farewells your soul will then give this world; she will then take her leave of riches, vanities, and all idle company; of pleasures, pastimes, friends, and neighbours; of kindred, children, husband, and wife; briefly, of every creature; and finally, of her own body, which she will leave pale, hideous, and loathsome.

4. Consider with what hurrying they will wash and carry away this body to bury it under the earth; which done, the world will think no more of you than you have thought of others. God's peace be with him, they will say, and that is all. O death! how void art thou of regard or pity.

5. Consider how the soul being departed from the body takes her flight away to the right hand or to the left. Alas! whither shall yours go? what way shall she take? No other than that which is begun here in this world.

LESSON IX. OF DEATH.

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Pray to God, and cast yourself into His arms. Alas ! O my Lord, receive me into Thy protection at that dreadful day ; make that hour happy and favourable unto me, and rather let all the other days of my life be sad and sorrowful.

2. *Despise the world.* Seeing I know not the hour in which I must leave thee, O wretched world, I will no more fix my love upon thee. O my dear friends and allies, pardon me if I love you no more, but with a holy friendship, which may last eternally. For why should I unite myself to you so as to be forced to break and dissolve that knot ?

3. I will then prepare myself against that hour, and take all requisite care to end this journey happily. I will secure the state of my conscience to the uttermost of my ability, and take present order for reparation of such and such defects.

Conclusion.

Give thanks to God for these resolutions which He has given you : offer them to His Divine Majesty. Be instant with Him to give you a happy death through the merits of that of His dearly beloved Son. Implore the assistance of the Blessed Virgin and glorified Saints. *Pater, Ave, Credo.* Make a posie of myrrh.

IMITATION—BK. I., CH. XXIII.—OF THE THOUGHTS OF DEATH.

A very little while and all will be over with thee here. See to it how it stands with thee in the next life. Man is to-day, and to-morrow he is seen no more. And when he is taken away from the sight, he is quickly also out of mind. Oh, the dulness and the hardness of the human heart, that dwelleth only upon things present, instead rather of providing for those which are to come ! Thou shouldst so order thyself in every deed and thought as if thou wert immediately to die. If thou hadst a good conscience, thou wouldst not much fear death. It is better to avoid sin than to fly death. If thou art not prepared to-day, how wilt thou be to-morrow ? To-morrow is an uncertain day ; and how knowest thou if thou shalt have to-morrow ? Of what use is it to live long when we advance so little. Ah ! long life doth not always amend us ; nay, oftentimes it doth rather

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augment our guilt. Would that even for one day we had behaved ourselves well in this world! Many count the years of their conversion, but oftentimes the fruit of amendment is but little. If it is a fearful thing to die, it may be still more dangerous to live longer. Blessed is the man that hath the hour of his death continually before his eyes, and daily putteth himself in order for death. If thou hast at any time seen a person die, reflect that thou too must pass the same way.

3. When it is morning, think thou wilt not live till evening. And when evening comes, venture not to promise thyself the next morning. Be, therefore, always in readiness, and so live that death may never find thee unprepared. Many die suddenly and unprovidedly; *for the Son of Man will come at an hour when He is not looked for* (Luke xii. 40). When that last hour shall have come, then thou wilt begin to think far otherwise of all thy past life; and great will be thy grief that thou hast been so negligent and remiss.

4. How happy and how prudent is he who now striveth to be in life what he would fain be found in death! For it will give great confidence of dying happily to have a perfect contempt of the world, a fervent desire to advance in virtue, a love of discipline, the spirit of penance, readiness of obedience, abnegation of self, and patience to bear any kind of adversity for the love of Christ. Many are the good works thou canst do whilst in health; but when thou art sick, I know not what thou wilt be able to do. Few are improved by sickness; so also they that go much abroad seldom grow in sanctity.

5. Trust not in thy friends and neighbours, and put not off thy soul's welfare till the future, for men will forget thee sooner than thou thinkest. It is better to provide now in time, and send some good before thee, than to trust to the assistance of others after death. If thou art not solicitous for thyself now, who will be solicitous for thee hereafter? Now is the time very precious, behold *now is the acceptable time, behold now is the day of salvation* (2 Cor. vi. 2). But, O misery! that thou spendest not this time more profitably, wherein thou hast it in thy power to merit that thou mayest live eternally. The time will come when thou wilt fain implore one day or even one hour for amendment; and I know not if thou wilt obtain it.

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6. Oh, then, dearly beloved, from what great danger mayest thou free thyself, from what great fear be rescued, if only thou wouldst be always fearful and looking for death! Study, therefore, so to live now that in the hour of death thou mayest be able rather to rejoice than to fear. Learn now to despise all things, that then thou mayest begin to live with Christ. Learn now to die to the world, that then thou mayest freely go to Christ. Chastise thy body now by penance, that then thou mayest have an assured confidence.

7. Ah, fool! why thinkest thou to live long when thou art not sure of one day? How many thinking to live long have been deceived, and snatched unexpectedly from life! How often hast thou heard related that such a one fell by the sword, another is drowned, another falling from on high broke his neck, this man died at table, that other came to his end at play! Some perish by fire, some by the sword, some by pestilence, some by the hands of robbers, and so death is the end of all; and man's life passeth away suddenly like a shadow.

8. Who will remember thee when thou art dead? and who will pray for thee? Do now, beloved, do now, all thou canst; for thou knowest not when thou art to die, and, moreover, thou knowest not what will befall thee after death. Whilst thou hast time, amass for thyself immortal riches. Think of nothing but thy salvation; care only for the things of God. Make to thyself friends now by venerating the Saints of God and imitating their actions, that when thou shalt fail in this life, they may receive thee into everlasting dwellings.

9. Keep thyself as a pilgrim and a stranger upon earth, that hath no concern with the business of the world. Keep thy heart free and lifted up to God, for here thou hast no enduring city. Send thither thy prayers and daily sighs with tears, that thy spirit may merit after death to pass happily to our Lord. Amen.

INTRODUCTION—PT. I., CH. XIV., MEDITATION VI.—OF THE JUDGMENT.

Preparation.—1. Place yourself in the presence of God.

2. Beseech Him to inspire you with His grace.

Considerations.

1. After the time that God hath prescribed for the con-

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tinuance of the world, after many signs and horrible presages which will cause men to faint away for fear and anguish, a fire, raging like a torrent, shall burn and reduce to ashes everything that is upon the face of the earth, nothing which we see upon it shall be spared.

2. After these flames and thunderbolts all men shall rise from their graves, excepting such as are already risen, and, at the voice of the angel they shall all appear in the valley of *Josaphat*. But, alas! with what difference? for the one sort shall rise in glorified and resplendent bodies, the others in bodies most hideous and horrid.

3. Consider the majesty with which the Sovereign Judge shall appear, environed with all His angels and saints; before Him shall be borne His cross, shining much brighter than the sun, an ensign of mercy to the good, and of justice to the wicked.

4. This Sovereign Judge, by His dreadful command, which shall be suddenly obeyed, will separate the good from the bad, placing the one at His right hand and the other at His left. O everlasting separation! after which these two bands shall never meet.

5. This separation being made, and the books of conscience opened, all men shall see clearly the malice of the wicked, and their contempt against God; and, on the other side, the penance of the good, and the effects of God's grace which they have received, and nothing shall lie hid. O God, what a confusion will this be to the one, and what a consolation to the other!

6. Consider the last sentence pronounced against the wicked: *Go, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels*. Ponder well these weighty words. *Go*, saith He; a word of eternal banishment against those miserable wretches, excluding them eternally from His glorious presence. He calls them *cursed*. O my soul, how dreadful a curse! a general curse, including all manner of woes; an irrevocable curse, comprehending all times and eternity. He adds, *into everlasting fire*. Behold, O my heart, this vast eternity. O Eternal eternity of pains, how dreadful art thou?

7. Consider the contrary sentence of the good. *Uome*, saith the Judge. O sweet words of salvation, by which God draws us to Himself, and receives us into the bosom of His

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goodness! *Blessed of my Father.* O dear blessing, which comprehends all happiness! *Possess the kingdom which is prepared for you from the beginning of the world.* O good God, what excess of bounty! for this kingdom shall never have an end.

Affections and Resolutions.

1. *Tremble, O my soul, at the remembrance of these things.* O my God, who can secure me in that day in which the pillars of heaven shall tremble for fear?

2. Detest your sins, which only can condemn you in that dreadful day.

3. *Ah! wretched heart of mine, resolve to amend.* O Lord, I will judge myself now that I may not be judged then. I will examine my conscience and condemn myself. I will accuse and chastise myself that the Eternal Judge condemn me not in that dreadful day. I will therefore confess, and accept of all necessary advices, &c.

Conclusion.

1. Thank God who has given you the means to provide for that day, and time to do penance.

2. Offer Him your heart to perform it.

3. Pray Him to give you grace duly to accomplish it. *Pater, Ave, Credo, &c.* *Make your spiritual posie for all the day.*

IMITATION—BK. I., CH. XXIV.—OF JUDGMENT AND THE PUNISHMENTS OF SINNERS.

1. In all things look to the end, and how thou wilt stand before the strict Judge, from whom there is nothing hid; who takes no bribes, and receives no excuses, but will judge that which is just. O most miserable and foolish sinner, what wilt thou answer unto God, who knoweth all thy evil deeds,—thou who art sometimes afraid of the countenance of an angry man? Why dost thou not provide thee against the day of judgment, when no man can be excused or defended by another, but each one will have enough to do to answer for himself? Now thy labour is profitable, thy tears are acceptable, thy groans are heard, thy sorrow is satisfying and purifieth the soul.

LESSON IX. OF THE JUDGMENT.

2. The patient man hath a great and wholesome purgatory; who, suffering wrongs, is more concerned at another's malice than at his own injury; who prays freely for his adversaries, forgiving their offences from his heart; who delays not to ask pardon of others; who is easier moved to pity than to anger; who does frequent violence to himself; and strives to bring his flesh wholly in subjection to the spirit. Better is it to purge away our sins, and cut off our vices now, than to keep them for purgation hereafter. Truly we deceive ourselves, through the inordinate love we bear the flesh.

3. What else will that fire devour but thy sins? The more thou sparest thyself now, and followest the flesh, so much the more dearly shalt thou pay for it hereafter, and the more fuel dost thou lay up for that fire. In what things a man hath most sinned, in those things shall he be most grievously punished. There the slothful will be pricked with burning goads, the gluttonous tormented with extreme hunger and thirst; there the luxurious and the lovers of pleasure will have burning pitch and fetid sulphur rained upon them; and the envious, like rabid dogs, will howl for grief.

4. There will be no vice but will have its own peculiar torment. There the proud will be filled with all confusion, and the avaricious pinched with the most miserable want. There one hour of punishment will be more grievous than a hundred years of the most bitter penance here. There will be no rest, no consolation for the damned, whereas here we sometimes cease from labour, and enjoy the consolation of our friends. Be therefore now solicitous and sorrowful for thy sins, that in the day of judgment thou mayest be in security with the blessed: *for then the just shall stand with great constancy against those that have afflicted and oppressed them* (Wis. v. 2). Then will he stand up to judge who now humbly submitteth himself to the judgment of men. Then shall the poor and humble have great confidence, and the proud will fear on every side.

5. Then will it appear that he was wise in this world who for Christ's sake learned to be a fool and despised. Then every tribulation borne with patience shall be pleasing, *and all iniquity shall stop her mouth* (Ps. cvi. 42). Then shall every devout person rejoice, and all the irreligious shall be sad.

LESSON IX. OF THE JUDGMENT.

Then shall the flesh that was afflicted exult more than if it had always fared in delights. Then shall the mean habit shine and the fine garment grow dingy. Then shall the poor cottage be praised above the gilded palace. Then shall enduring patience more avail than all the poor of the world. Then shall simple obedience be more highly exalted than all worldly cunning.

6. Then a pure and good conscience shall bring more joy than learned philosophy. Then shall the contempt of riches far outweigh all the treasures of the children of earth. Then shalt thou find more consolation in having prayed devoutly than in having feasted daintily. Then shalt thou rejoice more in having kept silence than for having made long discourses or talked much. Then shall holy works be of greater value than multitudes of goodly words. Then shall strictness of life and hard penance please more than all the delights of earth. Learn to suffer in little things now, that then thou mayest be delivered from more grievous sufferings. Try first here what thou canst bear hereafter. If now thou canst endure so little, how wilt thou be able to suffer eternal torments? If now a little suffering makes thee so impatient, what will hell do then? Behold, assuredly, both joys thou canst not have,—to delight thyself here in this world, and afterwards to reign with Christ.

7. If up to this very day thou hadst always lived in honours and pleasures, what would it all profit thee did it happen that thou must immediately die? All therefore is vanity, except to love God and serve Him only. For he that loveth God with his whole heart feareth neither death, nor punishment, nor judgment, nor hell; for perfect love giveth secure access to God. But he who still finds delight in sin, no wonder if he fear death and judgment. It is good, however, if love as yet reclaim thee not from evil, that at least the fear of hell do check thee. For, indeed, he that setteth aside the fear of God will not be able to persevere long in good, but will very soon fall into the snares of the devil.

LESSON X. OF HELL.

LESSON X.

Of Hell and Heaven: That all Grievous Things are to be endured for Life Everlasting: Of the Day of Eternity and the Distresses of this Life.

TEXTS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

And fear ye not them that kill the body, and are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him that can destroy both soul and body into hell.—Matt. x. 28.

And if thy eye scandalise thee, pluck it out. It is better for thee with one eye to enter into the kingdom of God, than having two eyes to be cast into the hell of fire, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not extinguished. For every one shall be salted with fire, and every victim shall be salted with salt.—Mark ix. 46.

A man making void the law of Moses, dieth without any mercy under two or three witnesses. How much more, do you think he deserveth worse punishments who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath esteemed the blood of the testament unclean, by which he was sanctified, and hath offered an affront to the Spirit of grace? For we know him that he hath said: Vengeance belongeth to me, and I will repay. And again: The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.—Heb. x. 28.

Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching. Amen I say to you, that he will gird himself, and make them sit down to meat, and passing will minister unto them.—Luke xii. 37.

Then shall the just shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.—Matt. xiii. 43.

For that which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory.—2 Cor. iv. 17.

These words explain the torments of the reprobate, and the justice of their doom, and what things God has prepared for those who love and serve Him faithfully. Read now what your two masters have written.

LESSON X. OF HELL.

INTRODUCTION—PT. I., CH. XV., MEDITATION VII.—OF HELL.

Preparation.—1. Place yourself in the presence of God.
2. Humble yourself and implore His assistance. 3. Represent to yourself a dark city all burning, all stinking with pitch and brimstone, and full of inhabitants who cannot get out.

Considerations.

1. The damned are in the depth of hell as within this woful city, where they suffer unspeakable torments in all their senses and members, because, as they have employed all their senses and members in sinning, so shall they suffer in them all the pains which are due to sin. The eyes, for unchaste and wicked looks, shall be afflicted with the horrible vision of hell and devils. The ears, for delighting in vicious discourses, shall hear nothing but wailings, lamentations, desperate howlings: and so of the rest.

2. Besides all these torments there is yet another greater, which is the loss and privation of God's glory, from the sight of which they are excluded for ever. Now if *Absalom* found it more grievous to him to be deprived of the amiable face of his father *David* than to be banished, O God, what a grief will it be to be for ever excluded from beholding Thy most sweet and gracious countenance!

3. Consider, above all, the eternity of these pains, which above all things makes hell intolerable. Alas! if an insect in our ear, or if the heat of a little fever, make one short night so long and tedious, how terrible will the night of eternity be, accompanied with so many torments! From this eternity proceeds eternal desperation, infinite rage and blasphemy, &c.

Affections and Resolutions.

1. *Terrify your soul with the words of holy Job:—O my soul, art thou able to live for ever in everlasting flames and amidst this devouring fire? wilt thou forsake the sight of thy God for ever!*

2. *Confess that you have deserved it, yea, oftentimes. From henceforth I will take a new course; for why should I descend into this bottomless pit? I will, therefore, do this or that, and endeavour to avoid sin, which only can bring me to this eternal death. Give thanks, offer, pray. Pater, Ave, Credo.*

LESSON X. OF PARADISE.

CH. XVI., MEDITATION VIII.—OF PARADISE.

- Preparation.*—1. Place yourself in the presence of God.
2. Beseech Him to inspire you with His grace.

Considerations.

1. Consider a fair and clear night, and think how pleasant it is to behold the sky all spangled with that multitude and variety of stars ; join this now with the beauty of as clear a day, so that the brightness of the sun may no ways hinder the lustre of the stars and moon, and then say boldly, that all this put together is nothing in regard of the excellent beauty of that great paradise. Oh, how this lovely place is to be desired ! Oh, how precious is this city !

2. Consider the glory, beauty, and multitude of the inhabitants of this blessed country ; those millions of millions of Angels, Cherubim and Seraphim, those troops of Apostles, Prophets, Martyrs, Confessors, Virgins, and holy Matrons. The number is innumerable. Oh, blessed is this company ! The least of them all is more beautiful to behold than the whole world. What a sight then will it be to see them all ! But, O my God, how happy are they ! They sing continually harmonious songs of eternal love ; they always enjoy a constant mirth ; they interchange one with another unspeakable contentments, and live in the comfort of a happy and indissoluble society.

3. In fine, consider how blessed they are to enjoy God, who rewards them for ever with His lovely aspect, and by the same infuses into their hearts a treasure of delights. How great a happiness is it to be united everlastingly to their Maker ! They are there like happy birds flying and singing perpetually in the air of His Divinity, which encompasses them on all sides with incredible pleasure. There every one does his best, and without envy sings his Creator's praise. Blessed be Thou for ever, O sweet and sovereign Creator and Redeemer, who art so bountiful to us, and dost communicate to us so liberally the everlasting treasures of Thy glory. Blessed be you for ever, says He, My beloved creatures who have so faithfully served Me, and who now shall praise Me everlastingly with so great love and courage.

LESSON X. EVERLASTING LIFE.

Affections and Resolutions.

1. *Admire and praise this heavenly country.* Oh, how beautiful art thou, my dear Jerusalem! and how happy are thy inhabitants!

2. *Reproach your heart with the little courage it has had hitherto, in wandering so far from the way to this glorious habitation.* Oh, why have I so far strayed from my sovereign good? Ah, wretch that I am! for these foolish and trivial pleasures have I a thousand thousand times forsaken eternal and infinite delights; was I not mad to despise blessings so precious for desires so vain and contemptible?

3. *Aspire, notwithstanding, with fervour to this abode of delights.* O my gracious God, since it has pleased Thee at length to direct my wandering steps into the right way, never hereafter will I turn back. Let us go, my dear soul, let us go to this eternal repose, let us walk towards this blessed land which is promised us. What do we in this *Egypt*? I will therefore disburden myself of all such things as may divert or retard me in so happy a journey. I will perform such and such things as may conduct me to it. *Give thanks, offer, pray. Pater, Ave, Credo.*

IMITATION—BOOK III., CH. XLVII.—THAT ALL GRIEVOUS THINGS ARE TO BE ENDURED FOR LIFE EVERLASTING.

1. Son, let not the labours which thou hast undertaken for My sake crush thee, neither let tribulations, from whatever source, cast thee down; but in every occurrence, let My promise strengthen and console thee. I am sufficient to recompense thee beyond all bounds and measure. It is not long thou hast to labour here, nor shalt thou be always oppressed with sorrows. Wait a little, and thou shalt see a speedy end of suffering. The hour cometh when all labour and trouble shall be no more. All is little and short which passeth away with time.

2. Mind what thou art about; labour faithfully in My vineyard; I will be thy reward. Write, read, sing, lament, keep silence, pray, bear adversities manfully: eternal life is worth all these, and greater combats. Peace shall come one day, which is known to the Lord. And it will not be day or night, such as it is at present, but light everlasting, infinite

LESSON X. DISTRESSES OF THIS LIFE.

brightness, steadfast peace, and safe repose. Thou shalt not then say, *Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* (Rom. vii. 24). Neither shalt thou cry out, *Woe is me, that my sojourning is prolonged* (Ps. cxix. 5); *for death shall be no more* (Isa. xxv. 8), but never-failing health; there shall be no anxiety, but blessed delight, and a society sweet and glorious.

3. Oh, if thou couldst see the everlasting crowns of the Saints in heaven, and in how great glory they now triumph, who appeared contemptible heretofore to this world, and as it were even unworthy of life, doubtless thou wouldst immediately cast thyself down to the very earth, and wouldst rather be ambitious to be in subjection to all, than to have precedence over so much as one. Neither wouldst thou covet the pleasant days of this life, but wouldst rather be glad to suffer tribulation for the sake of God, esteeming it the greatest gain to be reputed as nothing amongst men.

4. Oh, if thou didst but relish these things, did they penetrate deep into thy heart, how wouldst thou dare so much as once to complain! Ought not all painful labours to be endured for everlasting life? It is no small matter to lose or gain the kingdom of God. Lift up, therefore, thy face to heaven; behold I, and all my Saints with Me, who in this world have had a great conflict, now rejoice, are now comforted, are now secure, are now at rest; and they shall for all eternity abide with Me in the kingdom of My Father.

CH. XLVIII.—OF THE DAY OF ETERNITY, AND OF THE DISTRESSES OF THIS LIFE.

1. Oh, most happy mansion of the celestial city! Oh, most bright day of eternity! which no night ever obscureth, but which the Sovereign Truth always enlighteneth. A day always joyful, always secure, and never changing its state for the contrary. Oh, that this day would shine forth, and that all these temporal things would come to an end! It shineth, indeed, upon the Saints, resplendent with everlasting brightness; but to us pilgrims upon earth it is seen only afar off, and as through a glass.

2. The citizens of heaven know how joyful that day is; but we, poor exiled children of Eve, mourn that this our day is bitter and tedious. The days of this life are short and evil, full of griefs and distresses; where man is defiled with many

LESSON X. DISTRESSES OF THIS LIFE.

sins, ensnared with many passions, enslaved with many fears, harassed with many cares, distracted with many curiosities, entangled with many vanities, encompassed with many errors, worn out with many labours, troubled with temptation, enervated with pleasures, tormented with want.

3. Oh, when will there be an end to these evils? When shall I be set at liberty from the wretched slavery of vice? When, O Lord, shall I think of Thee alone? When shall I fully rejoice in Thee? When shall I be without any impediment to true liberty, without any grievance of mind and body? When shall there be solid peace, peace firm and undisturbed, peace within and without, peace secure on every side? O good Jesus! when shall I stand to behold Thee? When shall I contemplate the glory of Thy kingdom? When wilt Thou be all in all to me? Oh, when shall I be with Thee in Thy kingdom, which Thou hast prepared for Thy beloved from all eternity? I am left poor, and an exile in an enemy's country, where there are daily wars and grievous misfortunes.

4. Solace my banishment, assuage my sorrow, for my every desire aspireth unto Thee; for whatever this world offereth for my comfort is all burdensome to me. I long to enjoy Thee intimately, but cannot attain unto it. I desire to cleave to heavenly things, but things temporal and my unmortified passions weigh me down. With my mind I wish to be above all things, but by the flesh I am forced against my will to be subject to them. Thus, unhappy man that I am, I fight with myself, *and am become burdensome to myself* (Job vii. 20), whilst the spirit tendeth upwards, and the flesh downwards.

5. Oh, what do I suffer interiorly, whilst with my mind I consider heavenly things, and presently a crowd of carnal thoughts interrupt me as I pray. *O my God, remove not Thyself far from me* (Ps. lxx. 12), *and depart not in anger from Thy servant* (Ps. xxvi. 9). *Dart forth Thy lightning, and disperse them. Shoot Thy arrows* (Ps. cxliii. 6), and let all the phantoms of the enemy be put to flight. Cause my senses to be collected in Thee; make me forget all worldly things; grant me speedily to cast away and despise all worldly imaginations. Come to my aid, O Eternal Truth, that no vanity may move me. Come, Heavenly Sweetness, and let all impurity fly from before Thy face. Pardon me also, and mercifully forgive me, as often as in my prayer

LESSON X. DISTRESSES OF THIS LIFE.

I think of aught else beside Thee. For I truly confess that I am accustomed to be very much distracted. For many a time I am not there, where I am bodily standing or sitting, but am there rather where my thoughts carry me. There am I where my thought is, and there oftentimes are my thoughts where that which I love is. That thing most readily cometh to my mind which naturally delighteth me, or which through custom is pleasing to me.

6. Whence Thou, the Eternal Truth, hast plainly said : *Where thy treasure is, there also is thy heart* (Matt. ix. 1). If I love heaven, I love to think on heavenly things. If I love the world, I rejoice at the world's prosperity, and am troubled at its adversity. If I love the flesh, my imagination is often on the things of the flesh. If I love the spirit, I delight to think of spiritual things. For whatever things I love, of the same I love to speak and hear, and I carry home with me the images of such. But blessed is that man who, for Thee, O Lord, abandoneth all things created, who offereth violence to nature, and through fervour of spirit crucifieth the concupiscence of the flesh ; that so, with a serene conscience, he may offer to Thee pure prayer, and become worthy to be admitted among the choir of Angels, having shut out all things of the earth, both from without and within.

(He speaks chiefly of mental prayer, less liable to distraction than is vocal. For mental prayer is for the most part a conception of the mind, while vocal is simple recitation, with a raising of the mind towards God.)

LESSON XI.

Of the Choice of Paradise: Of the Soul's Choice of a Devout Life: Of the Contempt of all Temporal Honour: Of the Desire of Eternal Life, and the Benefits promised to them that Fight.

TEXTS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abide in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for without me you can do nothing.—John xv. 4.

Father, I will that where I am, they also whom thou hast given me may be with me, that they may see my glory which thou hast given me, because thou hast loved me before the foundation of the world.—John xvii. 24.

And you are they who have continued with me in my temptations: and I dispose to you, as my Father hath disposed to me, a kingdom: that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom: and may sit upon thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.—Luke xxii. 28.

For I reckon that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us.—Rom. viii. 18.

But the foolish things of the world hath God chosen, that he may confound the wise, and the weak things of the world hath God chosen, that he may confound the strong. And the base things of the world, and the things that are contemptible, hath God chosen, and things that are not, that he might bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his sight.—I Cor. i. 27.

Well done, good and faithful servant; because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.—Matt. xxv. 21.

These words intimate—1, That Christ most ardently desires you to be a partaker in heavenly glory, seeing that with so much love He invites you to remain in Him, and promises to be the Life of your life; 2, that this is left to your free will,

LESSON XI. OF THE CHOICE OF PARADISE.

and, if you choose well, it will delight Him to show you hereafter His glory ; 3, that the toils of this life, whether undertaken freely, or laid upon you by Him, are to be counted gain ; 4, that the honours of this world, and all which this world esteems, should be despised by you since they are despised by God ; 5, that he who, in the spiritual combat, is faithful over a few things, will enter into the joy of his Lord. Now listen to the sentiments of your masters.

INTRODUCTION — PT. I., CH. XVII., MEDITATION IX. — BY WAY OF ELECTION AND CHOICE OF PARADISE.

Preparation.—1. Place yourself in the presence of God. 2. Humble yourself before His majesty, beseech Him to inspire you with His grace. 3. Imagine yourself to be in a plain field, all alone with your good Angel, as young *Tobias* going to *Rages*, and that he shows you paradise open, with all the pleasures represented in the former meditation of paradise, then, beneath that, he shows you hell wide open, with all the torments described in the meditation of hell. You being thus placed in your imagination, and kneeling before your good Angel—

Considerations.

1. Consider that it is most true that you are between heaven and hell, and that the one and the other is open to receive you according to the choice which you shall make.

2. Consider that the choice which one makes in this world shall last for all eternity in the other.

3. And though both the one and the other be open to receive you according to your choice, yet God, who is ready to give you either the one by His justice or the other by His mercy, desires notwithstanding with an incomparable desire that you would make choice of heaven, and your good Angel also importunes you with all his power, offering you on God's behalf a thousand assistances and a thousand graces to help you thither.

4. Consider that Jesus Christ beholds you from above in His clemency, and graciously invites you, saying, Come, My dear soul, to everlasting rest within the arms of My goodness, where I have prepared immortal delights for thee in

LESSON XI. CHOICE OF A DEVOUT LIFE.

the abundance of My love. Behold, likewise, with your inward eyes, the Holy Virgin, who with a motherly love exhorts you, saying, Courage, my child ; despise not the desires of my Son, nor so many sighs which I have cast forth for thee, thirsting with Him for thy eternal salvation. Behold the Saints also, who exhort you, and millions of blessed souls sweetly inviting you, and wishing nothing more than to see your heart united with theirs to praise God for ever ; assuring you that the way to heaven is not so hard as the world makes it. Courage, dear friend, say they ; he that shall diligently consider the way of devotion, by which we ascended hither, shall see that we came to these delights by pleasures incomparably more sweet than those of the world.

Election.

1. O hell ! I detest thee now and for evermore : I detest thy torments and pains ; I detest thy miserable and accursed eternity ; and, above all, I detest those eternal blasphemies and maledictions which thou vomitest out eternally against my God. And turning my heart and soul to thee, O beautiful paradise, everlasting glory and endless felicity, I choose my habitation for ever and irrevocably within thy fair and sacred mansions, within thy holy and most lovely tabernacles. I bless Thy mercy, O my God, and accept the offer which it pleaseth Thee to make me of it. O my Saviour Jesus ! I accept Thy everlasting love, and advow the purchase which Thou hast made for me of a place in this blessed *Jerusalem*, not so much for any other thing as to love and bless Thee for ever and ever.

2. Accept the favours which the Blessed Virgin and the Saints present you. Promise them to advance towards them, and give your hand to your good Angel that he may guide you thither. Encourage your soul to make this choice. *Pater, Ave, Credo.*

CH. XVIII., MEDITATION X.—BY WAY OF ELECTION AND CHOICE WHICH THE SOUL MAKES OF A DEVOUT LIFE.

Preparation—1. Place yourself in the presence of God.

2. Prostrate yourself before Him and implore the assistance of His grace.

LESSON XI. CHOICE OF A DEVOUT LIFE.

Considerations.

1. Imagine yourself again to be in a plain field, all alone with your good Angel, and that you see on your left hand the Devil, seated on a great high throne with many infernal spirits about him, and environed with a great troop of worldlings, which, all bare-headed, acknowledge him for their lord, and do him homage, some by one sin and some by another. Observe the countenances of all the woful courtiers of this abominable king. Behold some of them transported with hatred, envy, and choler; others killing one another, others wasted, pensive, and carking to heap up riches; others attentive to vanity, without any manner of pleasure which is not unprofitable and vain; others buried and putrefied in brutish affections. Behold how they are all without rest, without order, without dignity. Behold how they despise one another, and love but in show. In a word, you shall see a pitiful commonwealth, miserably tyrannised over by this cursed king, which will move you to compassion.

2. On the other side, behold Jesus Christ crucified, who with a cordial love prays for these poor enthralled people that they may be freed from this tyranny, and calls them to Himself. Behold round about Him a troop of devout persons with their angels. Contemplate the beauty of this kingdom of devotion. Oh, what a sight it is to see this troop of virgins, men and women, whiter than lilies, that assembly of widows, full of holy mortification and humility. See the ranks of divers married people, living peaceably together with mutual respect, which cannot be without great charity. Consider how these devout souls join the care of the exterior house with the care of the interior, the love of husband with love of the Celestial Bridegroom. Consider them all and each, and you shall see them with sweet, holy, and lovely faces observing our Saviour, whom every one would willingly put in the midst of his heart. They are full of joy, but that joy is comely, charitable, and well ordered; they love one another, but their love is most pure and sacred. Such as suffer afflictions amongst this devout company torment not themselves much, nor lose courage. Lastly, behold those eyes of our Saviour, who comforts them, and how they altogether aspire to Him.

3. You have already shaken off Satan with all his cursed

LESSON XI. CONTEMPT OF TEMPORAL HONOUR.

and execrable troop, by the good affections you have conceived ; but you are not yet come to Jesus your King, nor have you joined this blessed and holy company of devout people, but have hitherto kept yourself between the one and the other.

4. The Blessed Virgin, with *S. Joseph, S. Louis, S. Monica*, and a hundred thousand others who are in the squadron of those that lived in the world, do invite and encourage you.

5. The Crucified King calls you by your own name : Come, my well beloved, come that I may crown thee.

Election.

1. O world, O abominable troop ! never, never shall you see me under your banner. I have for ever left off your fooleries and vanities. O king of pride, O cursed king, infernal spirit, I renounce thee with all thy vain pomps, I detest thee with all thy works.

2. And turning myself to Thee, my dear Jesus, King of felicity and immortal glory, I embrace Thee with all the powers of my soul ; I adore Thee with all my heart ; I choose Thee now and ever for my King, and by my inviolable fidelity I pay Thee irrevocable homage, and submit myself to the obedience of Thy holy laws and ordinances.

3. O sacred Virgin, my dear Lady ! I choose thee for my guide ; I put myself under thy colours ; I offer thee a particular respect and special reverence.

4. O my good Angel ! present me to this sacred assembly, and forsake me not till I arrive at this blessed company, with whom I say, and will say for ever, in testimony of my choice, Live Jesus, Live Jesus. *Pater, Ave, Credo.*

(Narrow is the way to heaven, and the door is low by which we enter. He who would go there must humble himself, and walk in whatever path his Saviour has appointed for him. Therefore heed well the following.)

IMITATION—BK. III., CH. XLI.—OF THE CONTEMPT OF ALL TEMPORAL HONOUR.

1. My son, take it not to heart, if thou seest others honoured and advanced, and thyself despised and debased. Lift up

LESSON XI. DESIRE OF ETERNAL LIFE.

thy heart to Me in heaven, and the contempt of men on earth shall not grieve thee.

2. Lord, we are in blindness, and by vanity are quickly seduced. If I look well into myself, never was any injury done me by any creature, and therefore I can have no just complaint against Thee. But since I have often and grievously sinned against Thee, every creature is deservedly armed against me. To me, therefore, is justly due confusion and contempt; but to Thee praise, honour, and glory. And unless I put myself in this disposition to be willing to be despised and forsaken by all creatures, and to be esteemed altogether nothing, I can neither be interiorly at peace and stand firm, nor be spiritually enlightened, nor fully united to Thee.

BK. III., CH. XLIX.—OF THE DESIRE OF ETERNAL LIFE, AND HOW GREAT ARE THE BENEFITS PROMISED TO THEM THAT FIGHT.

1. Son, when thou perceivest the desire of eternal bliss to be infused into thee from above, and thou wouldst fain go out of the tabernacle of this body, that thou mightest contemplate My brightness without any shadow of change; enlarge thy heart, and receive this holy inspiration with thy whole desire. Return the greatest thanks to the Supreme Goodness which dealeth so condescendingly with Thee, mercifully visiteth thee, ardently inciteth thee, and powerfully raiseth thee up, lest by thy own weight thou fall down to the things of earth. For it is not by thy own thoughtfulness or endeavour that thou receivest this, but by the mere condescension of heavenly grace and Divine regard; that so thou mayest advance in virtue and greater humility, and prepare thyself for future conflicts, and labour with the whole affection of thy heart to keep close to Me, and serve Me with a fervent will.

2. Son, the fire often burneth, but the flame ascendeth not without smoke. And so the desires of some are on fire after heavenly things, and yet they are not free from the temptation of carnal affection. Therefore is it not altogether purely for God's honour that they do what they so earnestly request of Him. Such, also, is oftentimes thy desire, which thou hast professed to be so importunate. For that is not pure and perfect which is alloyed with self-interest.

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3. Ask not that which is pleasant and convenient, but that which is acceptable to Me and for My honour ; for if thou judgest rightly, thou oughtest to prefer and to follow My appointment rather than thine own wishes or any other desirable thing. I know thy desire, and I have often heard thy groanings. Thou wouldst wish to be already in the liberty of the glory of the children of God. Now doth the eternal dwelling and the heavenly country full of festivity delight thee. But that hour is not yet come ; for there is yet another time, a time of war, a time of labour and of trial. Thou desirest to be filled with the sovereign good, but thou canst not at present attain to it. I am He : wait for Me, saith the Lord, until the kingdom of God come.

4. Thou hast yet to be tried upon earth and exercised in many things. Consolation shall sometimes be given thee, but abundant satiety shall not be granted thee. *Take courage, therefore, and be valiant* (Jos. i. 6), as well in doing as in suffering things repugnant to nature. *Thou must put on the new man* (Eph. iv. 24), and *be changed into another person* (1 Kings x. 6). That which thou wouldst not, thou must oftentimes do ; and that which thou wouldst, thou must leave undone. What pleaseth others shall prosper ; what is pleasing to thee shall not succeed. What others say shall be hearkened to ; what thou sayest shall be reckoned as nought. Others shall ask, and shall receive ; thou shalt ask, and not obtain.

5. Others shall be great in the esteem of men ; about thee nothing shall be said. To others this or that shall be committed ; but thou shalt be accounted as of no use. At this, nature will sometimes repine, and it will be a great matter if thou bear it with silence. In these and many such-like things the faithful servant of the Lord is wont to be tried how far he can deny and break himself in all things. There is scarce anything in which thou standest so much in need of dying to thyself as in seeing and suffering things that are contrary to thy will, and more especially when those things are commanded which seem to thee inconvenient and of little use. And because, being under authority, thou darest not resist the higher power, therefore it seemeth to thee hard to walk at the beck of another, and wholly to give up thy own opinion.

6. But consider, son, the fruit of these labours, their speedy termination, and their exceeding great reward ; and

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thou wilt not derive affliction, but the most strengthening consolation in thy suffering. For in regard to that little of thy will which thou now willingly forsakest, thou shalt for ever have thy will in heaven. For there thou shalt find all that thou wilt and all that thou canst desire. There shalt thou have the possession of every good without fear of losing it. There thy will, always one with Me, shall not covet any extraneous or private thing. There no one shall resist thee, no one complain of thee, no one obstruct thee, nothing shall stand in thy way ; but every desirable good shall be present at the same moment, shall replenish all thy affections, and satiate them to the full. There I will give thee glory for the contumely thou hast suffered ; a garment of praise for thy sorrow ; and for having been seated here in the lowest place, the throne of My kingdom for ever. There will the fruit of obedience appear, there will the labour of penance rejoice, and humble subjection shall be gloriously crowned.

7. Now, therefore, bow thyself down humbly under the hands of all, and heed not who it was that said or commanded this. But let it be thy great care that, whether thy superior, or inferior, or equal require anything of thee, or hint at anything, thou take all in good part, and labour with a sincere will to perform it. Let one seek this, another that ; let this man glory in this thing, another in that, and be praised a thousand thousand times ; but thou, for thy part, rejoice neither in this nor in that, but in the contempt of thyself, and in My good pleasure and honour alone. This is what thou hast to wish for, that, *whether in life or in death, God may be always glorified in thee* (Phil. i. 20).

LESSON XII. OF A GENERAL CONFESSION.

LESSON XII.

Of a General Confession : Authentic Protestation to Engrave in the Soul a firm Resolution to Serve God : Of Self-denial : Of Casting all Care on the Lord.

TEXTS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

But the things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart, and those things defile a man. For from the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false testimonies, blasphemies. These are the things that defile a man. But to eat with unwashed hands doth not defile a man.—Matt. xv. 18.

Lazarus, come forth. And presently he that had been dead came forth, bound feet and hands with winding-bands, and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus said to them : Loose him and let him go.—John xi. 43.

And many of them that believed came confessing and declaring their deeds.—Acts xix. 18.

Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people by his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore to him without the camp, bearing his reproach. For we have not here a lasting city, but we seek one that is to come.—Heb. xiii. 13.

And he that taketh not up his cross and followeth me, is not worthy of me.—Matt. x. 38.

Seek ye, therefore, first the kingdom of God and his justice, and all these things shall be added unto you. Be not, therefore, solicitous for to-morrow, for the morrow will be solicitous for itself. Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.—Matt. vi. 33.

These words demonstrate—1, That requisite purity of heart can be obtained only by the Sacrament of Penance instituted by Christ in His Church ; 2, that as with a word He raised up Lazarus from the tomb, so with His interior grace He raises the sinner, but requires him to be set free by the absolution of a priest, as Lazarus was loosed by the Apostles ; 3, that satisfaction must be made to Divine justice in this life, after our Lord's example, who was led outside the city to be immolated ; 4, that the cross must be em-

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braced if we would be followers of Christ ; 5, that our care and trouble should be to seek the kingdom of God, on whom by perfect trust we ought to cast all solicitude. Now listen to our two masters.

INTRODUCTION—PT. I., CH. XIX.—HOW TO MAKE A GENERAL CONFESSION.

1. Behold here, then, my dear *Philothea*, the meditations requisite for our purpose ; which when you have ended, go on courageously in the spirit of humility to make your general confession. But pray suffer not yourself to be troubled with any kind of apprehension. The scorpion which has stung us is venomous in stinging, but being reduced into oil becomes a sovereign remedy against his own sting. Sin is only shameful in the committing, but being converted into confession and repentance, it becomes both honourable and wholesome : for contrition and confession are so precious and so savoury, that they efface the ugliness and disperse the loathsomeness of sin. *Simon* the leper judged *M. Magdalene* a sinner, but our Saviour denied it, and spake of nothing but the sweet perfumes she poured forth and of the greatness of her charity. If we be truly humble, *O Philothea*, our sins will infinitely displease us because God is offended by them, but the accusation of our sins will be sweet and pleasant to us because God is honoured thereby. It is a kind of ease to us to acquaint the physician rightly with the disease that torments us.

2. When you shall be before your ghostly father, imagine yourself on Mount *Calvary*, kneeling right under the feet of Jesus Christ crucified, whose Precious Blood streams down on all sides to wash you from your iniquities. For though it be not the very Blood of our Saviour, yet it is the merit of His Blood shed for us which waters abundantly the soul of the penitent in every Confessional. Open, then, your heart freely to let out your sins by confession ; for as fast as they go out, the precious merits of His Divine Passion will enter in to replenish it with blessings.

3. But be sure to declare all, simply and plainly. Fully satisfy your conscience in this now once for all : which done, then hearken to the advertisements and ordinances of your ghostly father, and say in your heart, *Speak, Lord, for Thy*

LESSON XII. AN AUTHENTIC PROTESTATION.

servant hearkeneth unto Thee. Yea, Philothea, it is God whom you hear, since He has said to His vicars : He that heareth you heareth Me.

4. After that, take in hand this following protestation, which serves for a conclusion of all your contrition, and which you ought first to have meditated and considered. Read it attentively, and with the greatest feeling that you possibly can.

CH. XX.—AN AUTHENTIC PROTESTATION, TO ENGRAVE IN OUR SOUL A FIRM RESOLUTION TO SERVE GOD, AND TO CONCLUDE THE ACTS OF PENANCE.

1. I, under-written, placed in the presence of the eternal God and of all the court of heaven, having considered the exceeding mercy of His Divine goodness towards me, a most unworthy and wretched creature, whom He has created of nothing, preserved, sustained, and delivered from so many dangers, and loaded with so many benefits; but, above all, having considered the incomprehensible sweetness and clemency wherewith this most good God has so graciously spared me in mine iniquities, so frequently inspired me, inviting me to amendment, and so patiently expected my repentance and conversion until this N. year of my age, notwithstanding all my ingratitude, disloyalty, and infidelity, whereby, deferring my conversion and despising His graces, I have so unadvisedly offended Him: having, moreover, considered that upon the day of my holy baptism I was so happily and holily vowed and dedicated to my God to be His child, and that, contrary to the profession then made in my name, I have so many times so execrably and detestably profaned and violated my understanding, applying and employing it against His Divine Majesty. At length returning to myself, prostrate in heart and mind before the throne of the Divine justice, I acknowledge, confess, and avow myself lawfully attainted and convicted of high treason against His Divine Majesty, and guilty of the Death and Passion of Jesus Christ, by reason of the sins I have committed, for which He died and suffered the torments of the cross; so that consequently I am worthy to be cast away and damned for ever.

2. But, turning myself towards the throne of the in-

LESSON XII. AN AUTHENTIC PROTESTATION.

finite mercy of the same eternal God, having detested from the bottom of my heart and with all my power the transgressions of my past life, I most humbly beg and crave pardon, grace, and mercy, with entire absolution from my offences, by virtue of the Death and Passion of the same Saviour and Redeemer of my soul, on which relying as on the only foundation of my hope, I confirm again and renew the sacred profession of my allegiance made in my behalf to God at my baptism; renouncing the devil, the world, and the flesh, abominating their horrible suggestions, vanities, and concupiscences for all the time of this present life, and for all eternity. And converting myself unto my most gracious and merciful God, I desire, deliberate, purpose, and resolve irrevocably to serve and love Him now and for ever; and to this end I give and consecrate to Him my spirit with all its faculties, my soul with all its powers, my heart with all its affections, and my body with all its senses; protesting never more to abuse any part of my being against His Divine will and sovereign majesty, to whom I offer up, and sacrifice myself in spirit to be perpetually a loyal, obedient, and faithful creature, without ever revoking, unsaying, or repenting me of this resolution.

3. But if, alas! by the suggestion of my enemy, or through human frailty, I chance to transgress in anything whatsoever this my vow and resolution; I protest and determine from this very hour, by the assistance of the Holy Ghost, to rise again so soon as I shall perceive my fall, and to return anew to the Divine mercy without any delay or protraction whatsoever. This is my will, intention, and resolution, inviolable and irrevocable, which I advow and confirm without reservation or exception, in the same sacred presence of my God, and in the sight of the Church triumphant, and in the face of the Church militant, my mother, who hears this my declaration in the person of him that, as her officer, hears me in this action.

4. Let it please thee, O my Eternal God, Almighty and Gracious Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to confirm me in this resolution, and to accept this my cordial and inward sacrifice in the odour of sweetness. And as it hath pleased Thee to give me the inspiration and will to do this, so grant me power and grace to perform it. O my God! Thou art my God, God of my heart, God of my soul, and God of my

LESSON XII. TO IMITATE CHRIST.

spirit ; so I acknowledge, and adore Thee now and for ever.
Live, O Jesu.

(Hear what follows, as our Lord's acceptance of your protest, and as His reply.)

IMITATION—BK. III., CH. LVI.—THAT WE OUGHT TO DENY OURSELVES, AND IMITATE CHRIST BY THE CROSS.

1. Son, as much as thou canst go out of thyself, so much wilt thou be able to enter into Me. As the desiring nothing exteriorly bringeth peace, so doth the relinquishing thyself interiorly unite thee unto God. I will have thee learn the perfect renunciation of thyself, according to My will, without contradiction or complaint. *Follow Me: I am the way, the truth, and the life* (Matt. ix. 9 ; John xiv. 6). Without the way, there is no going ; without the truth, there is no knowing ; without the life, there is no living. I am the way which thou must follow ; the truth which thou must believe ; the life which thou must hope for. I am the way inviolable, the truth infallible, the life interminable. I am the straightest way, the sovereign truth, the true life, the blessed life, the uncreated life. If thou abide in My way, *thou shalt know the truth, and the truth shall make thee free.* (John, viii. 51), and thou shalt attain to life everlasting.

2. *If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments* (Matt. xix. 17). If thou wilt know the truth, believe Me. *If thou wilt be perfect, sell all* (Matt. xix. 21). *If thou wilt be My disciple, deny thyself* (Luke ix. 23). If thou wilt possess a blessed life, despise this present life. If thou wilt be exalted in heaven, humble thyself in this world. If thou wilt reign with Me, bear the cross with Me. For none but the servants of the cross find the way of bliss and true light.

3. Lord Jesus, forasmuch as Thy way is narrow, and despised by the world, grant that I may follow Thee with the world's contempt. *For the servant is not greater than his lord, neither is the disciple above his master* (Matt. x. 24). Let Thy servant be exercised in Thy life, for there is my salvation and true sanctification. Whatever beside this I read or hear doth neither recreate nor fully delight me.

4. Son, since thou knowest these things, and hast read them all, happy shalt thou be if thou do them. *He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me*

LESSON XII. OF TRUST IN GOD.

(John xiv. 21) ; and *I will love him, and will manifest Myself unto him, and will make him sit with Me in the kingdom of My Father* (Ephes. ii. 6 ; Apoc. iii. 21).

5. Lord Jesus, as Thou hast said and hast promised, so let it be indeed, and may it be my lot to merit it. I have received, I have received from Thy hand, the cross. I will bear it, and bear it even unto death, as Thou hast laid it upon me. Truly, the life of the good religious is a cross ; but it is also the guide to paradise. We have begun ; we may not go back, nor may we leave off.

6. Take courage, brethren ; let us go forward together ; Jesus will be with us. For the sake of Jesus we have taken up this cross ; for Jesus' sake let us persevere in it. He will be our Helper who is our Captain and our Forerunner. Behold, our King marcheth before us, who will fight for us. Let us follow Him manfully ; let no one fear terrors. *Let us be ready to die valiantly in battle, nor let us bring disgrace upon our glory* (2 Mac. vii. 2 ; 1 Mac. ix. 10), by flying from the cross.

CH. XVII.—THAT ALL SOLICITUDE MUST BE PLACED IN GOD.

1. Son, suffer Me to do with thee what I will ; I know what is expedient for thee. Thou thinkest as a man ; thou judgest in many things as human affection suggesteth. Lord, what Thou sayest is true. Greater is Thy care for me than all the care I can take of myself. For at too great a hazard doth he stand who casteth not his whole care on Thee. Lord, provided that my will remain true and firm towards Thee ; do with me whatsoever it shall please Thee. For it cannot but be good, whatever Thou shalt do with me.

2. If Thou wilt have me to be in darkness, be Thou blessed ; and if Thou wilt have me to be in light, be Thou again blessed : if Thou vouchsafe to comfort me, be Thou blessed ; and if it be Thy will that I should be afflicted, be Thou still equally blessed.

3. Son, thus must thou stand affected if thou desire to walk with Me. Thou must be as ready to suffer as to rejoice ; thou must be as glad to be poor and needy as to be full and rich.

4. Lord, I will suffer willingly for Thee whatsoever Thou

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art pleased should befall me. I am willing indifferently to receive from Thy hand good and evil, sweet and bitter, joy and sorrow, and to give Thee thanks for all that happeneth to me. Keep me from all sin, and I will fear neither death nor hell. So that Thou cast me not off for ever nor blot me out of the book of life, whatsoever tribulation befalleth me shall not hurt me.

(These two chapters contain the summary of all we need know and do to reach the very highest point of perfection.)

LESSON XIII. CONCLUSION OF FIRST PURGATION.

LESSON XIII.

Conclusion of the First Purification : Of the Purification of the Affection for Venial Sin : Of the Peace found in Mortification of Inordinate Affections.

TEXTS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

And he said to her : Thy sins are forgiven thee. And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves : Who is this that forgiveth sins also ? And he said to the woman : Thy faith hath made thee safe, go in peace.—Luke vii. 48.

No man can serve two masters. For either he will hate the one, and love the other : or he will sustain the one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.—Matt. vi. 24.

Know you not, that to whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants you are whom you obey, whether it be of sin, unto death, or of obedience unto justice.—Rom. vi. 16.

So do you also reckon that you are dead indeed to sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus our Lord.—Rom. vi. 11.

Wherefore having the loins of your mind girt up, being sober, trust perfectly in the grace which is offered you in the revelation of Jesus Christ, as children of obedience, not fashioned according to the former desires of your ignorance : but according to him that hath called you, who is holy, be you also in all manner of conversation holy, because it is written : You shall be holy, for I am holy.—1 Pet. i. 13.

But the fruit of the Spirit is charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, longanimity, mildness, faith, modesty, continency, chastity. Against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified their flesh, with the vices and concupiscences.—Gal. 5. 22.

These words show—1, With what goodness Christ receives souls converted to Him, and how the grief of a true and loving contrition can obtain everything from Him ; 2, that you cannot serve two masters, God and yourself or the world ; 3, that so long as you persist in sin, you cannot serve God with a free mind ; 4, that we should live for God alone ; 5, that the passions are to be thoroughly mortified if you would taste the fruits of the Spirit, and belong really to our Lord. Now note carefully what follows on this point.

LESSON XIII. THE AFFECTION FOR VENIAL SIN.

INTRODUCTION—PT. I., CH. XXI.—THE CONCLUSION OF THIS FIRST PURGATION.

1. This protestation ended, be attentive and open the ears of your heart to hear in spirit the words of your absolution, which the Saviour of your soul Himself, sitting on the throne of His mercy, will pronounce above in heaven before all His Angels and Saints at the same time as the Priest in His name absolves you beneath on earth; so that all the troops of the blessed souls, rejoicing at this your happiness, will sing a spiritual hymn with incomparable joy, and give the kiss of peace and fellowship to your heart now re-established in grace and sanctity.

2. O *Philothea*, behold this admirable contract, by which you make a happy league with the majesty of God, since in giving yourself to Him you gain both Him and yourself for life everlasting. It remains only to take pen in hand and subscribe with a joyful heart the act of your protestation, and so go to the altar, where God on the other side will reciprocally sign and seal your absolution and the promise He will make you of the kingdom of heaven, putting Himself by His venerable Sacrament as a seal and sacred signet upon your renewed heart.

3. Thus I hope, *Philothea*, your soul will be purged from sin and all sinful affections. Yet because the affections do easily return to the soul through our frailty and concupiscence, which may well be mortified, but can never die while we live here on earth, I will give you some instructions, which being well practised, shall preserve you hereafter from mortal sin, and from all the affections thereto, so that it shall never take root in your heart. And because the same instructions serve also for a more perfect purification, before I deliver them, I will say somewhat of this more absolute purity to which I desire to conduct you.

CH. XXII.—THAT WE MUST PURIFY OURSELVES FROM THE AFFECTION WE HAVE TO VENIAL SINS.

1. As the daylight increases, we see more clearly in the glass the spots and blemishes of our faces; even so as the inward light of the Holy Ghost more and more illuminates our consciences, we see more plainly and distinctly the sins, the inclinations, and imperfections which hinder us from

LESSON XIII. THE AFFECTION FOR VENIAL SIN.

attaining to true devotion ; and the self-same light which causes us to discover those spots and deformities, enflames us likewise with desire to cleanse and rid us from them.

2. Thou shalt then discover, my dear *Philothea*, that besides mortal sins, and the affections to them, from which by the aforementioned exercises thou hast been purged, there remain yet in thy soul divers inclinations and affections to venial sins.

3. I do not say thou shalt discover venial sins, but affections and inclinations to them. Now the one is far different from the other ; for we can never be altogether free from venial sins, at least to continue in that purity for any long time, but we may well be without all affections to venial sins : for it is one thing to lie once or twice, merrily, in matters of small importance, and another thing to take pleasure in lying, and to bear an affection to this kind of sin.

4. I say, then, that it is necessary to purge the soul from all affections and inclinations to venial sins ; that is to say, we must not nourish voluntarily a will to continue and persevere in any kind of venial sin ; for it would be too great a baseness to keep wittingly in our conscience a thing so displeasing to God as the will to displease Him. Venial sin, be it never so little, displeases God, though not so highly that He will reject or damn us for it. If, then, venial sin displeases Him, the will and affection to venial sin is no other thing than a resolution to displease His Divine Majesty. And is it possible that a generous soul should not only displease his God, but also like to displease Him ?

5. Such affections, my *Philothea*, are directly contrary to devotion, as affections to mortal sins are to charity ; they weaken the forces of the spirit, hinder the course of Divine consolations, open a gate to temptations, and although they kill not the soul, yet they make it exceeding sick. *Dead flies*, says the wise man, *mar the sweets of an ointment* (Eccles. x. 1) : he would say, that flies, staying not long upon the ointment, but eating it in passing by, spoil no more than they take, the rest remaining good ; but, when they die in the ointment, they deprive it of its virtue, and leave it nothing worth : so venial sins, entering into a devout soul and staying not long there, do not much prejudice it ; but if the same sins remain in the soul, by the affection she takes to them they make her without doubt lose the sweetness of the ointment, that is, holy devotion.

LESSON XIII. OF INORDINATE AFFECTIONS.

6. Spiders kill not the bees, but they spoil and corrupt their honey, and so entangle the combs with their webs that the bees cannot go forward in their work; this is to be understood when the spiders make their abode among them. So venial sin kills not our soul, but it spoils devotion, and pesters the powers of our soul with such depraved customs and inclinations that it can no more exercise charity with promptitude, in which devotion consists; but this is to be understood when venial sin makes abode in our conscience by the affection we bear it.

7. It is but a small matter, *Philothea*, to tell some trivial lie, to exceed a little in words, in actions, in looks, in apparel, in mirth, in play, in dancing, if so soon as these spiritual spiders are entered into our consciences we chase and hunt them away, as bees hunt away the corporeal spiders: but if we permit them to stay in our hearts, and not only this, but are pleased to retain and multiply them there, we shall soon find our honey destroyed, and the hive of our conscience pestered and spoiled. But I say once again, what likelihood is there that a noble soul should take pleasure in displeasing God, and delight in becoming offensive to Him, or desire to do that which she knows to be a vexation to Him?

IMITATION—BK. I., CH. VI.—OF INORDINATE AFFECTIONS.

1. Whenever a man desireth anything inordinately, straightway he is disquieted within himself. The proud and the covetous are never at rest; the poor and humble in spirit pass their life in abundance of peace. The man who is not yet perfectly dead to self is soon tempted and overcome in little and paltry things. He that is weak in spirit, and in a certain manner as yet carnal and inclined to things of sense, cannot without difficulty sever himself wholly from earthly desires. And therefore he is often sad when he does withdraw himself: and besides, he is easily moved to anger if any one thwarts him.

2. And if he has pursued his inclination, forthwith he is burdened with remorse of conscience for having gone after his passion, which helpeth him not at all to the peace he looked for. It is by resisting the passions, and not by serving them, that true peace of heart is to be found. Peace therefore is not in the heart of carnal man, nor in the man who is devoted to outward things, but in the fervent and spiritual man.

LESSON XIV. AFFECTION FOR USELESS THINGS.

LESSON XIV.

Of the Purification of the Affection for Useless and Dangerous Things : Of avoiding Vain Hope and Arrogance : That Self-love chiefly keeps us back from the Sovereign Good : Of a Pure and Entire Resignation of Ourselves to obtain Freedom of Heart.

TEXTS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.—Luke xiv. 26.

He that loveth his life shall lose it : and he that hateth his life in this world keepeth it unto life eternal.—John xii. 25.

And it came to pass as they walked in the way, that a certain man said to him : I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. Jesus said to him : The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air nests : but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. But he said to another : Follow me. And he said : Lord, suffer me first to go, and to bury my father. And Jesus said to him : Let the dead bury their dead : but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.— Luke ix. 57.

I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercy of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing unto God, your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world : but be reformed in the newness of your mind, that you may prove what is the good, and the acceptable, and the perfect will of God. For I say, through the grace that is given me, to all that are among you, not to be more wise than it behoveth to be wise, but to be wise unto sobriety, and according as God hath divided to every one the measure of faith.—Rom. xii. 1.

Therefore, if you be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God : mind the things that are above, not the things that are upon the earth. For you are dead ; and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ shall appear, who is your life ; then you also shall appear with him in glory.—Col. iii. 1.

These words teach—1, How pure is the Divine Spirit, and that as we withdraw from things earthly so do we approach to God ; 2, that for complete reformation of the soul there

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must be self-forgetfulness, carelessness about the much-prized fashions of the world, and glory rather in not having than in having its goods; 3, that the good pleasure of God's holy will should be dear to us, and that we should ever strive to learn it and fulfil it; 4, that we should surrender ourselves to the guidance of God, and, as though we were dead to the world, aspire only to the things of heaven. Listen now to your masters.

INTRODUCTION—PT. I., CH. XXIII.—THAT WE OUGHT TO PURIFY OURSELVES FROM AFFECTIONS TO UNPROFITABLE AND DANGEROUS THINGS.

1. Gaming, balls, feasting, costly attire, comedies, of themselves are no way hurtful, but indifferent, and may be used both well and ill; yet notwithstanding, these things are dangerous, and to bear an affection for them is yet more dangerous. I say then, *Philothea*, that although it be lawful to play, to dance, to deck and adorn yourself, to be present at honest comedies, to banquet; yet to delight in such things is contrary to devotion, and very offensive and dangerous. It is no sin to do such things, but it is sin to grow too fond of them. It is pity to sow in the garden of our heart such vain and foolish affections, which take up the room of virtuous impressions, and hinder the sap of our souls from nourishing good inclinations.

2. The ancient *Nazarites* abstained not only from all that might inebriate, but also from grapes; not that the grape makes drunk, but because it was to be feared that, tasting the grape, they would be tempted to taste the wine. I deny not but we may use sometimes these dangerous things, but I avow that we cannot give our affection to them without prejudice to devotion. The stags when they find themselves too fat retire to the thickets, knowing that, being burdened with their own weight, they are not able to run if they should be hunted. The heart of man, over-charged with these superfluous, unprofitable, and perilous affections, cannot run after God readily, swiftly, and lightly, which is the principal point of devotion.

3. Little children delight and heat themselves in chasing butterflies, and none thinks it ill in them, because they are little children; but is it not a ridiculous, nay, rather a

LESSON XIV. OF AVOIDING VAIN THINGS.

lamentable thing, to see men amuse and busy themselves about such unworthy toys and trifles as those which I have named which, besides their unprofitableness, put us in danger of committing disorders and excesses in their pursuit? Wherefore, my dear *Philothea*, I say that we must necessarily purge ourselves from these affections; for though the acts are not always contrary to devotion, yet the affections are always prejudicial to it.

IMITATION—BK. I., CH. VII.—OF AVOIDING VAIN HOPE AND ARROGANCE.

1. He is a vain man that putteth his hope in man or in things created. Be not ashamed to wait on others for the love of Jesus Christ, and to be looked upon as poor in this world. Depend not upon thyself, but place thy hope in God. Do what thou canst, and God will be with thy good will. Trust not in thine own knowledge, nor in the cunning of any man living, but rather in the grace of God, who helpeth the humble, and humbleth them that presume upon themselves.

2. Glory not in riches, if thou hast them, nor in friends, because they are powerful, but in God, who giveth all things, and desireth to give Himself above all things. Boast not thyself of thy stature or beauty of body, which with a little sickness is spoiled and disfigured. Be not proud of thy abilities or thy talents, lest thou offend God, to whom appertaineth whatever good thou mayest naturally have. Esteem not thyself better than others, lest perhaps thou be accounted worse in the sight of God, who knoweth what is in man. Be not proud of thy own good works; for the judgments of God are other than those of men, and what pleaseth men oftentimes displeaseth Him. If thou hast any good in thee, believe still better things of others, that thou mayest preserve humility. It will do thee no harm to put thyself below everybody, but it will hurt thee very much to put thyself before any one. Continual peace dwelleth with the humble, but in the heart of the proud is frequent envy and indignation.

LESSON XIV. OF SELF-LOVE.

BK. III., CH. XXVII.—THAT SELF-LOVE CHIEFLY KEEPETH US BACK FROM THE SOVEREIGN GOOD.

1. My son, thou must give all for all, and be nothing of thy own. Know that the love of thyself is more hurtful to thee than anything in the world. Everything, according to the love and inclination which thou hast to it, cleaveth to thee more or less. If thy love be pure, simple, and well ordered, thou shalt not be in captivity to anything. Covet not that which thou mayest not have. Seek not to have that which may embarrass thee, and deprive thee of thy inward liberty. It is wonderful that thou wilt not, from the very bottom of thy heart, commit thyself wholly unto Me, with all things that thou canst desire or have.

2. Why dost thou pine away with vain grief? why art thou so worn with superfluous cares? Be resigned to My good pleasure, and thou shalt suffer no loss. If thou seekest this or that, or wouldst be here or there for thy own interests' sake, and the more to indulge thy own will, thou wilt never be at rest, nor free from solicitude; for in everything there will be found some defect, and in every place there will be some one that will cross thee.

3. Thy welfare, therefore, lies not in obtaining and multiplying any external things, but rather in contemning them, and utterly rooting them out of thy heart: which I would not have thee to understand only with regard to money and riches, but also with regard to the ambition of honour and the desire of empty praise, all which things pass away with the world. The place avails little if the spirit of fervour be wanting; neither shall that peace stand long if it be sought from without, and if the state of thy heart want the true foundation, that is, if thou stand not in Me: thou mayest change, but shalt not better thyself. For, when occasion offers and is laid hold of, thou shalt find that which thou didst fly from, and more.

A PRAYER

FOR THE CLEANSING OF THE HEART, AND FOR HEAVENLY WISDOM.

4. Confirm me, O God, by the grace of Thy Holy Spirit. Grant me power to be strengthened in the inner man, and to

LESSON XIV. OF ENTIRE RESIGNATION.

cast out of my heart all unprofitable care and trouble ; not to be drawn away with various desires of anything whatsoever, be it vile or precious, but to view all things as passing away, and myself also as passing with them. *For nothing is lasting under the sun, but all is vanity and affliction of spirit* (Eccl. ii. 11). Oh, how wise is he who thus judgeth !

5. Grant me, O Lord, heavenly wisdom, that I may learn above all things to seek Thee and find Thee ; above all things to relish Thee and to love Thee, and to understand all other things as they are, according to the order of Thy wisdom. Grant that I may prudently avoid him that flattereth me, and patiently bear with him that contradicteth me. For this is great wisdom, not to be moved with every wind of words, nor to give ear to the wicked, flattering siren ; for thus shall we go on securely in the way we have begun.

BK. III., CH. XXXVII. — OF A PURE AND ENTIRE RESIGNATION OF OURSELVES FOR OBTAINING FREEDOM OF HEART.

1. Son, relinquish thyself, and thou shalt find Me. Stand without choice or any self-seeking, and thou shalt always gain. For greater grace shall be added to thee as soon as thou hast given up thyself, and dost not take thyself back again.

2. Lord, how often shall I resign myself, and in what things shall I relinquish myself ?

3. Always and at all times ; as in little, so also in great ; I make no exception, but will have thee to be found in all things divested of self. Otherwise, how canst thou be Mine and I thine, unless thou be both interiorly and exteriorly stripped of thy own will ? The sooner thou effectest this, the better will it be with thee ; and the more fully and sincerely thou doest it, the more wilt thou please Me, and the more shalt thou gain.

4. Some there are that resign themselves, but it is with some exception ; for they do not wholly trust in God, and, therefore, are busy in providing for themselves. Some also at first offer all ; but afterwards, being assailed by temptation, they return again to what they had left, and, therefore, make no progress in virtue. These shall neither attain to the true liberty of a pure heart, nor to the grace of a delightful fami-

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liarity with Me, unless they first entirely resign themselves up, and offer themselves a daily sacrifice to Me; without which, union of fruition neither does nor shall subsist.

5. I have often said to thee, and I repeat it now again, Forsake thyself, resign thyself, and thou shalt enjoy a great inward peace. Give all for all; seek nothing; call for nothing back; stand purely and with a full confidence before Me, and thou shalt possess Me. Thou shalt be free in heart, and the darkness shall not weigh thee down. Aim at this, pray for this, desire this, that thou mayest be divested of all self-seeking; and thus naked, follow Jesus naked, that thou mayest die to thyself, and eternally live to Me. Then all vain imaginations shall vanish, all evil disturbances and superfluous cares. Then also immoderate fear shall forsake thee, and inordinate love shall die.

LESSON XV. OF THE DESIRES OF THE HEART.

LESSON XV.

That the Desires of our Heart are to be Examined and Moderated: Of the Contempt of all Creatures to find the Creator: Of Self-Abnegation: That the Grace of God is not given to the Earthly-minded: Of the different Motions of Nature and Grace: Of the Corruption of Nature, and the Efficacy of Divine Grace.

TEXTS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

Dearly beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits if they be of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.—1 John iv. 1.

The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hidden in a field, which a man having found, hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like to a merchant seeking good pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went his way, and sold all that he had, and bought it.—Matt. xiii. 44.

But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh in its concupiscences.—Rom. xiii. 14.

For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; for these are contrary one to another: so that you do not the things that you would.—Gal. v. 17.

For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am; and his grace in me hath not been void, but I have laboured more abundantly than all they: yet not I, but the grace of God with me.—1 Cor. xv. 9.

These words warn us—1, That what appears good is not always to be followed out, but we are to act with counsel and discretion; 2, that the possession of God can be attained only by leaving all things, and that for the sake of interior peace even our desires must be renounced; 3, that the conflicts and contradictions of our spiritual and lower nature must be fought out with patience, and we must learn to dis-

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cern the difference between the motions of nature and of grace and reason ; 4, that since grace is absolutely necessary, we must put no obstacle to its effects, but be docile and faithful, and beware of negligence. Now study well the further instruction hereon which the author of the Imitation gives us.

IMITATION—BOOK III., CH. XI.—THAT THE DESIRES OF OUR HEART ARE TO BE EXAMINED AND MODERATED.

1. Son, it behoves thee still to learn many things which thou hast not yet well learned.

2. What are these, Lord ?

3. That thou conform in all things thy desire to My good pleasure ; and that thou be not a lover of thyself, but earnestly zealous that My will may be done. Desires often inflame thee and vehemently impel thee : but consider whether it be for My honour or thy own interest that thou art most moved. If I am the cause, thou wilt be well contented with whatever I shall ordain ; but if there lurk in thee any self-seeking, behold, this it is that hindereth thee and weigheth thee down.

4. Take care, then, not to rely too much upon any preconceived desire before thou hast consulted Me ; lest, perhaps, afterwards thou repent, or be displeased with that which at first pleased thee, and which thou wast zealous for as the best. For not every inclination which appeareth good is, therefore, at once to be followed, nor is every contrary affection at once to be rejected. Even in good intentions and desires it is expedient sometimes to use some restraint, lest by too much eagerness thou incur distraction of mind ; lest for want of discipline thou generate scandal to others, or by opposition from others thou be suddenly disturbed and fall. Sometimes, indeed, we must use violence, and manfully resist the sensual appetite, and not regard what the flesh liketh or disliketh, but rather endeavour that, even against its will, it may be subject to the spirit. And so long must it be chastised and kept under servitude, till it readily obey in all things, and learn to be content with a little, and to be pleased with simplicity, and not to murmur at any inconvenience.

LESSON XV. OF CONTEMPT OF THE CREATURE.

CH. XXXI.—OF THE CONTEMPT OF EVERYTHING CREATED
IN ORDER TO FIND THE CREATOR.

1. *Disciple.* Lord, I stand in much need of a grace yet greater, if I must arrive so far that it may not be in the power of any man nor anything created to hinder me. For as long as anything holds me back, I cannot freely fly to Thee. He was desirous to fly freely to Thee who said, *Who will give me wings like a dove, and I will fly and be at rest?* (Ps. li. 7). And what can be more at rest than a simple eye? And what can be more free than he who desires nothing upon earth? A man ought, therefore, to soar above everything created, and perfectly to forsake himself, and, in ecstasy of mind, to stand and see that Thou, the Creator of all, hast nothing like to Thee among creatures. And unless a man be disengaged from all things created, he cannot freely attend to things divine. And this is the reason why there are found so few contemplative persons, because there are few that know how to sequester themselves entirely from perishable creatures.

2. For this a great grace is required, such as may elevate the soul, and lift her up above herself. And unless a man be elevated in spirit, and freed from attachment to all creatures, and wholly united to God, whatever he knows and whatever he has is of no great importance. For a long time shall he be little, and lie grovelling beneath, who esteems anything great but only the one, immense, eternal Good. And whatsoever is not God is nothing, and ought to be accounted as nothing. There is a great difference between the wisdom of an illuminated and devout man, and the knowledge of a learned and studious cleric. Far more noble is that learning which flows from above from the Divine influence, than that which is laboriously acquired by the industry of man.

3. Many are found to desire contemplation, but they are not careful to practise those things which are required for its attainment. It is also a great impediment that we rest so much upon signs and sensible things, and have but little of perfect mortification. I know not by what spirit we are led, or what we pretend to, who seem to be called spiritual persons, that we take so much pains and are so full of anxiety for transitory and mean things, and seldom or never think

LESSON XV. OF SELF-ABNEGATION.

with full recollection of mind on our own inward concerns.

4. Alas! after a slight recollection, we presently break forth again; neither do we weigh well our works by a strict examination. Where our affections lie, we take no notice; and how impure is our every action, we do not deplore. *Because all flesh had corrupted its way* (Gen. vi. 12), therefore the great deluge followed. Since, therefore, our interior affection is much corrupted, it must needs be that the action which follows should also be corrupted; a testimony of the want of inward vigour. From a pure heart proceedeth the fruit of a good life.

5. How much a man hath done is inquired into, but with how much virtue he hath acted is not so studiously weighed. We ask whether he be strong, rich, handsome, clever, a good writer, a good singer, or a good workman; but how poor he is in spirit, how patient and meek, how devout and interior, is what few speak of. Nature looketh upon the exterior of a man, but grace turneth itself to the interior. Nature is often in error, but grace hath her trust in God, that so she may not be deceived.

CH. XXXII.—ON SELF-ABNEGATION, AND THE RENUNCIATION OF ALL CUPIDITY.

1. Son, thou canst not possess perfect liberty unless thou wholly deny thyself. All self-seekers and self-lovers are bound in fetters; full of desires, full of cares, ever unsettled, and seeking always their own ease, not the things of Jesus Christ, but oftentimes devising and framing that which shall not stand. For all shall perish that cometh not of God. Hold fast this short and perfect word, "Forsake all, and thou shalt find all; relinquish desire, and thou shalt find rest." Consider this well, and, when thou hast put it in practice, thou shalt understand all things.

2. Lord, this is not the work of one day, nor children's sport; yea, in this short sentence is included all the perfection of Religious. Son, thou oughtest not to be turned back, nor presently cast down, when thou hearest what is the way of the perfect; but be drawn the more onwards towards its lofty heights, or at least aspire ardently for their attainment. I would it were so with thee, and that thou wert come so far that thou

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wert no longer a lover of thyself, but didst simply wait My bidding and his whom I have appointed father over thee ; then wouldst thou exceedingly please Me, and all thy life would pass in joy and peace. Thou hast yet many things to forsake, which, unless thou give them up to Me without reserve, thou shalt not obtain that for which thou prayest. *I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest become rich* (Apoc. iii. 18), that is, heavenly wisdom, which treadeth under foot all things below. Lay aside earthly wisdom, that is, all human and self-complacency.

3. I have said, buy for thyself things most contemptible in exchange for such as are precious and most valued in human estimation. For very mean and contemptible, and almost forgotten amongst men, seems that wisdom which is true and heavenly, not teaching high notions of self, nor seeking to be magnified upon earth ; which many praise in words, while in their life they are far from it : yet this same is that precious pearl which is hidden from many.

CH. LIII.—THAT THE GRACE OF GOD IS NOT COMMUNICATED TO THE EARTHLY-MINDED.

1. Son, My grace is precious ; it suffereth not itself to be mingled with external things nor with earthly consolations. Thou must, therefore, cast away every obstacle to grace if thou desire to receive its infusion. Choose for thyself a retired place ; love to dwell with thyself alone ; seek not to be talking with any one, but rather pour forth devout prayer to God, that thou mayest keep thy mind in compunction and thy conscience pure. Esteem the whole world as nothing ; prefer attendance on God before all external occupations. For thou canst not both attend to Me, and at the same time delight thyself in transitory things. Thou must be sequestered from thy acquaintance and from thy dearest friends, and keep thy mind disengaged from all temporal consolation. So the blessed Apostle Peter beseeches the faithful of Christ to *keep themselves as strangers and pilgrims in this world* (1 Pet. ii. 11).

2. Oh, what great confidence shall he have at death who is not detained by an affection to anything in the world ! But an infirm soul is not yet capable of having a heart thus perfectly disengaged from all things, neither doth the animal

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man understand the liberty of the interior man. But if he will be truly spiritual, he must renounce as well those that are near as those that are far off, and beware of none more than of himself. If thou perfectly overcome thyself, thou shalt more easily subdue all things else. The perfect victory is to triumph over one's self. For whosoever keepeth himself in subjection, so that sensuality obeyeth reason, and reason in all things is obedient to Me, he is indeed a conqueror of himself and lord of the world.

3. If thou longest to climb this eminence, thou must begin manfully, and lay the axe to the root, in order to pluck out and destroy secret and inordinate inclination to thyself and to every private and material good. From this vice, that man loveth self too inordinately, depends almost all whatsoever must be radically overcome; which being vanquished and brought under, a great peace and tranquillity will immediately ensue. But because few labour to die perfectly to themselves, or fully to aim beyond themselves, therefore do they remain entangled in themselves, nor can they be elevated in spirit above themselves. But whosoever desireth to walk freely with Me, it is necessary that he mortify all his perverse and inordinate affections, and not cleave with particular love or concupiscence to anything created.

CH. LIV.—OF THE DIFFERENT MOTIONS OF NATURE AND GRACE.

1. Son, observe diligently the motions of nature and grace; for they move with great contrariety and subtlety, and can hardly be distinguished but by a spiritual man, and one that is inwardly illuminated. All men indeed desire good, and pretend to something good in what they say and do; therefore, under the appearance of good many are deceived. Nature is crafty and draweth away many, and ensnareth them and deceiveth them, and always proposeth self as her end. But grace walketh in simplicity, turneth aside from all appearance of evil, offereth no deceits, and doeth all things purely for God, in whom also it resteth as its last end.

2. Nature is not willing to be mortified, nor restrained, nor overcome, nor to be subject, neither of its own accord to be brought under obedience. But grace studieth the mortification of self, resisteth sensuality, seeketh to be subject,

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coveteth to be overcome, aimeth not at enjoying its own liberty, loveth to be kept under discipline, and desireth not to have the command over any one ; but under God ever to live, stand, and be, and for God's sake to be ever ready humbly to bow down unto every human creature. Nature laboureth for its own interest, and considereth what gain it may derive from another ; but grace considereth not what may be advantageous and profitable to self, but rather what may be beneficial to many. Nature willingly receiveth honour and respect, but grace faithfully attributeth all honour and glory to God.

3. Nature is afraid of shame and contempt, but grace is glad to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus. Nature loveth ease and bodily repose, but grace cannot be idle, and willingly embraceth labour. Nature seeketh to have things that are curious and beautiful, and abhorreth such as are cheap and coarse ; but grace delighteth in that which is plain and humble, rejecteth not coarse things, nor refuseth to be clad in old garments. Nature hath regard to temporal things, rejoiceth at earthly gains, is troubled at losses, and is irritated at every slight injurious word ; but grace attendeth to things eternal, and cleaveth not to temporal things, neither is disturbed at the loss of things, nor exasperated with hard words, for it placeth its treasure and its joy in heaven, where nothing perisheth.

4. Nature is covetous, and liketh rather to take than to give, and loveth to have things exclusive and private ; but grace is kind and open-hearted, shunneth private interest, is contented with little, and judgeth it *more blessed to give than to receive* (Acts xx. 35). Nature inclineth a man to creatures, to his own body, to vanities, and to running to and fro ; but grace draweth to God and to all virtues, renounceth creatures, flieth the world, hateth the desires of the flesh, restraineth wanderings, blusheth to appear in public. Nature willingly receiveth some exterior comfort, in which the senses may be gratified ; but grace seeketh to be comforted in God alone, and beyond all things visible to be delighted in the Sovereign Good.

5. Nature doth all for her own gain and interest : she can do nothing gratis, but hopeth to gain something equal or better for her good deeds, or else praise or favour, and coveteth to have her actions and gifts and sayings highly esteemed ;

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but grace seeketh nothing temporal, nor requireth any other recompense than God alone for her reward; nor desireth anything more of the necessaries of this life, than may serve her to obtain things eternal.

6. Nature rejoiceth in a multitude of friends and kindred, glorieth in noble place and descent, smileth on them that are in power, flattereth the rich, and applaudeth such as are like itself. But grace loveth even enemies, and is not puffed up with having a great many friends, nor hath any value for rank or birth unless when joined with greater virtue; rather favoureth the poor than the rich; sympathiseth more with the innocent than with the powerful; rejoiceth with him that loveth the truth, and not with the deceitful; ever exhorteth the good to be zealous for better gifts, and in the exercise of virtues to become like to the Son of God. Nature easily complaineth of want and of trouble; grace beareth poverty with constancy.

7. Nature turneth all things to self, and contendeth and disputeth for self; but grace referreth all things to God, from whom they originally proceed, attributeth no good to self, nor doth she arrogantly presume. Grace doth not contend, nor prefer her own opinion to others; but in every feeling and understanding submitteth herself to the Eternal Wisdom and to the Divine scrutiny. Nature coveteth to know secrets and to hear news, desireth to appear abroad, and to have experience of many things by the senses; longeth to be taken notice of, and to do those things which may procure praise and admiration. But grace careth not for the hearing of things new or curious, because all this springeth from the old corruption, since nothing is new or lasting upon earth. Grace teacheth, therefore, to restrain the senses, to avoid vain complacency and ostentation, humbly to hide those things which are worthy of praise and admiration; and from everything, and in every knowledge, to seek the fruit of utility, and the praise and honour of God. She desireth not to have self, or what belongeth to self, exalted; but wisheth that God may be blessed in His gifts, who bestoweth all things out of mere love.

8. This grace is a supernatural light, and a certain special gift of God, the proper mark of the elect, and the pledge of eternal salvation; which elevateth a man from earthly things to love such as are heavenly, and from carnal maketh him spiritual. Wherefore, as nature is the more kept down and

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subdued, with so much the greater abundance is grace infused, and every day by new visitations the interior man is reformed according to the image of God.

CH. LV.—OF THE CORRUPTION OF NATURE, AND OF THE EFFICACY OF DIVINE GRACE.

1. O Lord my God, who hast created me to Thine own image and likeness, grant me this grace which Thou hast shown to be so great, and so necessary to salvation, that I may overcome my most corrupt nature, which draweth me to sin and to perdition. *For I perceive in my flesh the law of sin contradicting the law of my mind, and leading me captive to obey sensuality in many things* (Rom. vii. 23). Neither can I resist the passions thereof, unless Thy most holy grace, infused with fervour into my heart, assist me.

2. I stand in need of Thy grace, and of great grace, in order to overcome nature, *always prone to evil from its youth* (Gen. viii. 21). For fallen as it is through the first man Adam, and corrupted by sin, the punishment of that stain hath descended upon all mankind; so that nature itself, which by Thee was created good and right, is now put for the vice and the infirmity of corrupt nature; because the motion thereof, left to itself, draweth to evil and to things below. For the little strength which remaineth is but as a little spark hidden under ashes. This is the self-same natural reason, encompassed with much darkness, having yet the judgment of good and evil, and the difference between truth and falsehood; though it be unable to fulfil all that it approves; neither doth it now enjoy the full light of truth, nor the former healthfulness of its affections.

3. Hence it is, O my God, that *according to the inward man I am delighted with Thy law* (Rom. vii. 22), *knowing Thy command to be good, just, and holy* (Rom. vii. 12), both for the reproof of all evil and for the avoiding of sin. And *yet in the flesh I serve the law of sin* (Rom. vii. 25), while I obey sensuality rather than reason. Hence it is that *to will that which is good is present with me, but how to accomplish it I find not* (Rom. vii. 18). Hence I often make many good purposes, but because grace is wanting to help my weakness, through a light resistance I recoil and fall of. Hence cometh it to pass that I know the way of perfection, and see clearly

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enough what I ought to do, but pressed down with the weight of my own corruption, I rise not to the things that are more perfect.

4. Oh, how supremely necessary for me, O Lord, is Thy grace, to begin that which is good, to go forward with it, and accomplish it! For without it I can do nothing: but I can do all things in Thee, when grace strengtheneth me. Oh, grace, truly celestial, without which our own merits are nothing, neither are the gifts of nature to be esteemed! Nor arts, nor riches, nor beauty, nor strength, nor genius, nor eloquence, avail aught in Thy sight, O Lord, without grace. For the gifts of nature are common to the good and to the bad; but grace and divine love is the proper gift to the elect, with which they that are adorned are esteemed worthy of eternal life. This grace is so excellent, that neither the gift of prophecy, nor the working of miracles, nor any speculation, how sublime soever, is of any value without it. No, not even faith, or hope, or any other virtues, are acceptable to Thee without charity and grace.

5. Oh, most blessed grace, which makest the poor in spirit rich in virtues, and renderest him who is rich in many good things humble of heart; come, descend upon me, replenish me early with thy consolation, lest my soul faint through weariness and dryness of mind. I beseech Thee, O Lord, *that I may find grace in Thine eyes* (Gen. xviii. 3); *for sufficient for me is Thy grace* (2 Cor. xii. 9), though I obtain none of those things which nature desires. If I be tempted and afflicted with many tribulations, I will fear no evils whilst Thy grace is with me. This alone is my strength, this alone giveth counsel and help. This is more mighty than all my enemies, and wiser than all the wise.

6. Thy grace is the mistress of truth, the teacher of discipline, the light of the heart, the consoler of anguish, the banisher of sorrow, the expeller of fear, the nurse of devotion, the producer of tears. What am I without this but a withered branch and a useless trunk, meet only to be cast away? Therefore, *O Lord, let thy grace always go before and follow me, and make me ever intent upon good works, through Jesus Christ Thy Son. Amen.* (Collect, 16th Sunday after Pentecost.)

LESSON XVI. PURGATION OF EVIL INCLINATIONS.

LESSON XVI.

Of Purifying ourselves from Evil Inclinations: Of Acquiring Peace and Zeal for our Spiritual Progress: Of a Pure Mind and a Simple Intention.

TEXTS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

Let every one of you please his neighbour unto good, to edification.—Rom. xv. 2.

But you have not so learned Christ: if so be that ye have heard him and have been taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus. To put off, according to former conversation, the old man, who is corrupted according to the desire of error, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind: and put on the new man, who, according to God, is created in justice and holiness of truth.—Ephes. iv. 20.

Have salt in you, and have peace among you.—Mark ix. 49.

For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, and cast away himself?—Luke ix. 25.

Be ye therefore followers of God, as most dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath delivered himself for us, an oblation and a sacrifice to God for an odour of sweetness.—Ephes. v. 1.

The light of thy body is thy eye. If thy eye be single thy whole body shall be lightsome.—Matt. vi. 22.

These words teach—1, That natural inclinations and habits must be overcome, since we are to strive to please every one out of charity as far as is possible; 2, that the ways and customs of the old man must be put off to conform our conduct to the Gospel maxims; 3, that peace of the soul is gained only by following the rules of Christian prudence; 4, that our amendment and growth in holiness must be preferred to everything; 5, that the charity of Christ must be copied by making ourselves all to all, and by having always a pure and single intention. Read hereon the teachings of your two masters.

LESSON XVI. OF CORRUPT INCLINATIONS.

INTRODUCTION—PT. I., CH. XXIV.—THAT WE MUST PURGE OURSELVES FROM CORRUPT INCLINATIONS.

1. We have yet, moreover, *Philothea*, certain natural inclinations, which, because they proceed not from our particular sins, are not properly sins, neither mortal nor venial, but are called imperfections, and their acts are termed faults and omissions. For example, *S. Paula*, according to the relation of *S. Jerome*, had a great inclination to grief and sadness, so that at the death of her children and husband she ran a hazard to die with sorrow; this was an imperfection but no sin, since she had it against her will.

2. There are some naturally cheerful, others froward; some hard to receive advice, others inclined to indignation; some prone to choler, others to love; and in sum, there are few persons in whom some such imperfections may not be observed. Now although they are, as it were, proper and natural to every one, yet by care and a contrary affection they may be moderated and corrected, yea, and we may altogether purge and deliver our souls from them.

3. And I tell thee, *Philothea*, it is necessary so to do. Men have found the means to change bitter almond trees into sweet, only by piercing them near the root to let out their juice: and why may not we then let out our perverse inclinations, and become better? There is no nature so good which may not be corrupted by vicious customs; nor so perverse that may not first by the grace of God, and next by good industry and diligence, be reduced and overcome.

4. I will therefore now give you the instructions, and propose the exercises by which you may purge your soul from dangerous affections to venial sins, and secure your conscience also more and more against all mortal sin. God give you His grace to practise them well.

IMITATION—BK. I., CH. XI.—OF ACQUIRING PEACE AND ZEAL FOR OUR SPIRITUAL PROGRESS.

1. We might have much peace if we would not busy ourselves with the sayings and doings of other people, and with things which concern us not. How can he long abide in peace who entangleth himself with other people's concerns; who seeketh occasions abroad; who little or

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seldom recollecteth himself interiorly? Blessed are the single-hearted, for they shall enjoy much peace.

2. What is the reason why some of the Saints were so perfect and contemplative? Because their whole study was to mortify themselves wholly from all earthly desires; and so they were able to cleave to God with all their inmost heart, and freely to attend to themselves. But we are too much taken up with our own passions, and too solicitous about transitory things. Seldom do we perfectly overcome one single vice; nor do we ardently desire to make daily progress; therefore we remain cold and tepid.

3. If we were perfectly dead to ourselves, and no ways entangled in earthly pursuits, then might we taste the savour of Divine things, and experience something of heavenly contemplation. The whole hindrance, and a very great one, is, that we are not free from passions and lusts, and strive not to walk in the perfect way of the Saints. When we are met by even a little adversity, we are too soon cast down, and seek after human consolation.

4. If we strove like valiant men to stand in the battle, verily we should have the help of God upon us from heaven. For He is ready to help them that fight, trusting in His grace; and He Himself provideth us occasions to fight, in order that we may overcome. If we place our religious progress in outward observances only, our devotion will soon come to an end. But let us lay the axe to the root, that, being purged of passions, we may possess our minds in peace.

5. If every year we rooted out one vice, we should soon become perfect men. But now we often feel, on the contrary, that we have been better and more pure in the beginning of our conversion than after many years of our profession. Our fervour and progress ought to increase daily; but now it is esteemed a great thing if any one can retain something of his first fervour. If we could do ourselves a little violence in the beginning, afterwards we should be able to do all things with ease and joy.

6. It is hard to give up what we are accustomed to, but harder to go contrary to our own will. But if thou overcome not little and easy things, how wilt thou surmount greater difficulties? Resist thine inclination in the beginning, and break off evil habits; lest, by little and little, the difficulty increase upon thee. Oh, if thou didst consider

LESSON XVI. OF WORKS OF CHARITY.

what peace thou wouldst procure for thyself, and what joy for others, by well-doing, I think thou wouldst be more solicitous for thy spiritual progress.

BK. I., CH. XV.—OF WORKS DONE OUT OF CHARITY.

1. Evil ought not to be done for anything in the world, nor for the love of any human being; but yet for the benefit of one that is in need, a good work is sometimes freely to be left undone or rather to be changed for what is better. For by this means a good work is not lost, but changed into a better. Without charity, the outward work profiteth nothing; but whatever is done out of charity, be it ever so little and contemptible, it all becometh fruitful; inasmuch as God regardeth out of how much love a man doth a work, rather than how much he doeth.

2. He doth much who loveth much. He doth much who doth well what he doeth. He doth well who regardeth rather the common good than his own will. Oftentimes that seemeth to be charity which is rather of the flesh; for natural inclination, self-will, hope of reward, study of our own interest, will seldom be absent.

3. He that hath true and perfect charity seeketh himself in nothing, but only desireth God to be glorified in all things. And he envieth no man, for he loveth no joy for himself alone. Neither doth he desire to rejoice in himself, but above all good things wisheth to find his blessedness in God. He attributeth nothing good to any man, but referreth it all to God, from whom, as from their fountain, all things proceed, and in whom, as in their end, all the Saints repose in fruition. Oh, if one had but a spark of real charity, truly would he feel that all earthly things are full of vanity!

BK. II., CH. IV.—OF A PURE MIND AND A SIMPLE INTENTION.

1. By two wings is man lifted above earthly things, viz., by simplicity and purity. Simplicity must be in the intention, purity in the affection. Simplicity aimeth at God, purity apprehendeth Him and tasteth Him. No good work will be a hindrance to thee, if thou be inwardly free from all inordinate affection. If thou aim at and seek after nothing

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else but the will of God and thy neighbour's benefit, then shalt thou enjoy interior liberty. If only thy heart were right then every created thing would be to thee a mirror of life and a book of holy teaching. There is no creature so little and so vile as not to manifest the goodness of God.

2. If thou wert inwardly good and pure, then wouldst thou discern all things without impediment, and comprehend them aright. A pure heart penetrates heaven and hell. According as every one is interiorly, so doth he judge exteriorly. If there be joy in the world, truly the man of pure heart possesseth it. And if there be anywhere tribulation and distress, an evil conscience doth the more readily experience it. As iron cast into the fire loses its rust, and becomes all bright with burning, so the man that turneth himself wholly to God is divested of all sloth, and changed into a new man.

3. When a man beginneth to grow lukewarm, then he is afraid of a little labour, and willingly receiveth exterior consolation. But when he beginneth perfectly to overcome himself, and to walk manfully in the way of God, then he maketh little account of things that before seemed to him grievous.

LESSON XVII. THE MONASTIC LIFE.

LESSON XVII.

**Of the Monastic Life : Of the Examples of the Holy Fathers :
Of the Exercises of a Good Religious : Of the Love of
Solitude and Silence.**

TEXTS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

Jesus answering, said : Amen, I say to you there is no man who hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or children, or lands for my sake and for the gospel, who shall not receive an hundred times as much, now in this time ; houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions : and in the world to come life everlasting.—Mark x. 29.

Strive to enter by the narrow gate : for many, I say to you, shall seek to enter, and shall not be able.—Luke xiii. 24.

Take, my brethren, for an example of suffering evil, of labour and patience, the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord. Behold we account them blessed who have endured. You have heard of the patience of Job, and you have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is merciful and compassionate.—James v. 10.

But be zealous for the better gifts.—1 Cor. xii. 31.

For the rest, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever modest, whatsoever just, whatsoever holy, whatsoever lovely, whatsoever of good fame, if there be any virtue, if any praise of discipline, think on these things.—Phil. iv. 8.

And forthwith Jesus obliged his disciples to go up into the boat, and to go before him over the water, till he dismissed the multitudes. And having dismissed the multitude, he went up into a mountain alone to pray. And when it was evening, he was there alone.—Matt. xiv. 22.

But thou when thou shalt pray, enter into thy chamber, and having shut the door, pray to thy Father in secret : and thy Father who seeth in secret will repay thee.—Matt. vi. 6.

These words convey—1, What gain will be theirs who leave all things for God, as Religious should ; 2, that in order to work out our salvation securely, we should quit the wide road of the world, whereon many walk, whose wills are said

LESSON XVII. EXAMPLE OF THE FATHERS.

to be good yet produce no results ; 3, that we should often turn to the examples of the Saints, for they enkindle the desire of practising virtue ; 4, that a soul, desirous of adhering entirely to God, ought to be intent on all that belongs to great sanctity and perfection ; 5, that seclusion and solitude are most conducive to pleasing God, and the avoiding of the dangers, troubles, and contradictions of life. See how this is explained by what follows.

IMITATION—BK. I., CH. XVII.—OF THE MONASTIC LIFE.

1. Thou must learn to overcome self in many things, if thou wouldst live in peace and concord with others. It is no small thing to dwell in monasteries, or in a congregation, and to live there without complaint, and to persevere faithfully even unto death. Blessed is he who shall have lived there well, and have made a happy end. If thou wouldst persevere dutifully and make progress, look on thyself as an exile and a pilgrim upon earth. Thou must become a fool for Christ's sake, if thou wishest to lead the life of a religious.

2. The habit and the tonsure effect but little ; but the moral change, and the entire mortification of the passions, make a true religious. He that seeketh anything else but simply God, and the salvation of his soul, will find nothing but trouble and sorrow. And he who doth not strive to be the least, and subject to all, cannot long remain in peace.

3. Thou hast come to serve, not to govern : know thy vocation is to suffer and to labour, not to pass thy time in idleness or vain conversation. Here, therefore, men are tried as gold in the furnace. Here no man can abide, except he be ready with all his heart to humble himself for the love of God.

CH. XVIII.—OF THE EXAMPLES OF THE HOLY FATHERS.

1. Look upon the lively examples of the holy Fathers, in whom shone real perfection and religion, and thou wilt see how little it is, yea, almost nothing, that we do. Alas ! what is our life, if it be compared with theirs ! Saints and friends of Christ, they served our Lord in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness, labour and weariness, in watchings

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and fastings, in prayers and holy meditations, in frequent persecutions and reproaches.

2. Oh, how many and grievous tribulations did the Apostles suffer, and the Martyrs, and Confessors, and Virgins, and all the rest who resolved to follow the steps of Christ! For they hated their lives in this world, that they might keep them unto life eternal. Oh, what a strict and self-renouncing life the holy Fathers of the desert led! what long and grievous temptations did they bear! how often were they harassed by the enemy! what frequent and fervent prayers offered they up to God! what rigorous abstinence did they practise! what great zeal and fervour had they for spiritual progress! what a valiant contest had they to subdue their imperfections! how pure and upright an intention kept they towards God! By day they laboured, and in the night they gave themselves to long prayer; though even while they laboured, they ceased but little from mental prayer.

3. They spent all their time profitably; every hour seemed short which they spent with God; and even their necessary bodily refection was forgotten in the great sweetness of contemplation. They renounced all riches, dignities, honours, friends, and kindred; they desired to have nothing of this world; they hardly took what was necessary for life; it grieved them to serve the body even in its necessity. Accordingly, they were poor in earthly things, but very rich in grace and virtues. Outwardly they suffered want, but within they were refreshed with grace and Divine consolation.

4. They were aliens to the world, but they were the very near and familiar friends of God. To themselves they seemed as nothing, and the world despised them; but they were precious and beloved in the eyes of God. They persevered in true humility, they lived in simple obedience, they walked in charity and patience; and so every day they advanced in spirit, and gained great favour with God. They were given for an example to all religious; and ought more to excite us to advance in good than the number of the lukewarm induce us to grow remiss.

5. Oh, how great was the fervour of all religious in the beginning of their holy institute! Oh, how great was their devotion in prayer! how great their zeal for virtue! how vigorous the discipline that was kept up! what reverence and obedience, under the rule of the superior, flourished in all! Their traces

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that remain still bear witness that they were truly holy and perfect men who did battle so stoutly, and trampled the world under their feet. Now, he is thought great who is not a transgressor, and who can with patience endure what he hath undertaken.

6. Ah, the lukewarmness and negligence of our state! that we so soon fall away from our first fervour, and are even now tired of life through slothfulness and tepidity. Would to God that advancement in virtue were not quite asleep in thee, who hast so often seen the manifold examples of the devout!

CH. XIX.—OF THE EXERCISES OF A GOOD RELIGIOUS.

1. The life of a good religious ought to abound in every virtue, that he may be such inwardly as he seemeth to men outwardly to be. And with good reason ought he to be much more within than he appears outwardly; for it is God that beholdeth us, and we should exceedingly stand in awe of Him, and walk in His sight wherever we may be, as the Angels do, in purity. Every day we ought to renew our purpose, and stir ourselves up in fervour, as if it were the first day of our conversion, and to say, Help me, O Lord God, in my good purpose, and in Thy holy service, and grant I may this day begin indeed, since what I have hitherto done is nothing.

2. As our purpose is so will our progress be; and he hath need of much diligence that wisheth to advance much. And if he who strongly purposeth doth yet oftentimes fail, what will he do that seldom or but weakly resolveth? But the falling off from any good resolution happeneth many ways; and a trifling omission in our exercises hardly passeth over without some loss. The resolutions of the just depend rather on the grace of God than on their own wisdom; and in Him they always put their trust, whatever they take in hand. For man proposeth, but God disposeth; *neither is the way of man in his own hands* (Jer. x. 23).

3. If, for piety's sake, or for a brother's benefit, any accustomed exercise be sometimes omitted, it can easily be resumed afterwards. But if it be laid aside lightly, out of weariness of mind or negligence, it is justly blamable, and will be found to do harm. Let us try as much as we can, we shall still

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unavoidably fail in many things. Nevertheless, we should always have some certain resolution, and especially against the things that are our greatest hindrances. We must alike examine and set in order both our interior and exterior, for both are necessary to our advancement.

4. If thou canst not be continually recollected, at all events be so sometimes, and at least once a day; in the morning, for example; or the evening. In the morning make thy resolution; in the evening examine thy conduct, how thou hast behaved this day in word, deed, and thought; for it may be that in these thou hast many times offended God and thy neighbour. Gird thyself up like a man to resist the wicked suggestions of the devil; bridle gluttony, and thou wilt the easier bridle every inclination of the flesh. Never be wholly idle, but either reading, or writing, or praying, or meditating, or labouring at something for the common good. Nevertheless bodily exercises are to be practised with discretion and not equally to be undertaken by all.

5. Those things which are not common ought not to be done in public; for what is private is more safely practised in secret. But thou must take care not to be slothful in what is common, and too ready to do what is singular; but when thou hast fully and faithfully fulfilled what is of obligation, and whatever hath been enjoined thee, then if there be any time left, give thyself to thyself, as thy devotion may lead thee. All cannot use the self-same exercise; for one suits this person better, another that. Moreover, according to the diversity of times are different exercises agreeable; some please on holy days, others suit better on common days. We have need of one sort in time of temptation, of another in time of peace and quiet. There are some things we love to think of when we are sad, and others when we are joyful in the Lord.

6. About the time of the principal festivals we should renew our good exercises, and implore more fervently the intercession of the Saints. From festival to festival we should make our resolutions, as if we were then to depart from this world, and to come to the eternal festival. And so we ought carefully to prepare ourselves in seasons of devotion, and walk the more devoutly, and keep every observance the more strictly, as if we were in a little while to receive from God the reward of our labour.

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7. And if it be put off, let us believe that we were not well enough prepared, and as yet unworthy of that so great glory, which shall be revealed to us in the time appointed; and let us study to prepare ourselves the better for our departure. *Blessed is that servant, saith the Evangelist S. Luke, whom, when the Lord shall come, He shall find watching. Amen, I say unto you, He shall set him over all His possessions* (Luke xii. 43).

CH. XX.—OF THE LOVE OF SOLITUDE AND SILENCE.

1. Seek a convenient time to retire into thyself, and think upon the benefits of God. Let curiosities alone. Read such matters as may produce compunction rather than give occupation. If thou wilt withdraw from superfluous talking and idle visiting, and from giving ear to news and rumours, thou wilt find time sufficient and proper to spend in good meditations. The greatest Saints shunned the company of men when they could, and chose rather to live unto God in secret.

2. As often as I have been amongst men, said one, I have returned less a man. This we too often experience when we talk long. It is easier to keep silence altogether than not to fall into excess in speaking. It is easier to keep retired at home than to be enough upon one's guard abroad. He, therefore, who aims at inward and spiritual things, must, with Jesus, turn aside from the crowd. No man can safely appear in public but he who loves seclusion. No man can safely speak but he who loves silence. No man can safely be a superior but he who loves to live in subjection. No man can safely command but he who hath learned how to obey well.

3. No man can rejoice securely but he who hath the testimony of a good conscience within. Yet the security of the Saints was always full of the fear of God. Neither were they the less careful and humble in themselves because they shone with great virtues and grace. But the security of the wicked arises from their pride and presumption, and in the end turns to their own deception. Never promise thyself security in this life, however good a religious or devout solitary thou mayest seem to be.

4. Oftentimes the highest in men's estimation have been

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in the greater danger by reason of their too much confidence. And hence it is more useful for many not to be wholly without temptations, but to be very often assaulted, lest they be too secure ; lest perhaps they be lifted up unto pride, and even turn aside, with too little restraint, after exterior consolations. Oh, how good a conscience would he keep who should never seek transitory joys and never busy himself about the world ! Oh, how great peace and tranquillity would he have who should cut off all vain solicitude, and think only of the things of God and his salvation, and place his whole hope in God !

5. No one is worthy of heavenly consolation who hath not diligently exercised himself in holy compunction. If thou wouldst feel compunction to thy very heart, enter into thy chamber and shut out the tumult of the world ; as it is written, *Be sorry in your beds* (Ps. iv. 5). Thou wilt find in thy cell what thou wilt too often lose abroad. The cell continually dwelt in groweth sweet ; but ill guarded, it begetteth weariness. If, in the beginning of thy religious life, thou dwell in it and keep it well, it will be to thee afterwards as a dear friend and most delightful solace.

6. In silence and in quiet the devout soul maketh progress, and learneth the hidden things of Scripture. There she findeth floods of tears, wherein each night she may wash and be cleansed, and so become the more familiar with her Creator, the further she dwelleth from all the tumult of the world. For whoso withdraweth himself from acquaintances and friends, to him will God draw near with His holy angels. Better is it to lie hid and take diligent care of thyself, than, neglecting thyself, to work even miracles. It is praiseworthy for a religious to go abroad but seldom, to shun being seen, and to have no wish to see men.

7. Why dost thou wish to see what it is not lawful for thee to have ? *The world passeth away, and its concupiscence* (1 John ii. 17). The longings of sense draw thee to roam abroad ; but when the hour hath passed away, what dost thou bring back with thee but a weight upon thy conscience, and a dissipated heart ? Oftentimes a joyous going abroad begetteth a sorrowful coming home, and a merry evening maketh a sad morning. So all carnal joys enter pleasantly, but at the end bring remorse and death.

8. What canst thou see elsewhere that thou dost not see

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here? Behold the heavens, and the earth, and all the elements; for out of these are all things made.

9. What canst thou see anywhere that can last long under the sun? Thou trustest that perchance thou wilt be satisfied; but thou wilt never be able to reach it. If thou couldst see all things at once before thee, what would it be but an empty vision? Lift up thine eyes to God on high, and pray for thy sins and negligences. Leave vain things to vain people: look thou to those things which God hath commanded thee. Shut thy door upon thee, and call unto thee Jesus thy beloved. Stay with Him in thy cell; for nowhere else shalt thou find so great peace. If thou hadst never left it, nor hearkened to any rumours, thou wouldst have remained longer in happy peace. But the moment thou delightest to give ear to what is new, thou must suffer from thence disquietude of heart.

LESSON XVIII.

That we ought to be Ardent for our Amendment and Progress : That all things are to be referred to God as to our Last End : That it is sweet to Despise the World and to Serve God : How we are to be Disposed, what we are to say when we Desire anything.

TEXTS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

Know you not that they that run in the race, all run indeed, but one receiveth the prize? So run that you may obtain. And every one that striveth for the mastery refraineth himself from all things. And they indeed that they may receive a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible one. I therefore so run, not as at an uncertainty : I so fight, not as one beating the air : but I chastise my body, and bring it into subjection ; lest perhaps, when I have preached to others, I myself should become a cast-away.—1 Cor. ix. 24.

For the rest therefore, brethren, we pray and beseech you in the Lord Jesus, that as you have received of us how you ought to walk and to please God, so also you would walk, that you may abound the more.—1 Thess. iv. 1.

And we helping do exhort you, that you receive not the grace of God in vain. For he saith : In an accepted time have I heard thee : and in the day of salvation have I helped thee. Behold now is the acceptable time : behold now is the day of salvation.—2 Cor. vi. 1.

Therefore whether you eat, or drink, or whatsoever else you do, do all to the glory of God.—1 Cor. x. 31.

I have given them thy word ; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, as I also am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from evil. They are not of the world, as I also am not of the world. Sanctify them in truth : thy word is truth.—John xvii. 14.

My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me : nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.—Matt. xxvi. 39.

These words plainly show—1, The necessity of pressing on, and not being satisfied with the present state of your soul, unless you want to fall back and incur grave spiritual loss ; 2, that you should make all use of the time given you, and

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the graces you receive, and not abuse these gifts; 3, that all our acts must be referred to God; 4, that the world must be held in great contempt, for Christ spoke of it as something quite rejected by Him; 5, also how we should make known to God and set forth our petitions, and accept His holy will. Now, listen to what your master says hereon in the Imitation.

IMITATION—BK. I., CH. XXV.—OF THE FERVENT AMENDMENT OF OUR WHOLE LIFE.

1. Be watchful and diligent in the service of God, and often reflect: What hast thou come hither for, and why hast thou left the world? Was it not that thou mightest live for God, and become a spiritual man? Be fervent, then, in making progress; for thou shalt shortly receive the reward of thy labours, and then neither fear nor sorrow shall come near thy borders. Thou shalt labour a little now, and thou shalt find great rest, yea, everlasting joy. If thou continue faithful and fervent in doing, God will doubtless be faithful and rich in rewarding. Thou must keep a good and firm hope of coming to the crown; but thou must not be too secure, lest thou grow indolent, or be lifted up.

2. When a certain anxious person, who oftentimes wavered between hope and fear, once overcome with sadness, threw himself upon the ground in prayer before one of the altars in the church, and revolving these things in his mind, said, Oh! if I only knew that I should persevere: that very instant he heard within him this heavenly answer: And if thou didst know this, what wouldst thou do? Do now what thou wouldst then do, and thou shalt be perfectly secure. And immediately being consoled and comforted, he committed himself to the divine will, and his anxious wavering ceased. He had no longer any wish for curious searchings to find out what should happen to him, but studied rather to learn what was the acceptable and perfect will of God for the beginning and the perfecting of every good work.

3. *Hope in the Lord*, saith the prophet, *and do good, and inhabit the land, and thou shalt be fed with the riches thereof* (Ps. xxxvi. 3). There is one thing that keepeth many back from spiritual progress, and from fervour in amendment; namely, a dread of the difficulty or of the labour that is necessary in the

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struggle. And assuredly they especially advance beyond others in virtue who strive the most manfully to overcome the very things which are the hardest and most contrary to them. For there a man doth profit most and merit more abundant grace, where he doth most overcome himself and mortify his spirit.

4. All have not, indeed, equal difficulties to overcome and mortify ; but a diligent and zealous person will make greater progress, though he have more passions, than another who is well regulated, but less fervent in the pursuit of virtues. Two things especially conduce to great improvement ; namely, forcibly to withdraw oneself from what nature is viciously inclined to, and fervently to follow up the good one is most in need of. Study, likewise, especially to guard against and to get the better of such things as oftenest displease thee in others.

5. Turn all occasions to thy spiritual profit, so that, if thou seest or hearest any good examples, thou mayest be stirred up to imitate them. And whatever thou shalt observe that is blameworthy, take care not to do the same thing thyself ; or, if thou hast ever done so, study to amend as soon as possible. As thine eye observeth others, so again thou art also observed by others. How pleasant and sweet is it to see brethren fervent and devout, well mannered and well disciplined ! How sad and afflicting to see them walking disorderly, and not practising the things that they are called to ! How mischievous it is to neglect the purpose of their vocation, and turn their minds to what is not their business !

6. Do thou be mindful of the purpose thou hast undertaken, and place before thee the image of the Crucified. Well mayest thou be ashamed when looking into the life of Jesus Christ, that as yet thou hast not studied more to conform thyself to Him, long as thou hast been in the way of God. The religious who exerciseth himself earnestly and devoutly in the most holy life and passion of our Lord shall find there abundantly all that is useful and necessary for him ; nor need he seek out of Jesus for anything better. Oh ! if the crucified Jesus should come into our heart, how quickly and sufficiently learned should we be !

7. The fervent religious beareth and taketh all things well that are commanded him. The negligent and lukewarm religious hath trouble upon trouble, and endureth angui-

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on every side ; for he has no consolation within, and is forbidden to seek it without. The religious that liveth out of discipline is exposed to dreadful ruin. He that is seeking to be more free and unrestrained will always be in trouble ; for one thing or other will ever disgust him.

8. How do so many other religious do, who live most strictly under the cloistered discipline? They seldom go abroad, they live retired, they are fed on the very poorest, they are coarsely clad, they labour much, they talk little, they keep late vigils, they rise early, they spend much time in prayer, they read frequently, and keep themselves in all discipline. Consider the Carthusians, and the Cisterciars, and the monks and nuns of other religious orders, how they rise every night to sing praises to the Lord ! And what a shame it would be for thee to grow slothful at such a time, when so great a multitude of religious are beginning to sing aloud with joy to God !

9. Oh ! if there were nothing else to do but praise the Lord our God with all our heart and voice ! Oh ! if thou didst never want to eat, or drink, or sleep, but couldst be always praising God, and occupied with spiritual pursuits only, then thou wouldst be much happier than now, since thou art a slave to the flesh from necessities of every kind. Would to God that there were none of these necessities, but only spiritual reflections required for the soul. These, alas, it is seldom enough we taste !

10. When a man hath arrived so far that he seeks his consolation from no created thing, then first doth he begin truly to taste what God is : then, too, will he be well content with everything that happens. Then will he neither rejoice much nor be sorrowful for little, but will commit himself wholly and confidingly to God, who is to him all in all ; to whom nothing is lost or dieth, but for whom all things live, and at whose beck they instantly obey.

11. Ever keep in mind thine end, and that time lost returneth no more. Without care and diligence thou shalt never acquire virtues. If once thou beginnest to grow lukewarm, thou beginnest to be in a bad state. But if thou give thyself to fervour, thou shalt find great peace ; and thou shalt feel thy labour light, through the grace of God and for the love of virtue. The fervent and diligent man is ready for all things. It is harder labour to withstand our vices and

LESSON XVIII. GOD OUR LAST END.

passions than to toil at bodily labours. He that shunneth not small defects, by little and little falleth into greater. Thou wilt always rejoyce in the evening, if thou spend the day profitably. Watch over thyself, stir up thyself, admonish thyself, and, whatever may become of others, neglect not thyself. In proportion as thou dost violence to thyself, the greater progress wilt thou make.

[Observe how your master insists on doing violence to self. There is no progress without it. It presupposes pains and labour. And this shows the co-operation which we must give to the grace of God. With His help we must do ourselves this violence, not to be wanting to the grace of God. We must implore His help in using this violence by which natural propensities are overcome. Christ Himself urges us, saying : *Ask, seek, knock.*]

BK. III., CH. IX.—THAT ALL THINGS ARE TO BE REFERRED TO GOD, AS TO OUR LAST END.

1. Son, I must be thy chief and last end, if thou desirest to be truly happy. By this intention shall thy affections be purified, which too often are irregularly bent upon thyself and things created. For if in anything thou seekest thyself, thou presently faintest away within thyself, and growest dry. Principally therefore refer all things to Me ; for it is I that have given thee all. Consider each thing as flowing from the sovereign Good ; and therefore all must be returned to Me, as to their origin.

2. Out of Me both little and great, poor and rich, as out of a living fountain, draw living water ; and they who freely and willingly serve Me shall receive grace for grace. But he who would glory in anything else beside Me, or delight in any good as his own, shall not be established in true joy, nor enlarged in his heart ; but in many ways shall be impeded and straitened. Therefore thou must not ascribe any good to thyself, nor attribute virtue to any man ; but give all to God, without whom man has nothing. I have given all, I will also have all again ; and with great strictness do I require a return of thanks.

3. This is that truth by which all vainglory is put to flight. And if heavenly grace and true charity come in, there shall be no envy nor narrowness of heart, nor shall self-love keep

LESSON XVIII. OF SERVING GOD.

possession. For Divine charity overcometh all, and enlargeth all the powers of the soul. If thou art truly wise, thou wilt rejoice in Me alone, thou wilt hope in Me alone; for none is good but God only, who is to be praised above all, and to be blessed in all.

BK. III., CH. X.—THAT IT IS SWEET TO DESPISE THE WORLD AND TO SERVE GOD.

1. Now will I speak again, O Lord, and will not be silent; *I will say in the hearing of my God and my King who is on high* (Ps. lxxvii. 25); *Oh, how great is the abundance of Thy sweetness, O Lord, which Thou hast hidden for those that fear Thee!* (Ps. xxx. 20). But what art Thou to those that love Thee? what to those that serve Thee with their whole heart? Unspeakable, indeed, is the sweetness of Thy contemplation, which Thou bestowest on those that love Thee. In this most of all hast Thou showed me the sweetness of Thy love, that when I had no being, Thou didst make me; and when I was straying far from Thee, Thou broughtest me back again, that I might serve Thee; and Thou hast commanded me to love Thee.

2. O Fountain of everlasting love, what shall I say of Thee? How can I ever forget Thee, who hast vouchsafed to remember me, even after I was corrupted and was lost? Beyond all hope hast Thou shown mercy to Thy servant; and beyond all desert hast Thou manifested Thy grace and friendship. What return shall I make to Thee for this favour? for it is not granted to all to forsake all things, to renounce the world, and to assume the monastic life. Is it much that I should serve Thee, whom the whole creation is bound to serve? It ought not to seem much to me to serve Thee; but this rather doth appear great and wonderful to me, that Thou vouchsafest to receive for Thy servant one so wretched and unworthy, and to associate him with Thy beloved servants.

3. Behold all things are Thine which I have, and with which I serve Thee. And yet contrariwise Thou rather servest me than I Thee. Lo, heaven and earth, which Thou hast created for the service of man, stand ready before Thee, and daily perform whatsoever Thou hast commanded. And this is but little; for Thou hast also created and appointed angels for the service of man. But what transcendeth all this is that Thou

LESSON XVIII. OF GOOD DISPOSITIONS.

Thyself hast vouchsafed to serve man, and hast promised that Thou wilt give him Thyself.

4. What shall I give Thee for all these thousand favours? Would that I could serve Thee all the days of my life. Would that I were able, were it but for one day, to serve Thee worthily! Verily Thou art worthy of all service, of all honour, and of eternal praise. Thou art truly my Lord, and I am Thy poor servant, who am bound with all my strength to serve Thee, and ought never to grow weary of praising Thee. This is my will, this is my desire; and whatever is wanting in me do Thou vouchsafe to supply.

5. It is a great honour, a great glory, to serve Thee, and to despise all things for Thee. For they who willingly subject themselves to Thy most holy service shall have great grace. They shall experience the most sweet consolation of the Holy Spirit who for the love of Thee have cast away all carnal delight. They shall gain great freedom of mind who for Thy name enter upon the narrow way, and relinquish all worldly care.

6. Oh, pleasant and delightful service of God, which maketh a man truly free and holy! Oh, sacred state of religious servitude, which maketh men equal to angels, pleasing to God, terrible to the devils, and commendable to all the faithful! Oh, servitude lovely and ever to be desired, in which we are rewarded with the greatest good, and joy is acquired that will never end!

BK. III., CH. XV.—HOW WE ARE TO BE DISPOSED, AND WHAT WE ARE TO SAY, WHEN WE DESIRE ANYTHING.

1. My son, say this on every occasion: Lord, if it be pleasing to Thee, so let it be. Lord, if it be to Thy honour, let this be done in Thy name. Lord, if Thou seest that this is expedient, and approvest it as profitable for me, then grant that I may use it to Thy honour. But if Thou knowest that it will be hurtful to me, and not profitable for the salvation of my soul, take away from me such a desire. For not every desire is from the Holy Ghost, though to man it seem right and good. It is difficult to judge truly whether it be a good or evil spirit that impelleth thee to desire this or that, or whether thou art not moved to it by thy own spirit. Many in the end have been deceived who at first seemed to be led by a good spirit.

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2. Whatsoever, therefore, occurreth to thy mind as worthy to be desired, it must be always with the fear of God and humility of heart that thou desire and ask for it. And above all thou oughtest, with self-resignation, to commit all to Me, and to say: Lord, Thou knowest what is best; let this or that be done as Thou wilt. Give what Thou wilt, how much Thou wilt, and at what time Thou wilt. Do with me as Thou knowest, and as best pleaseth Thee, and is most for Thy honour. Put me where Thou wilt, and do with me in all things according to Thy will. I am in Thy hand; turn me hither and thither as Thou chooseth. Lo, I am Thy servant, ready for all things; for I do not desire to live for myself, but for Thee: oh, that I could do so in a worthy and perfect manner!

A PRAYER

FOR FULFILLING THE WILL OF GOD.

3. Grant me Thy grace, most merciful Jesus, that it may be with me, and labour with me, and continue with me unto the end. Grant me always to will and desire that which is most acceptable to Thee, and which pleaseth Thee best. Let Thy will be mine, and let my will always follow Thine, and agree perfectly with it. Let me always will, or not will, the same with Thee; and let me not be able to will, or not to will, otherwise than as Thou willest or willest not.

4. Grant that I may die to all things that are in the world, and for Thy sake love to be despised, and to be unknown in this world. Grant unto me, above all things to be desired, that I may rest in Thee, and that my heart may be at peace in Thee. Thou art the true peace of the heart; Thou art its only rest; out of Thee all things are hard and restless. *In this peace, in the self-same, that is, in Thee, the one sovereign eternal Good; I will sleep, and take my rest* (Ps. iv 9). Amen.

(We will now return to matters which concern all, whether religious or seculars.)

LESSON XIX. OF PRAYER.

LESSON XIX.

On the Necessity of Prayer : Of the Internal Discourse of Christ to a Faithful Soul : That Truth speaketh within us without Noise of Words : That the Words of God are to be heard with Humility, and that many Weigh them not.

TEXTS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

Watch ye, and pray that ye enter not into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh weak.—Matt. xxvi. 41.

Ask, and it shall be given you : seek, and ye shall find : knock, and it shall be opened to you. For every one that asketh, receiveth : and he that seeketh, findeth : and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened. Or what man is there among you, of whom if his son shall ask bread, will he reach him a stone ? Or if he shall ask a fish, will he reach him a serpent ? If you then being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask him ?—Matt. vii. 7.

If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, you shall ask whatever you will, and it shall be done unto you.—John xv. 7.

He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me. And he that loveth me shall be loved by my Father : and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.—John xiv. 21.

Behold, I stand at the gate, and knock. If any man shall hear my voice, and open to me the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.—Apoc. iii. 20.

But that on the ground, are they who in a good and perfect heart, hearing the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit in patience.—Luke viii. 15.

Those words teach you—1, That prayer, which is necessary not only to procure Divine benefits, but also to avoid falls, infallibly obtains its results ; for the Son of God promises this, and to make you sure of it, asserts that the love of God for you is more than paternal ; 2, that Christ makes Himself known in a spiritual manner to the soul which, keeping

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His words recorded in Holy Writ, disposes itself to listen to internal inspirations and supernatural truths. However, the seed of His Word brings forth fruit only in the heart that is humble, sincere, and detached. Listen now to both your teachers.

INTRODUCTION—PT. II., CH. I.—OF THE NECESSITY OF PRAYER.

1. Prayer placing our understanding in the clearness of the Divine light, and exposing our will to the heat of heavenly love, there is nothing so much purges our understanding from its ignorance, and our will from its depraved affections. It is the water of benediction, the sprinkling whereof makes green and flourishing the plants of our good desires, washes our souls from imperfections, and quenches passions in our heart.

2. But above all I recommend to you mental and cordial prayer, and especially that which has for its subject the life and passion of our Lord ; for, beholding Him often by meditation, your soul will be filled with Him, you will learn His ways, and frame your actions according to the model of His. He is the light of the world ; it is then in Him, by Him, and for Him, that we must be guided and illuminated. He is the Tree of desire, under the shadow of which we must refresh ourselves. He is the living Fountain of *Jacob* to wash away all our stains. In fine, as little children, by hearing their mothers, and by prattling with them, learn to speak ; so we, conversing with our Saviour by meditation and observing His words, works, and His affections, shall soon by help of His grace learn to speak, work, and will like Him. We must stay with Him, *Philothea* ; and believe me, we cannot go to God the Father but through this gate ; for even as the glass of a mirror cannot terminate our sight unless the back be tinned or leaded, so the Divinity could not well be contemplated by us in this world below if it were not joined to the Sacred Humanity of our Saviour, whose life and death is the fairest, most delightful, sweetest, and most profitable object we can choose for our ordinary meditation. 'Tis not for nothing that our Saviour called Himself the Bread descended from heaven ; for as bread is to be eaten with all sorts of meats, so our

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Saviour must be meditated, considered, and sought after in all our prayers and actions.

His life and death have been disposed and distributed into divers points by many authors to serve for meditation. Those whom I counsel you to use are *S. Bonaventure, Bellintani, Bruno, Capiglia, Granada, Da Ponte.*

3. Employ in it every day an hour before dinner ; if it may be, at the beginning of the morning, for then you shall find your spirit less troubled, and more fresh after the repose of the night. But spend no more than an hour unless your Spiritual Father expressly commands it.

4. If you can perform this exercise in the church, and find sufficient tranquillity there, it would be the most commodious place for you, because neither father nor mother, wife nor husband, nor any other whatsoever can well hinder you from staying one hour in church ; whereas, being in subjection, you cannot perchance assure yourself to have an hour so free in your own house.

5. Begin all your prayers, be they mental or vocal, with the presence of God ; keep this rule without exception, and in a short time you will perceive what profit you shall reap by it.

6. If you will be advised by me, say your *Pater, Ave,* and *Credo* in Latin, but learn likewise to understand well the words of them in your own language, to the end that saying them in the common language of the Church, you may nevertheless relish the admirable and delicious sense of them, not striving to say many, but taking care to say those you do say from your heart ; for one only *Pater* said with devotion is more worth than many hastily and cursorily repeated.

7. The *Beads* are a most profitable kind of praying, if they be used as they ought ; and to that end provide yourself with some of those little treatises which teach the way of repeating them. It is good also to say the Litanies of our Saviour, of our Lady, of the Saints, and other such vocal prayers as are in approved *Manuals* and *Primers*, yet with this caution, that if you have the gift of mental prayer you always reserve for that the principal place, so that if afterward, either for multiplicity of business, or for any other respect, you cannot say your vocal prayers, be not therefore troubled, but rest content to say only, before or after your meditation, the *Pater, Ave,* and *Credo.*

LESSON XIX. OF INTERNAL DISCOURSE.

8. If in making your vocal prayers you feel your heart invited to inward or mental prayer, refuse it not, but let your spirit turn gently that way, and trouble not yourself for not finishing your vocal prayers which you did intend; for the mental prayer which you have made instead thereof is as pleasing to God, and much more profitable for your soul. I except the office of the Church, if you be bound to say it, for that duty must not be neglected.

9. If it should happen that all the morning should pass away without this sacred exercise of mental prayer, either by the multitude of your affairs or any other cause, which you ought to prevent as much as possible, endeavour to repair this loss after dinner in some hour longest after meat, because doing it presently after eating, before digestion be well made, drowsiness will come on and your health would be prejudiced thereby.

10. But if all the day long you cannot do it, recompense the loss, at least, by multiplying ejaculatory prayers and by reading some book of devotion, with some penance for future prevention of this fault, and therewithal make a firm resolution to reduce yourself into order the day following.

IMITATION—BK. III., CH. I.—OF THE INTERNAL DISCOURSE OF CHRIST TO A FAITHFUL SOUL.

1. *I will hear what the Lord God will speak in me* (Ps. lxxxiv. 9). Happy is the soul that heareth the Lord speaking within her, and receiveth from His mouth the word of comfort. Happy ears that receive the breathings of the Divine whisper, and take no notice of the whisperings of this world. Happy ears indeed, that hearken not to the voice which soundeth without, but to Truth itself teaching within. Happy eyes that are shut to outward things, but intent on things internal. Happy they who penetrate into eternal things, and endeavour to prepare themselves more and more by daily exercises for the receiving of heavenly secrets. Happy they who rejoice to be wholly intent on God, and who shake off every worldly impediment. Consider these things, O my soul, and close up the doors of thy sensual desires, that thou mayest hear what the Lord thy God speaketh within thee.

2. Thus saith thy Beloved: *I am thy salvation* (Ps. xxxiv. 3), thy peace, and thy life. Keep thyself with Me, and

LESSON XIX. TRUTH SPEAKETH WITHIN US.

thou shalt find peace. Let go all transitory things: seek the eternal. What are all things temporal but seductive snares? and what avail all created things, if thou be forsaken by the Creator? Cast off, then, all earthly things, and make thyself pleasing to thy Creator, and faithful to Him, that so thou mayest lay hold on true happiness.

CH. II.—THAT TRUTH SPEAKETH WITHIN US WITHOUT NOISE OF WORDS.

1. *Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth* (1 Kings iii. 9). *I am Thy servant; give me understanding, that I may know Thy testimonies* (Ps. cxviii. 125). *Incline my heart to the words of Thy mouth* (Ps. cxviii. 36): *let Thy speech distil as the dew* (Deut. xxxii. 2). Heretofore the children of Israel said to Moses, Speak thou to us, and we will hear: let not the Lord speak to us, lest we die. It is not thus, O Lord, it is not thus I pray; but rather with the Prophet Samuel, I humbly and earnestly entreat, *Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth*. Let not Moses, nor any of the Prophets, speak to me: speak Thou rather, O Lord God, the Inspirer and Enlightener of all the Prophets; for Thou alone, without them, canst perfectly instruct me; but they, without Thee, will avail me nothing.

2. They may indeed sound forth words, but they give not the spirit. Most beautifully do they speak; but if Thou be silent, they inflame not the heart. They give the letter, but Thou disclorest the sense. They publish the mysteries, but Thou unlockest the meaning of the things signified. They declare the commandments, but Thou enablest us to fulfil them. They show the way, but Thou givest strength to walk in it. What they can do is only from without, but Thou instructest and enlightenest the heart. They water outwardly, but Thou givest the increase. They cry aloud in words, but Thou impartest understanding to the hearing.

3. Let not then Moses speak to me, but Thou, O Lord my God, the Eternal Truth, lest I die and prove fruitless, if I be admonished only outwardly, and not enkindled within. Lest it be to my condemnation that the Word be heard and not fulfilled, known and not loved, believed and not observed. *Speak, then, O Lord, for Thy servant heareth; for Thou hast the words of eternal life* (John vi. 69). Speak

LESSON XIX. HEARING THE WORD OF GOD.

to me, that it may be some comfort to my soul, and the amendment of my whole life ; and also to Thy praise, and glory, and everlasting honour.

CH. III.—THAT THE WORDS OF GOD ARE TO BE HEARD WITH HUMILITY, AND THAT MANY WEIGH THEM NOT.

1. My son, hear My words, words most sweet, excelling all the learning of philosophers, and of the wise men of this world. *My words are spirit and life* (John vi. 64), and not to be estimated according to human perception. They are not to be drawn forth for vain complacency, but are to be heard in silence, and to be received with all humility and great affection.

2. And I said, *Blessed is the man whom Thou, O Lord, shalt instruct, and shalt teach him Thy law ; that Thou mayest give him rest from the evil days* (Ps. xxiii 12), and that he may not be desolate upon earth. I (saith the Lord) have taught the Prophets from the beginning, and even till now I cease not to speak to all. But many are deaf and hardened to My voice. The greater number listen more willingly to the world than to God, and are readier to follow the desires of their flesh than the good pleasure of God. The world promiseth things temporal and of small value, and is served with great eagerness : I promise things most excellent and everlasting, and yet men's hearts remain torpid.

3. Who is there that serveth and obeyeth Me in all things, with that great care with which the world and its lords are served ? *Be ashamed, O Sidon, saith the sea* (Isa. xxiii. 4). And if thou ask why, hear the reason. For a scanty sustenance men run a great way ; for eternal life many will scarce lift foot once from the ground. A petty gain is sought after ; for a single coin sometimes men shamefully quarrel : yea, for some mere trifle or a slight promise, men will brave toil day and night.

4. But, alas ! for an unchangeable good, for an inestimable reward, for the highest honour and never-ending glory, they are loath to undergo a little fatigue. Blush, then, thou slothful, querulous servant, that they are actually more ready to labour for death than thou for life. They rejoice more in vanity than thou in the truth. Sometimes, indeed,

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they are disappointed of their hopes ; but My promise deceiveth no man, nor sendeth away empty him that trusteth in Me. What I have promised, I will give ; what I have said, I will make good ; if only a man continue to the end faithful in My love. I am the Rewarder of all the good, and the mighty Prover of all the devout.

5. Write My words in thy heart, and think diligently on them ; for they will be very necessary in the time of temptation. What thou understandest not when thou readest, thou shalt know in the day of visitation. I am accustomed to visit My elect in two manner of ways, namely, by trial and by consolation. And I daily read to them two lessons ; one to rebuke their vices, the other to exhort them to the increase of virtue. *He that hath My words, and slighteth them, hath One who shall judge him at the last day* (John xii. 48).

A PRAYER

TO IMPLORE THE GRACE OF DEVOTION.

6. O Lord my God, Thou art all my good ; and who am I, that I should dare to speak to Thee ? I am Thy most poor servant, and a wretched little worm, much more poor and contemptible than I can conceive or dare express. Yet remember, O Lord, that I am nothing ; I have nothing, and can do nothing. Thou alone art good, just, and holy ; Thou canst do all things ; Thou givest all things ; Thou fillest all things ; leaving only the sinner empty. *Remember Thy tender mercies* (Ps. xxiv. 6), and fill my heart with Thy grace, Thou who wilt not that Thy works should be void.

7. How can I support myself in this wretched life unless Thy mercy and grace strengthen me ? Turn not away Thy face from me, delay not Thy visitation ; withdraw not Thy comfort, *lest my soul become as earth without water to Thee. O Lord, teach me to do Thy will* (Ps. cxlii. 6) ; teach me to converse worthily and humbly in Thy sight ; for Thou art my wisdom ; Thou knowest me in the Truth, and didst know me before the world was made, and before I was born in the world.

LESSON XX. OF MEDITATION.

LESSON XX.

**A Brief Method of Meditation : Of the Presence of God :
Of Invocation : Of Proposing the Mystery.**

TEXTS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

Before prayer prepare thy soul : and be not as a man that tempteth God.—Eccli. xviii. 23.

I set the Lord always in my sight : for he is at my right hand, that I be not moved.—Ps. xv. 8.

Turn again, O God of Hosts, look down from heaven, and see, and visit this vineyard : and perfect the same which thy right hand hath planted : and upon the Son of Man whom thou hast confirmed for thyself.—Ps. lxxix. 15.

I thought upon the days of old : and I had in my mind the eternal years. And I meditated in the night with my own heart : and I was exercised, and I swept my spirit.—Ps. lxxvi. 6.

We see now through a glass in a dark manner ; but then face to face : now I know in part ; but then I shall know even as I am known.—1 Cor. xiii. 12.

These words teach that preparation for prayer is necessary, and point out the way of making it well by the exercise—1, Of the Presence of God ; 2, of invocation ; 3, of meditation ; 4, of affections ; 5, of patience. Your sainted teacher fully explains this method to you with his customary clearness.

INTRODUCTION—PT. II., CH. II.—A BRIEF METHOD OF
MEDITATION. AND FIRST, OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD,
WHICH IS THE FIRST POINT OF PREPARATION.

I. But perhaps, *Philothea*, you know not how to make mental prayer, for it is a thing wherewith, in this unhappy age, few are acquainted. And for this cause I present you a brief and simple method to that end, till, by reading many good books composed on this subject, and, above all, by use, you may be more amply instructed.

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2. And first, I prescribe you the preparation, which consists in two points; whereof the first is to place yourself in the presence of God. I propound to you four principal means wherewith you may help yourself in this your beginning.

3. The first consists in a lively and attentive apprehension of the general presence of God; that is to say, to conceive that God is in all and every place, and that there is neither place nor thing in the world wherein He is not most assuredly present; so that, as the birds wheresoever they fly always encounter the air, wherever we go, or wherever we are, we still find God present.

4. Every one knows this truth, but every one is not attentive to comprehend it. Blind men, who see not the prince present with them, omit not to behave themselves with respect when they are admonished of his presence; but the truth is, because they see him not, they easily forget that he is present, and forgetting him, more easily omit their respect and reverence.

5. Alas! *Philothea*, we see not God, who is present with us, and though faith gives us notice of His presence, yet not seeing Him with our eyes, we often forget Him, and then behave ourselves as though God were very far from us. For although we well know that He is present in all things, yet not reflecting on it, 'tis all one as if we knew it not.

6. Therefore, ever before prayer we must stir up our soul to an attentive apprehension and consideration of God's presence; so did *David* when he cried out: *If I ascend into heaven, O my God, Thou art there: if I descend into hell, Thou art there* (Ps. cxxxviii. 8). We must also use the words of *Jacob*, who, having seen the holy ladder, said: *O how dreadful is this place! verily God is here, and I knew it not* (Gen. xxviii. 17); that is, he considered it not; for he was not ignorant that God was in all things and all places.

7. When you come, then, to prayer, say in your heart, and also to your heart, O my heart, my heart, God is truly here!

8. The second means to place yourself in this sacred presence is to think that God is not only in the place where you are, but that He is, after a most particular manner, in your heart, and in the very depths of your spirit, which He quickens and animates with His Divine presence, being there as the heart of your heart, and the spirit of your spirit. For as your soul being diffused through all your body is present

LESSON XX. OF MEDITATION.

in every part thereof, and yet resides with a more special presence in the heart, so likewise God being verily present in all things, notwithstanding in a more particular manner is present in our spirit. For this cause *David* calls God the *God of his heart* (Ps. lxxii. 26). And *S. Paul* says that *we live, we move, and we are in God* (Acts xvii. 28). In consideration, then, of this truth, stir up in your heart a great reverence towards God, who is there so intimately present.

9. The third means is, to consider our Saviour, who, in His Humanity, beholds from heaven all persons in the world, especially Christians, who are His children, and most particularly such as are in prayer, whose actions and behaviour He observes. And this is not a simple imagination, but an infallible truth; for although we see not Him, yet He from above sees us. *S. Stephen* saw Him thus at the time of his martyrdom: so that we may truly say with the Spouse: *Behold Him there behind the wall; see where He is looking through the window, beholding through the lattice* (Cant. ii. 9).

10. The fourth means consists in helping ourselves with simple imaginations, representing to our thoughts our Saviour in His Sacred Humanity, as if He were hard by us, as we are wont to represent our friends to our fancy, and to say: *Methinks I see such an one doing this or that, it seems to me that I see him, or some such thing.* But if the venerable Sacrament of the altar were present, then this presence would be real, and not by mere imagination; for the species and appearance of bread would be a tapestry behind which our Lord being really present sees and observes us, though we see not Him in His human form. Use, then, one of these four means of placing your soul in God's presence before prayer. But they must not be all employed at one time; one at once, and that briefly and simply, will suffice.

CH. III.—OF INVOCATION, THE SECOND POINT OF PREPARATION.

1. Invocation is made in this manner. Your soul remembering that she is in God's presence, prostrates herself with profound reverence, acknowledging that she is most unworthy to appear before so sovereign a Majesty; yet knowing that His goodness will have it so, she humbly demands grace of Him to serve Him well and to adore Him in this meditation.

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2. If you will, you may use some short and efficacious words, such as these of holy *David*: *Cast me not, O God, from Thy face: take not from me the favour of Thy Spirit* (Ps. l. 13). *Suffer Thy face to shine upon Thy servant, and I will consider Thy marvels* (Ps. cxviii. 135). *Give me understanding, and I will ponder Thy law and keep it with all my heart: I am Thy servant, give me understanding* (Ps. cxviii. 125); and such like.

3. It would be well also to call upon your good Angel, and upon the sacred persons who are concerned in the mystery on which you meditate. As for example, in meditating on the death of our Lord, you may invoke our Blessed Lady, *S. John*, *S. M. Magdalen*, and the good thief; that the inward touchings and motions which they received may be likewise communicated to you. So, in meditating on your own death, you may invoke your good guardian Angel, who will be present with you, desiring him to inspire you with appropriate considerations. Do the like in other mysteries.

CH. IV.—OF THE THIRD POINT OF PREPARATION, CONSISTING IN PROPOSING THE MYSTERY WE MEAN TO MEDITATE ON.

1. After these two ordinary points of preparation there is a third, which is not common to all sorts of meditations, which some call the form or figuring of the place, and others the interior lecture. And this is nothing else but to represent unto your imagination the substance of the mystery on which you will meditate, as though it were acted really and truly in your presence. For example, if you would meditate on our Lord upon the Cross, imagine yourself to be upon *Mount Calvary*, and that you there behold and hear all that was done or said on the day of our Lord's Passion; or if you will, for it is all one, imagine to yourself that in the very place where you are they are crucifying our Saviour in such manner as the holy Evangelists describe.

2. The like may be done when you will meditate on death, as I have noted in the meditation thereof; and likewise in the meditation of hell and such like mysteries, in which visible and sensible things may be represented; for, as concerning other mysteries, as those of the greatness of God, of the excellency of virtue, of the end for which we were created, which are invisible things, we cannot use this kind of imagination. True

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it is, we may use some similitude or comparison to help our meditation ; but that is done with some difficulty, and my meaning is to deal with you so plainly that your spirit may not be wearied in searching out inventions.

3. Now by means of this imagination we retain our spirit within the mystery we mean to meditate on, to the end it range not idly hither and thither, even as we shut up a bird in a cage, or as we tie a hawk by her leash that she may abide upon the wrist.

4. Yet some will tell you that it is better to use a simple imagination of faith, and a mere apprehension altogether mental and spiritual, in the representation of these mysteries, or else to imagine that these things are acted in your own understanding. But these ways are too subtle for beginners ; and therefore until such time as God shall raise you higher, I counsel you, *Philothea*, to keep in this low valley which I have shown you.

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LESSON XXI.

Of Considerations : Of Affections and Resolutions : Of the Conclusion, and Spiritual Posie : Certain Profitable Instructions : Of Considering the Secret Judgments of God : Of the Excellence of a Free Mind, which Devout Prayer rather than Reading Meriteth.

TEXTS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

Consider the lilies how they grow ; they labour not, neither do they spin. But I say to you, not even Solomon in all his glory was clothed like one of these.—Luke xii. 27.

Think diligently upon him that endured such opposition from sinners against himself : that you be not wearied, fainting in your minds. For you have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.—Heb. xii. 3.

In that same hour he rejoiced in the Holy Ghost, and said : I confess to thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones. Yes, Father, for so it hath seemed good in thy sight.—Luke x. 21.

For I am not conscious to myself of anything, yet am I not hereby justified : but he that judgeth me, is the Lord.—1 Cor. iv. 4.

But if any of you want wisdom, let him ask of God who giveth to all men abundantly, and upbraideth not : and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, which is moved and carried about by the wind.—James i. 5.

For if a man be a hearer of the word and not a doer : he shall be compared to a man beholding his natural countenance in a glass. For he beheld himself, and went his way, and presently forgot what manner of man he was. But he that hath looked into the perfect law of liberty, and hath continued therein, not becoming a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work ; this man shall be blessed in his deed.—James i. 23.

These words teach you—1, That we should mount from the consideration of visible things to the invisible ; 2, what affections the meditation on the Passion ought to produce ;

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3, what movements of joy known truth causes within the soul ; 4, that you should presume nothing on account of good works, but rather fear the just judgment of God ; 5, that you should ask in prayer with confidence ; 6, that he has the greater guilt, who, knowing what is good and right, fails to accomplish it. Listen hereon to both your masters.

INTRODUCTION—PT. II., CH. V.—OF CONSIDERATIONS, WHICH ARE THE SECOND PART OF MEDITATION.

I. After the acts of imagination, follow the acts of our understanding which we call meditation, and this is no other thing but one or many considerations made to stir up our affections to God and godly things. For in this is meditation different to study and other thoughts and considerations, which are not made to obtain virtue or the love of God, but for other respects and intentions, as to become learned, to write, or dispute. Having then limited your understanding, as I have said, within the bounds of the subject you will meditate either by imagination if the matter be sensible, or by a simple proposal of it if it be insensible, begin to make considerations on it, according to the examples you may see ready framed in the meditations above written. And if your soul find sufficient satisfaction, light, and fruit in any one of the considerations, stay there without going further, doing as the bees, which never leave the flower so long as they find any honey to be sucked out of it ; but if you find not the success, according to your desire, in any point, having turned and tried it in your imagination, proceed to another ; but be sure to go on sweetly and plainly in this business without tiring yourself too much.

CH. VI.—OF AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS, THE THIRD PART OF MEDITATION.

I. Meditation infuses good motions into our will, or the affective part of our soul ; such are the love of God and our neighbour, the desire of heaven and glory, zeal for the salvation of souls, imitation of our Lord's life, compassion, admiration, joy, fear of God's displeasure, of judgment and of hell, hatred of sin, confidence in the goodness and mercy of God, and shame for our wicked life past. And in these affections our spirit should spread and extend itself as far as

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it is possible. And if you desire help in this, take in hand the first tome of the meditations of *Andrew Capiglia*, and look into the preface, where he shows the manner of dilating these affections, as *Father Arias* does more largely in his *Treatise of Prayer*.

2. You must not dwell long upon these general affections, without descending to special and particular resolutions for your correction and amendment. For example, the first word that our Lord spake on the cross will doubtless stir up in your soul a good affection of imitation, as a desire to pardon and to love your enemies; but this is to small purpose, if you add not to it a particular resolution in this manner: Well, then, I will not hereafter be angry at such and such words, which such and such persons, as my neighbour or my servant, shall say of me, nor be sensible of this or that affront which such or such a person shall put upon me, but I will rather say or do such and such a thing to gain him and sweeten him towards me. And by this means, *Philothea*, you shall correct your defects in very short time; whereas, by affections only, amendment will be but hardly and slowly made.

(But in order to learn how to pour out these affections from your heart, and how to ponder on matter proposed for meditation, take for example the two following chapters.)

IMITATION—BK. III., CH. XIV.—OF CONSIDERING THE SECRET JUDGMENTS OF GOD, THAT WE BE NOT PUFFED UP WITH OUR OWN GOOD WORKS.

1. Thou thunderest forth over my head Thy judgments, O Lord, and Thou shakest all my bones with fear and trembling, and my soul is terrified exceedingly. I stand astonished, and consider that *the heavens are not pure in Thy sight* (Job xv. 15). *If in the angels Thou hast found depravity*, and hast not spared them, what will become of me? *Stars have fallen from heaven* (Apoc. viii. 18), and I, dust as I am, how can I presume? They whose works seemed praiseworthy have fallen to the very lowest; and those that did eat the bread of Angels I have seen delighted with the husks of swine.

2. There is, then, no sanctity, if Thou, O Lord, withdraw Thy hand. No wisdom avails, if Thou cease to govern

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us. No strength is of any help, if Thou cease to preserve us. No chastity is secure without Thy protection. No self-custody profits us, if Thy holy vigilance be not nigh unto us. For left to ourselves, we sink and perish; but by Thee visited, we are raised up and live. For we are unsteadfast, but by Thee we are strengthened; we are tepid, but by Thee we are inflamed.

3. Oh, how humbly and lowly ought I to think of myself; of how little worth, whatever good I may seem to have! Oh, how profoundly ought I to abase myself under Thy unfathomable judgments, O Lord, where I find myself to be nothing else but nothing, and altogether nothing! O weight immense! O sea that cannot be passed over, where I find nothing of myself but only and wholly nothing! Where, then, is there any lurking-place for glorying? where any confidence conceived of my own virtue? All vainglory is swallowed up in the depth of Thy judgments over me.

4. What is all flesh in Thy sight? *Shall the clay glory against him that formed it?* (Isa. xxix. 16.) How can he be puffed up with vain talk, whose heart is subjected to God in truth. All the world will not lift him up whom the Truth hath subjected to itself. Neither will he be moved with the tongues of all that praise him, who hath settled his whole hope in God. For even they who speak, behold, they are all nothing, for they shall pass away with the sound of their words: *but the Truth of the Lord remaineth for ever* (Ps. cxvi. 2).

CH. XXVI.—OF THE EXCELLENCE OF A FREE MIND, WHICH DEVOUT PRAYER RATHER THAN READING MERITETH.

1. Lord, this is the work of a perfect man, never to let the mind slacken from attending to heavenly things, and amidst many cares to pass on as it were without care; not after the manner of an indolent person, but by a certain prerogative of a free mind, not cleaving with inordinate affection to anything created.

2. Preserve me, I beseech Thee, O most merciful Lord God, from the cares of this life, that I be not too much entangled by them; from the many necessities of the body, that I be not ensnared by pleasure; and from all hindrances of the soul, lest, being overcome by molestations, I be quite

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cast down. I do not say from those things which worldly vanity covets with so much eagerness; but from those miseries which, by the common curse of our mortality, penally weigh down and keep back the soul of Thy servant from entering as often as it pleaseth into liberty of spirit.

3. O my God, who art unspeakable sweetness, turn for me into bitterness all carnal consolation, which withdraweth me from the love of things eternal, and wickedly allureth me to itself, by setting before me some delightful present good. Let not flesh and blood, O my God, prevail over me; let it not overcome me; let not the world and its transitory glory deceive me; let not the devil supplant me by his craftiness. Give me courage to resist, patience to endure, and constancy to persevere. Give me, instead of all worldly consolation, the most sweet unction of Thy Spirit; and instead of carnal love, infuse into me the love of Thy Name.

4. Behold, eating, drinking, clothing, and other necessaries appertaining to the support of the body, are burdensome to the fervent spirit. Grant that I may use such necessary supports with moderation, and not be entangled with any inordinate affection. It is not lawful to cast them all away, for nature must be sustained; but to require superfluities, and such things as are rather for delight, Thy holy law forbiddeth; for otherwise the flesh would grow insolent against the spirit. In all this, I beseech Thee, let Thy hand govern and teach me, that I may in no way transgress.

INTRODUCTION—PT. II., CH. VII.—OF THE CONCLUSION, AND SPIRITUAL POSIE.

1. Last of all we must conclude our meditation by three acts, which must be done with the greatest humility we can. The first is, thanksgiving to God for the holy affections and resolutions He has given us, and for His goodness and mercy we have discovered in the mystery of our meditation.

2. The second is, an oblation, whereby we offer to God His own goodness and mercy, the death, Blood, and merits of His only Son, and jointly with them our affections and resolutions.

3. The third is a petition or supplication, by which we demand of God and conjure Him to communicate unto us the graces and virtues of His Son, and to bless our affections and

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resolutions to the end we may faithfully put them in execution. Then likewise we pray for the Church, for our country, pastors, parents, friends, and others, employing to that end the intercession of our Blessed Lady, and of the Angels and Saints. Lastly, I have advised that you should say a *Pater*, and an *Ave*, which is the general and necessary prayer of all the faithful.

4. To all this I have added that you should gather a little nosegay of devotion. My meaning is this. Such as have been walking in a pleasant garden, go not willingly thence without gathering four or five flowers to smell at and keep in their hands all the day after. Even so, when our mind has discoursed by meditation on some mystery, we should choose one or two or three points which we have found most proper for our advancement, on which we must busy our mind, and spiritually smell at them all the rest of the day. And this must be done in the self-same place where we made our meditation, walking alone, and entertaining our thoughts some short time after.

CH. VIII.—CERTAIN PROFITABLE INSTRUCTIONS UPON THE SUBJECT OF MEDITATION.

1. Above all things, *Philothea*, when you rise from your meditation, remember the resolutions and deliberations you have taken, and carefully put them in practice that day. This is the chief fruit of meditation, without which oftentimes it is not only unprofitable but hurtful, for virtues meditated and not practised puff up the mind, and make us think that we are such indeed as we are resolved to be, which doubtless is true, when our resolutions are lively and solid; yet they are not such, but rather vain and dangerous, if they be not practised. We must therefore try all means and seek all occasions, little or great, of putting our resolutions in execution. For example, if I resolved by mildness to win the minds of such as have offended me, I must endeavour this day to meet with them and salute them courteously, or if I cannot meet with them to speak well of them and to pray to God for them.

2. Having finished this mental prayer take heed you give not your heart a jog, lest you spill the balm you have received by means of your prayer. My meaning is, that for some time, if it were possible, you keep yourself silent, and fair and softly

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remove your heart from your prayers to your worldly business, retaining so long as you are able the feeling and affection you have conceived. A man that has got some precious liquor in a fair porcelain dish to carry home to his house will go gently, never looking aside, but sometimes before him for fear of stumbling, sometimes upon his dish for fear of spilling the liquor ; even so must you do, having ended your meditation, withdraw not yourself all at once, but look well before you. As, for example, if you meet with any one whom you are obliged to hear or speak to, there is no remedy, you must accommodate yourself to that, yet in such sort that you have regard also to your heart, that as little of the liquor of this holy prayer be spilt as may be.

3. Accustom yourself to pass from prayer to all kind of business which your vocation and profession justly and lawfully requires of you, be it never so distant from the affections you have received in prayer. So let the advocate learn to pass from prayer to pleading, the merchant to his traffic, the married woman to her housewifery and care of her family, with such sweetness and tranquillity that their minds be not troubled or vexed therewith ; for since the one and the other are according to the will of God, we must learn to go from the one to the other with a humble and devout spirit.

4. Many times immediately after preparation your affections will run in a full career towards God ; and then, *Philothea*, you must let go the bridle, without keeping that method which I have set down. For although ordinarily consideration ought to go before affection and resolution, yet, nevertheless, when the Holy Ghost gives affections together with consideration, you must not then seek consideration, since that serves for no other end but to stir up the affection. In a word, whensoever affections offer themselves, receive them and make room for them, whether they come before or after consideration ; and although I have placed the affections after all the considerations, I have done it only to distinguish more plainly the parts of prayer ; for otherwise it is a general rule never to bridle your affections, but always to let them have their free course when they arise. And this is to be understood not only of the other affections, but also of thanksgiving, oblation, and petition, which may likewise be used together with the considerations ; for they must no more be restrained than the other affections, though they must after-

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wards be again repeated for conclusion of the meditation. But as for resolutions, they are always to be made after the affections, and at the end of all the meditation, before the conclusion ; because, representing to us particular and familiar objects, they would put us in danger of great distraction if we should confound them with our affections.

5. Amongst these affections and resolutions it is good to use words, and to speak sometimes to God, sometimes to the angels and persons represented in the mysteries, sometimes to the Saints, and sometimes to ourselves, to our own hearts, to sinners, yea, and to insensible creatures, as we see *David* does in his Psalms, and other devout Saints in their prayers and meditations.

LESSON XXII. OF DRYNESS IN PRAYER.

LESSON XXII.

Of the Dryness which often happens in Meditation : That True Consolation is to be sought in God alone : How a Desolate Person ought to offer Himself into the Hands of God : That we must Exercise ourselves in Humble Works when we cannot attain to the Highest.

TEXTS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

Father, if thou wilt, remove this chalice from me : but yet not my will, but thine be done. And there appeared to him an angel from heaven strengthening him. And being in an agony, he prayed the longer. And his sweat became as drops of blood trickling down upon the ground. And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow. And he said to them : Why sleep you ? arise, pray, lest you enter into temptation.—Luke xxii. 42.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulation ; that we also may be able to comfort them who are in all distress, by the exhortation wherewith we also are exhorted by God.—2 Cor. i. 3.

Is any of you sad ? Let him pray. Is he cheerful in mind ? Let him sing.—James v. 13.

God resisteth the proud, but to the humble he giveth grace. Be you humbled therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in the time of visitation : casting all your care upon him, for he hath care of you.—1 Peter v. 5.

Be patient, therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. Behold the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth : patiently bearing till he receive the early and later rain. Be you therefore also patient, and strengthen your hearts : for the coming of the Lord is at hand.—James v. 7.

1. Here you can admire in the example of Jesus Christ Himself the secret counsel of God concerning the aridities and contradictions by which the soul is assailed in prayer, and conclude that, since they greatly help progress in perfection, the soul ought not to falter, but rather be confirmed.

2. These words of Scripture also convey to you that true

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consolation must be hoped for and sought for from God alone, who will grant it to you if, in your pain and distress, you bear yourself according to that spirit which they suggest. Your two masters also have practical instructions for you on this subject.

INTRODUCTION—PT. II., CH. IX.—OF THE DRYNESS WHICH OFTEN HAPPENS IN MEDITATION.

1. If it happens that you find no pleasure or comfort in your meditation, I conjure you, nevertheless, *Philothea*, not to afflict yourself, but sometimes open the door to words, and bemoan yourself to our Saviour, confess your unworthiness, and desire Him to be your helper. Kiss His image, if you have it, and say to Him these words of *Jacob*:—*I will not leave Thee, O Lord, until Thou hast given me Thy blessing* (Gen xxxii. 26); or those of the *Cananean woman*: *Yea, Lord, but yet the whelps do eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table* (Matt. xv. 27).

2. At other times take some spiritual book in your hand, read it with attention till such time as your spirit be awaked and returned to you. Stir up your heart sometimes with outward gestures and motions of devotion, such as prostrating yourself on the ground, crossing your arms before your breast, embracing a crucifix; which exterior acts are only to be used when you are alone in some secret place.

3. But if, after all this, you obtain no comfort, afflict not yourself by the dryness never so great, but continue to keep yourself in a devout posture before Almighty God. How many courtiers be there that go a hundred times a year into the Prince's chamber without hope of once speaking with him, but only to be seen of him and to render their duty to him? So must we, my dear *Philothea*, come to the exercise of prayer, purely and merely to do our duty and to testify our fidelity. If it please His Divine Majesty to speak and discourse with us by His holy inspirations and interior consolations, it will be doubtless an inestimable honour to us, and a pleasure above all pleasures; but if it please Him not to do us this favour, leaving us without so much as speaking to us, as if He saw us not, or as if we were not in His presence, we must not for all that go our way, but continue with decent and devout behaviour in the presence of His sovereign good-

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ness; and then infallibly our patience will be acceptable to Him, and He will take notice of our diligence and perseverance; so that another time when we shall come before Him, He will favour us, and pass His time with us in heavenly consolations, and make us see the beauty of this holy prayer. Yet if He should not show us this favour, let us content ourselves, *Philothea*; it is an exceeding great honour to be in His sight and presence.

IMITATION—BK. III., CH. XVI.—THAT TRUE CONSOLATION IS TO BE SOUGHT IN GOD ALONE.

1. Whatsoever I can desire or imagine for my comfort I look not for here, but hereafter. For if I alone should have all the comfort of this world, and might enjoy all its delights, certain it is they could not last long. Wherefore thou canst not, O my soul, be fully comforted, nor perfectly refreshed, except in God, the Comforter of the poor, and the support of the humble. Wait a little while, my soul, wait for the Divine promise, and thou wilt have abundance of all good things in heaven. If thou desirest too inordinately these present things, thou wilt lose those that are heavenly and eternal. Use temporal things, but desire eternal. Thou canst not be satisfied with any temporal goods, because thou wast not created for the enjoyment of such things.

2. Although thou shouldst have all created goods, thou couldst not be happy and blessed; but in God, who created all things, consists all thy beatitude and happiness. Not such as is seen or cried up by the foolish lovers of the world, but such as the good faithful of Christ look for, and of which they that are spiritual and clean of heart, whose conversation is in heaven, have sometimes a foretaste. All human comfort is vain and short. Blessed and true is that comfort which is derived inwardly from the Truth. A devout man everywhere carrieth about with him Jesus his Consoler, and saith to Him, Be with me, O Lord Jesus, in all places, and at all times. Let this be my consolation, to be freely willing to forego all human comfort. And if Thy comfort be withdrawn, let Thy will, and just trial, be to me as the greatest of comforts. *For Thou wilt not always be angry, nor wilt Thou threaten for ever* (Ps. cii. 9).

LESSON XXII. OF OFFERING OURSELVES TO GOD.

IMITATION—BK. III., CH. I.—HOW A DESOLATE PERSON
OUGHT TO OFFER HIMSELF INTO THE HANDS OF GOD.

1. O Lord God, Holy Father, be Thou now and for ever blessed ; for as Thou wilt, so is it done, and what Thou dost is always good. Let Thy servant rejoice in Thee, not in himself, nor in any other ; for Thou alone art true joy, Thou art my hope and my crown, Thou art my joy and my honour, O Lord. *What hath Thy servant but what he hath received from Thee* (1 Cor. iv. 7), even without any merit on his part ? All things are Thine, both what Thou hast given, and what Thou hast made. *I am poor, and in labours from my youth* (Ps. lxxxvii. 16), and my soul is saddened sometimes even unto tears, and sometimes, too, my spirit is disturbed within herself by reason of impending suffering.

2. I desire the joy of peace ; I beg earnestly for the peace of Thy children, who are fed by Thee in the light of consolation. If Thou give peace, if Thou infuse holy joy, the soul of Thy servant shall be full of melody, and devout in Thy praise. But if Thou withdraw Thyself, as Thou art very often accustomed to do, he will not be able to *run in the way of Thy commandments* (Ps. cxviii. 32), but must rather bow down his knees, and strike his breast ; because it is not with him as yesterday and the day before, *when Thy lamp shone over his head* (Job xxix. 3), and he was *protected under the shadow of Thy wings* (Ps. xvi. 8) from assaulting temptations.

3. O just Father, holy, and ever to be praised, the hour is come for Thy servant to be tried. O Father, worthy of all love, it is fitting that Thy servant should at this hour suffer something for Thee. O Father, always to be honoured, the hour is come which from all eternity Thou didst foresee would arrive ; that Thy servant for a short time should be oppressed exteriorly, but interiorly should ever live unto Thee ; that he should be for a little slighted and humbled, and should fail in the sight of men ; that he should be severely afflicted with sufferings and languors, that so he may rise again with Thee in the dawning of a new light, and be glorified in heaven. O holy Father, Thou hast so appointed, and such is Thy will ; and that has come to pass which Thou hast ordained.

4. For this is a favour to Thy friend, that he should suffer

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and be afflicted in this world for the love of Thee, how often soever, by whom soever, and in what manner soever, Thou permittest it to befall him. Without Thy design and providence, and without cause, nothing happeneth in the world. *It is good for me, O Lord, that Thou hast humbled me, that I may learn Thy justifications* (Ps. cxviii. 71), and that I may cast away all pride of heart and presumption, It is profitable for me that *shame hath covered my face* (Ps. lxxviii. 8), that I may rather seek my comfort from Thee than from men. I have also hereby learned to fear Thy inscrutable judgment; who afflictest the just with the impious, but not without equity and justice.

5. I return Thee thanks that Thou hast not spared my evil ways, but hast bruised me with bitter stripes, inflicting anguish, and sending distress both within and without. Of all things under heaven, there is none that can comfort me but Thou, O Lord my God, the heavenly Physician of souls, *who woundest and healest* (1 Kings ii. 6), *bringest down to hell, and ledest back again* (Tob. xiii. 2). *Thy discipline is upon me, and Thy rod itself shall instruct me* (Ps. xvii. 36).

6. Behold, O beloved Father, I am in Thy hands; I bow myself down under the rod of Thy correction. Strike Thou my back and my neck, that I may bend my perversity to Thy will. Make me a pious and humble disciple, as Thou in Thy goodness art wont to do, that I may walk according to every indication of Thy will. Myself and all that are mine I commit to Thee for Thy correction; it is better to be chastised here than hereafter. Thou knowest all and everything, and nothing in man's conscience lieth hidden from Thee. Coming events Thou knowest before they happen; and Thou hast no need to be taught or admonished by any one of what is being done on earth. Thou knowest what is expedient for my progress, and how much tribulation serveth to cleanse away the rust of sin. Do with me according to Thy desired good pleasure; and despise not my sinful life, to no one better or more clearly known than to Thyself alone.

7. Grant me, O Lord, to know what I ought to know; to love what I ought to love; to praise that which is most pleasing to Thee; to esteem that which appeareth to Thee valuable; to abhor that which is filthy in Thy sight. Suffer me not to judge according to the sight of the outward eyes, nor to give sentence according to the hearing of the ears

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of ignorant men ; but to determine upon matters, both visible and spiritual, with true judgment ; and, above all things, ever to seek Thy good will and pleasure.

8. The senses of men are often deceived in giving judgments ; and the lovers of this world are deceived in loving only visible things. How is a man a whit the better for being reputed greater by man ? The deceitful deceiveth the deceitful, the vain deceiveth the vain, the blind the blind, the weak the weak, as often as he extolleth him ; and, in truth, doth rather confound him, whilst he vainly praiseth him. *For how much soever each one is in Thy eyes, so much is he and no more, saith the humble Saint Francis.*

CH. LI.—THAT WE MUST EXERCISE OURSELVES IN HUMBLE WORKS WHEN WE CANNOT ATTAIN TO THE HIGHEST.

1. Son, thou canst not always continue in the more fervent desire of virtue, nor remain constantly in the higher degree of contemplation ; but it must needs be that thou sometimes, by reason of original corruption, descend to low things, and bear the burden of this corruptible life, even against thy will, and with weariness. As long as thou carriest about with thee thy mortal body, thou shalt feel weariness and heaviness of heart. Thou oughtest, therefore, while in the flesh, oftentimes to bewail the burden of the flesh, for that thou canst not unceasingly give thyself up to spiritual exercises, and Divine contemplation.

2. On such occasions it is expedient for thee to betake thyself to humble and exterior works, and to recreate thyself in good actions ; to await My coming and heavenly visitation with an assured hope ; to bear with patience thy banishment and the aridity of thy mind, until thou be again visited by Me, and freed from all anxieties. For I will cause thee to forget thy pains, and to enjoy internal quiet. I will spread open before thee the pleasant fields of the Scriptures, that thy heart being enlarged thou mayest begin to run in the way of My commandments. And then shalt thou say, "*The sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the future glory which shall be revealed in us* (Rom. viii. 18).

LESSON XXIII. A MORNING EXERCISE.

LESSON XXIII.

Of the Morning Exercise: Of the Evening Exercise, and Examen of Conscience: Of Spiritual Recollection: Of Aspirations, Ejaculations, and Good Thoughts.

TEXTS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

Always rejoice. Pray without ceasing. In all things give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you all. Extinguish not the spirit. Despise not prophecies. But prove all things: hold fast that which is good. From all appearance of evil refrain yourselves.—1 Thess. v. 16.

But exhort one another every day, whilst it is called to-day, that none of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.—Heb. iii. 13.

Rabbi (which is to say, being interpreted, Master), where dwellest Thou? He saith to them: Come and see. They came, and saw where He abode, and they staid with Him that day.—John i. 38.

And be not drunk with wine, wherein is luxury, but be ye filled with the holy Spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual canticles, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord: giving thanks always for all things, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to God and the Father.—Ephes. v. 18.

He spoke also a parable to them, that we ought always to pray, and not to faint, saying: There was a judge in a certain city, who feared not God, nor regarded man. And there was a certain widow in that city, and she came to him, saying: Avenge me of my adversary. And he would not for a long time. But afterward he said within himself: Although I fear not God, nor regard man, yet because this widow is troublesome to me, I will avenge her, lest continually coming she weary me.—Luke xviii. 1.

These words teach you—1, That recourse must be had to God unceasingly; 2, that you must keep strict watch over yourself to discover what should be done, what avoided, what amended; 3, in what manner you can mentally draw near to Christ, and like the two disciples remain with Him; 4, that God delights in the importunity of assiduous prayer;

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whence we can conjecture how great must be the spiritual profit of the habit of making frequent ejaculations. S. Francis gives you the method of doing all this.

INTRODUCTION.—PT. II., CH. XI.—A MORNING EXERCISE.

1. Besides this main exercise of mental prayer, and the vocal prayers which you ought to make once every day, there are five other sorts of shorter prayers which are, as it were, branches and offshoots of the principal prayer. Amongst them the first is that which we use to make every morning as a general preparation to all the actions of the day, and you must make it in this manner.

2. Give thanks to God and adore Him profoundly for the favour He has done you in preserving you the night past, and if in it you have committed any sin crave pardon of Him for it.

3. Consider that this present day is given you, that in it you may gain the future day of eternity in heaven, and make a steadfast purpose to employ the day well to this intention.

4. Forecast with yourself what business, what opportunity, and what occasions you may meet with this day to serve God, and what temptations may befall to offend Him either by anger, or by vanity, or by any other disorder, and prepare yourself with a holy resolution to employ diligently those means which shall occur to you to serve God and to advance your devotion ; as also on the other side dispose yourself carefully to eschew, resist, and vanquish that which may present itself prejudicial to your salvation and the glory of God.

5. Now it is not enough to make this resolution, but you must withal prepare the means to put it in execution. For example, if I foresee that I am to treat of business with one that is subject to passion and prompt to choler, I will not only resolve to refrain from giving him offence, but I will prepare mild words to prevent him, or use the assistance of some person that may temper him. If I foresee that I shall visit some sick body, I will appoint the hour, and plan the succours and comforts I am to afford him. And so of other occasions.

6. This done, humble yourself before God, acknowledging that of yourself you can do nothing of that which you have deliberated, be it to avoid evil or to do good. And as if you

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held your heart in your hands, offer it with all your good designs to the Divine Majesty, entreating Him to take it into His protection, and to strengthen it that it may go on prosperously in His service, using these or the like interior words : O my Lord, behold here this my poor miserable heart that through Thy goodness has received many pious affections ; but, alas ! it is of itself too weak and feeble to execute the good which it desires, unless Thou impart to it Thy heavenly blessing, which for this end, I humbly crave of Thee, O Father of goodness, by the merit of Thy Son's passion, to whose honour I consecrate this day and the residue of my life. Then call upon our Blessed Lady, upon your good Angel, and the Saints, to the end they may all assist you to this effect.

7. But all these spiritual actions must be done briefly and efficaciously, before you go out of your chamber, if it be possible, that by means of this exercise all that you are to do the whole day following may be watered with God's blessing. And I pray you, *Philothea*, never to fail herein.

CH. XI.—AN EXERCISE FOR EVENING ; AND OF THE EXAMINATION OF OUR CONSCIENCE.

1. As before your corporal dinner you must make a spiritual dinner by meditation ; so likewise before your supper make a little supper, or at least a spiritual and devout collation. Gain, then, some time a little before supper, and prostrate yourself before God, recollect your spirit to the meditation of our Lord Jesus Christ crucified (whom you may represent to yourself by a simple consideration and an interior view) ; kindle again the fire of your morning meditation by a dozen of lively aspirations, humiliations, and amorous ejaculations towards this Divine Saviour of your soul, or else by repeating those points of your morning meditations which were most pleasing to you, or by stirring up your devotion upon some new spiritual subject, as you shall like best.

2. Touching the examination of our conscience which must always be done immediately before we go to bed, every one knows how it is to be performed. 1. We give thanks to God for having preserved us the day past. 2. We examine how we have behaved ourselves in every hour of the day ; and to do this more easily we must consider where, with whom, and in what we have been employed. 3. If we find that we

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have any good, we must give God thanks for it; and contrariwise, if we have done any evil in thoughts, words, or deeds, we must ask pardon of His Divine Majesty, with a true resolution to confess it at the first occasion and to amend it carefully. 4. After this we commend unto His Divine Providence our soul and body, the holy Church, our parents and friends; we pray our Lady, our guardian Angel, and the Saints, that they would watch over us and for us, and so with the blessing of God we go to take that rest which He has ordained for us.

3. This exercise must never be forgotten, no more than that of the morning; for by that of the morning you open the windows of your soul to the Sun of Justice, and by this of the evening you shut them against infernal darkness.

CH. XII.—OF SPIRITUAL RECOLLECTION.

It is here, dear *Philothea*, that I wish you most affectionately to follow my counsel; for in this article consisteth one of the most assured means of your spiritual advancement.

1. As often as you can, in the day-time, recall yourself home to the presence of God, by one of the four means mentioned above. Observe what God does and what you do, and you shall find His eyes turned towards you and perpetually fixed upon you by an incomparable love. O God, may you say, wherefore do I not look always upon Thee as Thou always lookest upon me? wherefore thinkest Thou so much upon me, O my Lord, and wherefore think I so little upon Thee? Where are we, O my soul! our proper place is God, and where is it that we find ourselves?

2. As birds have their nests upon trees to retire to when they are weary, and deer have bushes and thickets wherein to hide and shroud themselves, and to take the cool of the shade in the summer; even so, *Philothea*, should our hearts choose out every day some place either upon Mount Calvary, or in the Wounds of our Redeemer, or in some other place near Him, there to make our spiritual retreat upon every occasion, there to recreate and refresh ourselves amidst the turmoils of exterior affairs, and there to be as in a castle to defend ourselves against temptations. Blessed is the soul that can truly say to God: *Thou art my place of refuge* (Ps. xxx. 3), *my*

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secure rampart, my defence against rain and tempests, my shadow and shelter against all heat (Isa. xxv. 4).

3. Remember, then, *Philothea*, to make every day sundry retreats into the solitary closet of your heart, whilst you are outwardly busied in temporal affairs and conversations: this mental solitude cannot be hindered by the company of such as are about you; for they are not about your heart but about your body, so that your heart remaineth all alone in the presence of God alone. This is the retreat which king *David* made amidst so many businesses, as he testifies in a thousand places of his psalms. *O Lord, as for me I am always with Thee (Ps. xv. 8). I behold God always before me. I have lifted up my eyes to Thee, O my God, that dwelleth in heaven (Ps. cxii. 1). Mine eyes are always towards God (Ps. xxiv. 15).*

4. And again, our conversations, ordinarily, are not so serious but that we may sometimes withdraw our heart to retire it into our spiritual solitude.

5. When the father and mother of *S. Catherine of Siena* had taken from her all opportunity of place and leisure to pray and meditate, our Lord inspired her to make a little interior oratory within her heart, into which retiring herself mentally, she might amidst exterior affairs attend to this holy mental solitude. And when the world assaulted her, then received she no inconveniences, because, as she said, she had shut up her thoughts in her interior closet where she comforted herself with her heavenly Spouse. From experience of this exercise she afterwards counselled her spiritual children to make them an oratory within their heart, and there to remain.

6. Withdraw then, your spirit often into your heart, where sequestered from among men you may, heart to heart, treat the business of your soul with God, and say with *David*: *I have been like the pelican in the wilderness; like the night raven within the house; I have watched and been like the solitary sparrow upon the roof of the house (Ps. ci. 8).* Which words, besides their literal sense, which tells us that this great king took some hours to spend in the solitary contemplation of spiritual things, do moreover show us in their mystical sense three excellent retreats, and as it were three hermitages, wherein we may exercise our solitariness in imitation of our Lord and Saviour, who on *Mount Calvary*

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was like a pelican in the desert, that quickens her dead chickens with her own blood ; in His Nativity in the forsaken stable He was as the night raven in the ruins, weeping and bewailing our sins and offences ; and at the day of His Ascension He was like to the sparrow, retiring Himself and flying up to heaven, which is, as it were, the roof of the world. And in all these three places we may make our spiritual Retreat, even amongst the turmoils of our exterior employments.

7. Holy *Elzear*, Count of *Arian*, in *Provence*, having been long absent from his devout and chaste *Delphina*, she sent expressly a messenger to him to inform herself of his health, and he made her this answer : I am very well, my dear wife, but if you desire to see me, seek me in the Wound of my Blessed Saviour's side, for there I dwell, and there you shall find me ; elsewhere you will search for me in vain. This was a right Christian cavalier indeed.

CH. XIII.—OF ASPIRATIONS, EJACULATORY PRAYERS, AND GOOD THOUGHTS.

1. We retire ourselves into God because we aspire to Him, and we aspire to Him to retire us into Him, so that the aspiring to God and the spiritual retreat do mutually help one another, and both of them proceed and issue from holy thoughts.

2. Aspire, then, often to God, my *Philothea*, by brief yet ardent ejaculations of your heart, admire His beauty, invoke His assistance, and cast yourself in spirit at the foot of the cross, adore His goodness, inquire of Him often concerning your salvation, give your soul to Him a thousand times a day, fix your inward eyes upon His inestimable sweetness, stretch forth your hand to Him, as a child to his father, that He may conduct you, place Him in your bosom like a sweet-smelling posie, plant Him in your soul like a standard, finally make a thousand sorts of several motions in your heart to enkindle the love of God within you, and to excite you to a passionate and tender affection. Thus are ejaculatory prayers made, which the great *S. Augustine* so carefully counselled the devout lady *Proba* to use. *Philothea*, our spirit once giving itself to the company and familiarity of God will be all perfumed with His perfections.

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3. This exercise is easy, for it may be interlaced with all our businesses without any hindrance of them at all ; for whether we retire ourselves spiritually, or use only these interior ejaculations, we do no other thing but make certain short digressions which cannot hinder but rather advance our employments. The pilgrim that takes a little wine to comfort his heart and refresh his mouth, although he make some little stay, breaks not off his journey for that, but gains more force to finish it more speedily, resting only to travel afterwards the better.

4. Many authors have gathered together store of vocal aspirations which doubtless are very profitable, but in my judgment it is better not to oblige yourself to any set form of words, but only to pronounce either with heart or mouth such as fervent love shall on occasion suggest to you, for it will furnish you with as many as you can desire. True it is that there are certain words which have a particular force to content the heart in such occasions ; such are the ejaculations sown so thick in the Psalms of *David*, the many invocations of the name of Jesus, the lovely allurements expressed in the Canticles. Spiritual songs also serve for this end when they are sung with attention.

5. To conclude, as they that are enamoured with human and natural love have almost always their thoughts fixed on the person beloved, their heart full of affection towards her, their mouth filled with her praise, and when their beloved is absent they lose no occasion to testify their passion by letters, and on every tree they meet they engrave the name of their beloved ; even so, such as love God can never cease to think upon Him, they breathe only for Him, they aspire only to Him, and speak only of Him, and if it were possible they would grave the sacred Name of our Lord Jesus on the breasts of all men in the world.

6. And all creatures invite them to this, each one in its kind declaring to them the praises of their Beloved ; and as *S. Augustine* says, taking it from *S. Anthony*, All things in this world speak to us in a kind of dumb language, yet intelligible enough, in praise of our Love, all things provoke us to good thoughts, from whence afterwards arise many motions and aspirations of our soul to God. Behold some examples of this truth.

7. *S. Gregory*, Bishop of *Nazianzen*, himself relates to his

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people that, while walking on the sea-shore, he considered how the waves, breaking on the sands, left behind many little shells, stalks of weeds, little oysters, and such like medley which the sea cast up, and then returning with other waves swept them away and swallowed them again, the rocks round about meantime continuing firm and immovable, though the billows never so rudely beat upon them. Whereon he made this good reflection, that feeble men, like shells and stalks of rushes, suffer themselves to be tossed up and down and carried away, sometimes by affliction, sometimes by consolation, living always at the mercy of the inconstant waves of fortune ; but that great courages continue firm and unmoved against all kind of tempests ; and then out of this meditation he derived those aspirations of holy *David*: *Save me, O Lord, for the waters have penetrated even to my very soul. O Lord, deliver me from the depth of these waters. I am plunged in the depth of the sea, and the tempest has overwhelmed me* (Ps. lxxviii. 2). For at that time he was in affliction for the wicked usurpation of his bishopric by *Maximus*.

8. *S. Fulgentius*, Bishop of *Ruspa*, being present at a general assembly of the nobility of *Rome*, to whom *Theoderic*, king of the *Goths*, made an oration ; and beholding the splendour of so many great persons gathered together, and ranked each one according to his quality, O God, said he, how beautiful is the heavenly *Jerusalem*, since this earthly *Rome* here below is so glorious in her pomp and majesty. If, in this world the lovers of vanity be permitted to shine in such prosperity, what felicity is reserved in the other world for the lovers of truth and virtue.

9. *S. Anselm*, Archbishop of *Canterbury*, whose birth has highly honoured our mountains, was admirable in this practice of good thoughts. A hare, pressed by hounds, as this holy prelate went on a journey, ran under his horse's feet, as the best place of refuge that the imminent danger of death suggested, and the hounds, barking and baying all round, durst not presume to violate the sanctuary in which their prey had taken refuge. A sight truly very extraordinary, whereat when all the train laughed, the great *S. Anselm* answered, weeping and sighing, Ah! said he, you laugh ; but the poor beast laughs not ; the enemies of the soul, after hunting and driving her hither and thither by multitudes of temptations and sins, lie in wait for her at the narrow pas-

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sage of death to catch and devour her, and she seeks succour and refuge on every side, which if she finds not, then do her enemies laugh and mock at her. Which when the good bishop had said, he went forward on his way sighing.

10. *Constantine* the Great wrote with great respect to *S. Anthony*; whereat the religious about him greatly admiring, How, said he, do you marvel that a king should write to a man? Marvel rather that the Eternal God has writ His law to mortal men; nay, more, has spoken to them by word of mouth in the Person of His Son.

11. *S. Francis*, seeing a sheep all alone amidst a herd of goats: Observe, said he to his companions, the poor little sheep, how mild it is among the kids. Our Blessed Lord walked as meekly and humbly among the *Pharisees*. At another time, seeing a lambkin devoured by a hog: Ah! little lamb, said he weeping, how lively dost thou represent my Saviour's death.

12. That great person of our age, *Francis Borgia*, while he was yet Duke of *Gandia*, going a-hawking, made to himself a thousand devout conceptions. I admire, said he, how the falcons come to hand, suffer themselves to be hooded, and to be tied to the perch; and that men are so rebellious to the voice of God.

13. *S. Basil* the Great says, that the rose among its thorns makes this exhortation to men: *Whatsoever is most pleasant in this world, O mortal man, is mingled with sorrow; nothing is pure; regret always follows mirth; widowhood, marriage; care, fruitfulness; ignominy, glory; expense, honours; loathing, delicacies; and sickness, health. The rose is a fair flower, said he, but yet fills me with great sadness, putting me in mind of my sin, for which the earth has been condemned to bring forth thorns.*

14. A devout soul beheld the sky and the stars in a fair moonshine night represented in a clear fountain: O my God, said she, these self-same stars shall one day be underneath my feet, when Thou shalt vouchsafe to lodge me in Thy holy tabernacle; and as the stars of heaven are represented in this fountain on earth, even so men of this earth are represented in heaven in the living well of the Divine charity. Another, seeing a river swiftly flowing, cried out in this manner: My soul shall never take rest till she be swallowed up in the sea of the Deity, her original source.

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S. Francesca, considering a pleasant brook upon the bank whereof she kneeled to pray, was rapt into an ecstasy, often repeating these words: *The grace of my God flows sweetly and pleasantly, like this little river.* Another looking on the trees adorned with blossoms, sighed, and said: Wherefore am I alone without blossom in the orchard of the Church? Another, seeing little chickens gathered together under their mother's wings: O Lord, said he, preserve us beneath the shadow of Thy wings. Another, looking upon the flower called *heliotrope*, which turns with the sun, said: When shall the time be, O my God, that my soul shall wholly follow the allurements of Thy goodness. And seeing the flowers called *Pansies*,* fair to the eye but having no sweetness, Ah! said he, such are my thoughts, fair, but fruitless!

15. See, *Philothea*, how a man may draw good thoughts and holy inspirations from whatsoever is presented in the variety of this mortal life. Unhappy are they who pervert the creatures from their Creator to apply them to sin, and happy are they that turn them to His glory, and employ their vanity to the honour of His verity, as says *S. Gregory Nazianzen*: *I am wont to apply all things to my spiritual profit.* Read the devout epitaph which *S. Jerome* made on *Paula*; for it is pleasant to see how it is all studded with the sacred aspirations and devout conceits which she was wont to draw from all occurrences whatsoever.

16. Well, then, in this exercise of spiritual retreat and ejaculatory prayers consists the great work of devotion: it alone may supply the want of all other prayers; but the want of it can scarcely be repaired by any other exercise. Without it we cannot lead well a contemplative, and but ill, an active life; without it repose is but idleness, and labour confusion. Wherefore I conjure you to embrace it with your whole heart, and never give it up.

* *Pensées de jardin.*

LESSON XXIV.

Of the Most Holy Mass, and how to Hear it : Of other Public and Common Exercises ; Of the Honour and Invocation of Saints : How we ought to Hear and Read God's Holy Word : Against Vain and Worldly Learning.

TEXTS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world.—Matt. xxviii. 20.

For from the rising of the sun, even to the going down, my name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to my name a clean oblation : for my name is great among the Gentiles, saith the Lord of hosts.—Mal. i. 11.

For what things soever were written, were written for our learning : that through patience and the comfort of the Scriptures we might have hope.—Rom. xv. 4.

Beware lest any man cheat you by philosophy and vain deceit ; according to the tradition of men, according to the elements of the world, and not according to Christ.—Col. ii. 8.

In the sacrifice of the Mass Christ fulfils this prophecy and His own promise. But in order that you should on your part also fulfil the prophecy, you should unite your sacrifice with His, remaining with Him as He remains with you. Moreover, you may learn from the other texts, what to think of the reading of the Holy Scriptures, and of curiosity about human learning. Listen now to both your masters.

INTRODUCTION.—PT. II.—CH. XIV.—OF THE MOST HOLY MASS, AND HOW WE OUGHT TO HEAR IT.

I. Hitherto I have not spoken anything of the sun of spiritual exercises—I mean the most holy, sacred, and sovereign sacrifice of the Mass, the centre of Christian religion, the heart of devotion, the soul of piety, and an unspeakable mystery which comprehends within it the bottomless depth

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of God's charity, and by which God, uniting Himself really to us, liberally communicates His graces and favours.

2. Prayer made in union with this Divine sacrifice has an unspeakable force. By it the soul abounds with heavenly favours, as though she leaned upon her Beloved, who fills her so full of odours and spiritual sweetness that she resembles a pillar of smoke proceeding from aromatical wood, myrrh, incense, and all the powders of the perfumer, as is said in the *Canticles*.

3. Use, then, all diligence to assist every day at the Holy Mass, that you may jointly with the priest offer up the sacrifice of your Redeemer to God, His Father, for yourself and the whole Church. The Angels of heaven, as *S. John Chrysostom* says, are always present in great numbers to honour this mystery, and we being present with the same intention cannot but receive many favourable influences by such society. The choirs of the triumphant and militant Church unite themselves to our Lord in this Divine action, that with Him, in Him, and by Him, they may ravish the heart of God the Father, and make His mercy all our own. Oh what felicity for the soul to contribute her devout affections for so precious and desired a good!

4. If upon some urgent necessity you are forced to be absent from the celebration of this sovereign Sacrifice, at the least send your heart thither to assist there with a spiritual presence. At some time, then, of the morning, go in spirit, if otherwise you cannot, to the church, and there unite your intention with that of all faithful Christians, and use the same interior acts in the place where you are, which you would use if you were really present at the Holy Mass.

5. Now to hear either really or mentally the Holy Mass as we ought from the beginning till the priest goes up to the altar, prepare yourself with him; which preparation consists in placing yourself in God's presence, in acknowledging your unworthiness, and craving pardon for your offences.

6. From the time the priest goes to the altar till the Gospel, consider our Saviour's coming into this world and His life amongst us, by a simple and general apprehension thereof.

7. From the Gospel to the end of the *Credo* consider the preaching of our Lord, and protest that you will live and die in the faith and obedience of His Holy Word, and in the union of the Holy Catholic Church.

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8. From the *Credo* to the *Pater Noster*, apply your heart to the mysteries of our Redeemer's Death and Passion, which are actually and essentially represented in this holy Sacrifice, which with the priest and the rest of the people you shall offer to God the Father, for His honour and your own salvation.

9. From the *Pater Noster* to the Communion, endeavour to produce thousands of fervent desires from your heart, ardently longing to be for ever joined and united to your Saviour by everlasting love.

10. From the Communion to the end, give thanks to His Divine Majesty for His Incarnation, Life, Death, and Passion, and for the love He witnesseth to us in this holy Sacrifice; beseeching Him by it to be for ever merciful to you, to your parents and friends, and to the whole Church; and humbling yourself from the bottom of your heart, receive with devotion the heavenly blessing which our Lord gives you by the means of His minister.

11. But if you wish to make your meditation on the mysteries you take in daily order during mass, it will not then be needful that you divert yourself to make these particular acts; but it will suffice that at the beginning you direct your intention to adore and to offer up this holy Sacrifice, by the exercise of your meditation and prayer; for in all meditations are found the aforesaid acts, either expressly or tacitly and virtually.

CH. XV.—OF OTHER PUBLIC AND COMMON EXERCISES.

1. Besides all this, *Philothea*, on holy days and Sundays you must be present at the office of the hours and vespers, so far as your condition will permit. For these days are dedicated to God, and therefore in them you must perform more acts to His honour and worship than on other days. By this means you shall find a great sweetness of devotion, as *S. Augustine* did, who testifies in his Confessions that hearing the Divine office in the beginning of his conversion, his heart melted into feelings of tenderness, and his eyes into tears of piety. And to speak once for all, there is ever more good and more comfort in the public offices of the Church than in private devotions, God having so ordained that communion be preferred before all kind of isolation.

2. Enter willingly into the confraternities of the place

LESSON XXIV. INVOCATION OF SAINTS.

where you dwell, principally into those whose exercises are of most fruit and edification ; for so shall you practise a kind of obedience very acceptable to God ; because though these confraternities are not commanded, yet are they recommended by the Church, who, to witness how much she desires that many should enrol themselves in them, gives indulgences and other privileges to their members. And besides, it is a deed of excellent charity to concur and co-operate with others in their good designs. And although it may happen that one does as good exercises alone as in the Confraternities, and perchance takes more contentment by performing them in particular, yet is God more glorified by the union and concurrence we make of good works with our brethren and neighbours.

3. The like I say of all sorts of public prayers and devotions, which as much as is possible we should countenance with our example, for the edification of our neighbour and for love of the glory of God, and the common intention of the Church.

CH. XVI.—OF THE HONOUR AND INVOCATION OF SAINTS.

1. Since God often sends us inspirations by His angels, we ought also frequently to send back to Him our aspirations by the self-same envoys. The holy souls of the dead who are in Paradise with the angels, and are, as our Saviour says, equal and like to them, have likewise the same office of inspiring us and aspiring for us by their sacred intercessions.

2. My *Philothea*, let us join our hearts to these heavenly spirits and happy souls, for as the young nightingales learn to sing in company of the old, so by the holy association we make with the Saints we shall be better able to pray and sing God's Divine praises. *I will sing to Thee, O Lord, says David, in the sight of Thy angels* (Ps. cxxxvii. 1).

3. Honour, reverence, and respect the sacred and glorious Virgin *Mary* with an especial love ; she is the Mother of our Sovereign Father, and consequently our more than Mother. Let us run, then, to her, and like her little children, cast ourselves into her bosom with assured confidence at all times and in all occurrences. Let us call upon this sweet Mother, let us invoke her motherly love, and endeavour to imitate her virtues ; let our heart be truly filial towards her.

4. Make yourself very familiar with the angels ; behold

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them in spirit often present with you though unseen ; above all, love and reverence the angel of the diocese where you dwell, and those of the persons with whom you live, but especially your own ; pray to them often, praise them constantly, make use of their assistance and succour in all your affairs, spiritual or temporal, that they may co-operate with your intentions.

5. That great person *Peter Faber*, the first priest, first preacher, first divinity-reader of the holy company of the name of *Jesus*, and first companion of Saint *Ignatius* its founder, coming on a day out of *Germany*, where he had done great service to the glory of our Lord, and passing through this diocese in which he was born, related that having traversed many heretical places, he had received thousands of consolations by saluting at the entry of every parish the angel protectors of the same, and that he sensibly perceived them to have been favourable to him ; both by preserving him from the ambushes of the heretics, as also in mollifying many souls, and making them tractable to receive from him the doctrine of salvation. And this he said with such asseveration, that a gentlewoman, then very young, who heard it from his own mouth, told it with lively emotion but four years ago, to wit, above threescore years after he spake it. I had the consolation this last year to consecrate an altar in the place where God appointed this blessed man to be born, the little village of *Villaret*, among our most craggy mountains.

6. Choose some particular Saints, whose lives you may best fancy and imitate, and in whose intercessions you place an especial confidence. The Saint whose name you bear is already assigned you, even from your Baptism.

CH. XVII.—HOW WE OUGHT TO HEAR AND READ GOD'S HOLY WORD.

1. Be devout to the Word of God, whether you hear it in familiar discourses with your spiritual friends, or at a sermon ; hear it always with attention and reverence, make your profit of it ; suffer it not to fall to the ground, but receive it into your heart as a sovereign balm, imitating the Blessed Virgin, who kept carefully in hers all the words which she heard spoken in praise of her Son. And remember that our Lord

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esteems the words we speak to Him in prayer, according as we esteem those He speaketh to us in preaching.

2. Have ever about you some good book of devotion, as of *S. Bonaventure*, *Gerson*, *Denis the Carthusian*, *Lewis Blossius*, *Granada*, *du Pont*, *Stella*, *Arias*, *Pinelli*, *Avila*, the *Spiritual Combat*, *S. Augustine's Confessions*, *S. Jerome's Epistles*, and such like. Read every day a little in some one of them with great devotion, as if it were a letter which some Saint in heaven had sent, to show you the way thither, and encourage you in your journey.

3. Read also the lives of the Saints, in which, as in a mirror, you may see the portraiture of a Christian life, and accommodate their actions to your profit according to your vocation. For although very many actions of the Saints are not absolutely imitable by such as live in the world, yet all of them may be followed either near or far off. The solitariness of *S. Paul*, the first hermit, is imitated in your spiritual and real retreats, of which we will speak, and have already spoken before; the extreme poverty of *S. Francis* may be imitated by those practices of poverty, which we will hereafter set down, and so of others.

4. True it is that there be some histories which give more light to guide and order our lives than others, as the life of the Blessed Mother *Teresa*, which is admirable for this; the lives of the first Jesuits, *S. Charles Borromeo*, Archbishop of Milan, *S. Louis*, *S. Bernard*, the Chronicles of *S. Francis*, and such like. Others there are which contain more matter of admiration than imitation, as the life of *S. Mary of Egypt*, of *S. Simeon Stylites*, of the two Saints, *Catherine of Siena* and *Genoa*, of *S. Angela*, and such like; which nevertheless administer to us a great general feeling of the sweetness of God's love.

IMITATION—BK. I., CH. V.—ON READING THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

1. Truth is to be sought for in the Holy Scriptures, not eloquence. All Holy Scripture should be read in the spirit in which it was written. We should seek profit in the Scriptures rather than subtlety of speech. We ought to read devout and simple books as willingly as those that are high and profound. Let not the authority of the author offend

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thee, whether he be of little or great learning ; but let love of simple truth lead thee to read. Inquire not who may have said a thing, but consider what is said.

2. Men pass away, but the *truth of the Lord abideth for ever* (Ps. xxxviii. 7). God speaketh to us in divers ways, without respect of persons. Our curiosity is often a hindrance to us in reading the Scriptures, when we wish to understand and to discuss what ought to be passed over in simplicity. If thou wilt derive profit, read with humility, with simplicity, and with faith ; and seek not at any time the fame of being learned.

BK. III., CH. XLIII.—AGAINST VAIN AND WORLDLY LEARNING.

1. Son, let not the beautiful and subtle sayings of men affect thee ; *for the kingdom of God consisteth not in speech, but in virtue* (I Cor. iv. 20). Attend to My words, which inflame hearts, and enlighten minds, which excite to compunction, and afford manifold consolations. Never read anything in order that thou mayest appear more learned or more wise. Study the mortification of thy vices ; for this will more avail thee than the knowledge of many difficult questions.

2. When thou shalt have read and shalt know many things, thou must always return to the one beginning. I am He *who teacheth men knowledge, and who giveth a more clear understanding to little ones* (Ps. cxviii. 99) than can be taught by man. He to whom I speak will quickly be wise, and will make great progress in spirit. Woe to them that inquire of men after many curious things, and are little curious of the way to serve Me. The time will come, when Christ, the Master of masters, the Lord of angels, shall appear to hear the lessons of all men, that is, to examine the conscience of every one. *And then will He search Jerusalem with lamps* (Soph. i. 12), *and the hidden things of darkness shall be brought to light* (I Cor. iv. 5), and the arguments of tongues shall be silent.

3. I am He that in an instant elevateth the humble mind to comprehend more reasons of the eternal truth than if any one had studied ten years in the schools. I teach without noise of words, without confusion of opinions, without ambition of honour, without strife of arguments. I am He who

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teacheth to despise earthly things, to loathe things present, to seek and to relish the things eternal, to fly honours, to endure scandals, to repose all hope in Me, to desire nothing out of Me, and, above all things, ardently to love Me.

4. For a certain person, by loving Me intimately, learned things Divine, and spoke wonders. He profited more by forsaking all things than by studying subtleties. But to some I speak things common, to others things more particular; to some I sweetly appear in signs and figures, to others in great light I reveal mysteries. The voice of books is one and the same, but it teacheth not all men alike, because I within am the Teacher of truth, the Searcher of the heart, the Understander of thoughts, the Mover of actions, distributing in every one as I judge fitting.

LESSON XXV. OF INSPIRATIONS.

LESSON XXV.

How to Receive Inspirations : Of Holy Confession : Of the Examination of Conscience and Purpose of Amendment : That we must Offer Ourselves and all that is Ours to God, and Pray for all.

TEXTS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

For he that hath, to him shall be given, and he shall abound : but he that hath not, from him shall be taken away that also which he hath.—Matt. xiii. 12.

For it had been better for them not to have known the way of justice, than after they have known it, to turn back from that holy commandment which was delivered to them.—2 Pet. ii. 21.

I opened the bolt of my door to my beloved : but he had turned aside, and was gone. My soul melted when he spoke : I sought him, and found him not : I called, and he did not answer me.—Cant. v. 6.

I indeed baptize you in water unto penance, but he that shall come after me, is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear ; he shall baptize you in the Holy Ghost and fire. Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly cleanse his floor : and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.—Matt. iii. 11.

But if we should judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But whilst we are judged, we are chastised by the Lord ; that we be not condemned with this world.—1 Cor. xi. 31.

I desire therefore first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings be made for all men : for kings, and for all that are in high stations ; that we may lead a quiet and a peaceable life in all piety and chastity. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth.—1 Tim. ii. 1.

These words teach—1, That if you do not use the graces and inspirations of God for your growth in holiness, you will fall into the danger of losing by degrees what you have, and being reduced to a state of spiritual destitution ; 2, that gifts thus neglected cannot be recovered at will any time ; 3, that

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we should thoroughly search, and, as it were, winnow and sift our consciences, in order to condemn ourselves to a penance of love, and prevent the Divine judgment; 4, that we should perpetually present ourselves before God as living sacrifices, to implore His grace and help for all. Learn from your masters how to put this in practice.

INTRODUCTION—PT. II., CH. XVIII.—HOW WE OUGHT TO RECEIVE INSPIRATIONS.

1. We call inspirations, all those allurements, impulses, reproaches, remorse, lights and knowledges which God works in us, preventing our heart with His blessings, through His Fatherly care and love of us, to the end He might awake us, stir us up, and draw us to virtue, to heavenly love, to good resolutions, and in a word to all those things which forward our everlasting welfare. This it is which the Spouse calls knocking at the gate, and speaking to the heart of his Beloved, to awake her when she sleeps, to cry and call after her when she is absent, to invite her to eat his honey, and to gather apples and flowers in his garden, to sing, and cause her sweet voice to sound in his ears.

2. I must make use of a similitude to declare my meaning. For the arrangement of a marriage, three things are required of the damsel who is to be married. Firstly, the husband is proposed to her; secondly, she entertains the proposition; thirdly, she gives her consent. Thus likewise God, intending to work in us, by us, and with us, some act of charity, firstly, proposes it to us by His inspirations; secondly, we are pleased with it; and thirdly, we give our full consent to it. For as to descend to sin there are three degrees, temptation, delectation, and consent; so there are other three to ascend to virtue, inspiration, which is the opposite to temptation; delectation in the inspiration, the contrary to that of temptation; and consent to the inspiration, the contrary to that given to temptation.

3. For though the inspiration should endure all our life long, yet should we not be acceptable to God if we took no delight in it; nay, contrariwise, His Divine Majesty would be offended with us, as He was with the Israelites with whom He had been forty years, as He says Himself, soliciting their conversion, in all which time they would not give ear to

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Him ; whereupon He swore against them in His wrath that they should never enter into His rest. Thus the gentleman whose attentions had for a long time been received by a young lady would be much disobliged, if after all this she should in no case hearken to the marriage he desired.

4. The pleasure we take in the inspiration is a great step to the glory of God, and by it we begin already to adore His Divine Majesty ; for although this delight be not as yet a full consent, yet it is a certain disposition thereto, and if it be accounted a good sign to take pleasure in hearing the Word of God preached—which is as it were an exterior inspiration—it is also no doubt acceptable in the sight of God to take contentment in His internal inspiration. Such was that pleasure of which the holy Spouse speaks when she says, *My soul was melted with pleasure so soon as my Beloved spake* (Cant. v. 6). So the gentleman is highly content with the lady whom he courts, and takes it for a great favour when he sees that she takes delight in his services.

5. But, after all, it is the consent which perfects the virtuous act. For if after the inspiration, and the delight taken in the inspiration, we refuse, notwithstanding, to give our consent to God, we are extremely ungrateful, and highly offend His Divine Majesty ; for in that case the contempt appears the greater. So it happened to the Spouse ; for though the sweet voice of her Beloved had touched her heart with holy delight, yet she would not open him the door, but excused herself with a frivolous reason, whereat her lover, justly displeased, went his way and left her alone. So the gentleman, after long suit to his lady and service accepted, if at last he should be shaken off and despised, would have much more occasion of discontent than if his hopes had never been permitted and favoured.

6. Resolve, then, *Philothea*, to accept with all your heart the inspirations it shall please God to send you, and when they arrive admit them as ambassadors from the King of Heaven, who desires to make a contract of marriage with you, hear quietly their embassy, ponder well the love of Him that vouchsafes to inspire you, and cherish the inspiration. Consent to the proposal, but with a perfect, constant, and resolute consent, for so God, whom you cannot oblige, will, notwithstanding, hold Himself greatly obliged to you for your good will. But before you give consent to inspirations

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in important and extraordinary matters, lest you be deceived, ask counsel of your director, to the end he may examine whether the inspiration be true or false ; because the enemy perceiving a soul prompt to consent to inspirations, often proposes false ones to deceive her, which he can never do so long as she with humility obeys her guide.

7. The consent being given, you must diligently give effect to it, and hasten to put the inspiration in practice, which is the height of true virtue ; for to have consented in heart and not to proceed to the effect thereof, would be like planting a vine and not desiring that it should fructify.

8. Now to all this, the good performance of the morning exercise and spiritual retreat, which I have prescribed, serves exceedingly ; for by those means we prepare ourselves to do well, not only by a general, but also by a particular preparation.

CH. XIX.—OF HOLY CONFESSION.

1. Our Saviour has left in His Church the Holy Sacrament of Confession or Penance, that in it we may wash ourselves from all our sins whensoever we are defiled with them. Suffer not, then, your heart, *Philothea*, to be any long time infected with sin, since you have so present and easy a remedy.

2. The soul which has consented to sin ought to have a horror of herself, and cleanse herself as soon as may be, out of the respect due to the eyes of the Divine Majesty who beholds her. And why should we die this spiritual death, having so sovereign a remedy ?

3. Confess yourself humbly and devoutly once every week, and ever before you communicate, if it be possible, although you feel not your conscience charged with guilt of any mortal sin. For by Confession you shall receive not only absolution of the venial sins you shall confess, but also great force to avoid them hereafter, with a clear light to discern them, and abundance of grace to repair all the damage you have incurred by them ; you will practise the virtues of humility, obedience, simplicity, and charity, and in this one act of Confession you shall exercise more virtues than in any other whatsoever.

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4. Have always a true detestation of the sins you shall confess, be they never so little, with a firm resolution to amend them hereafter. Many confess their venial sins through custom, and rather to be methodical than for any amendment; and therefore they continue all their life charged with the burden of them, and lose by that means many spiritual helps and advantages. If, then, you confess to have lied, though without prejudice to any, or to have spoken some inordinate or idle word, or to have played overmuch, repent yourself thereof, and purpose firmly to amend. For it is an abuse to confess any kind of sin, be it mortal or venial, without a will to amend, since Confession was instituted for no other end.

5. Make not only those superfluous accusations many do out of custom; I have not loved God so well as I ought; I have not prayed with so great devotion as I should; I have not cherished my neighbour as I ought; I have not received the Sacraments with so great reverence as I ought, and such like. For making such accusations you bring nothing in particular that may make your confessor understand the state of your conscience; for all the Saints in heaven and all the men on earth might say the same if they went to Confession.

6. Consider, therefore, what particular cause you have to make those accusations, and when you have discovered it, accuse yourself of this default simply and plainly. For example, you accuse yourself of not having cherished your neighbour as you ought; peradventure, because having seen some poor body in great necessity, whom you might easily have succoured and comforted, you had no care of him. Well, then, in this case, accuse yourself thus in particular: Having seen a poor man in necessity, I did not assist him as I could have done, through my mere negligence, hard-heartedness, or contempt, according as you know the occasion of the default. So likewise accuse not yourself that you have not prayed to God with such devotion as you ought; but if you have had any voluntary distraction, or neglected to take convenient place, due time, and posture requisite for attention in prayer, accuse yourself of it with all simplicity, according as you shall find yourself faulty, without those general terms which serve for nothing at Confession.

7. Think it not enough only to confess your venial sins as facts, but accuse yourself also of the motive which induced you to commit them. For example, be not content to say

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you have lied without damaging any person, but declare whether it were for vainglory, either to praise or excuse yourself, or for vain mirth, or for stubbornness. If you have sinned in gaming, express whether it were for greediness of lucre, or for company's sake ; and so of the rest. Tell also how long you have persevered in your sin ; for continuance of time ordinarily much increases the sin, there being great difference between a light vanity, which slips into our mind for a quarter of an hour, and one whereon our heart has dwelt a day, or two, or three. We must then confess the fact, the motive, and the continuance of our sins. For though ordinarily we are not bound to be so punctilious in explicating venial sins ; nay, nor absolutely to confess them at all, yet they that desire to cleanse their souls, the better to attain to true devotion, must be careful to manifest to their spiritual physician the disease of which they desire to be cured, be it never so small.

8. Spare not to tell what is requisite to declare plainly the quality of your offence, as the occasion you had to be angry, or to support one in his vice. For example, a man whom I like not speaketh to me some word in jest, and I take it ill and grow choleric thereupon, whereas if another man that had been more pleasing to me had spoken more harshly, I should have taken it in good part. In such a case I will not omit to say, I have used choleric speeches to a certain person, taking in ill part some words he spake to me, not so much for the quality of the words, as for my dislike of the party. And if it be moreover needful to express the terms, to declare yourself the better, I think it were good to declare them ; for accusing yourself so plainly, you do not only discover the fault committed, but withal, the evil inclinations, habits, and other roots of sin ; so that by this means your ghostly father comes to have a more perfect knowledge of the conscience he deals with, and of the remedies most convenient for the same. Yet must you always conceal the third persons, who have been partakers with you in the offence, as much as is possible.

9. Take heed of many sins which often dwell and reign secretly in our conscience, that you may confess and purge yourself of them ; and to this purpose read attentively the 6th, 27th, 28th, 29th, 35th, and 36th Chapters of the Third Part, and the 8th Chapter of the Fourth Part.

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10. Change not easily your confessor ; but having made choice of one, continue to render him an account of your conscience on the days appointed, telling him freely and plainly the sins you have committed. From time to time, monthly, or every two months, disclose to him likewise the state of your inclinations, though you have not sinned by them, as whether you be tormented with sadness or with melancholy, whether you be given to mirth or desirous of gain, or such like inclinations.

IMITATION—BK. IV., CH. VII.—OF THE EXAMINATION OF OUR OWN CONSCIENCE, AND OF A RESOLUTION OF AMENDMENT.

The Voice of the Beloved.

1. Above all things it behoveth the priest of God to come to the celebrating, handling, and receiving this Sacrament with the greatest humility of heart and lowly reverence ; with a full faith, and a pious intention for the honour of God. Examine diligently thy conscience, and to the best of thy power cleanse and purify it by true contrition and humble confession ; so that thou neither have nor know of anything weighty which may give thee remorse, and hinder thy free access. Hold in displeasure all thy sins in general, and more especially grieve and lament for thy daily offences. And if time admit, confess to God, in the secrecy of thy heart, all the miseries of thy passions.

2. Sigh and grieve that thou art still so carnal and worldly, so unmortified from thy passions. So full of the motions of concupiscence ; so unguarded in thy outward senses ; so often entangled with many vain imaginations. So much inclined to exterior things ; so negligent as to the interior. So prone to laughter and dissipation ; so hard to tears and compunction. So inclined to relaxation, and to the pleasures of the flesh ; so sluggish to austerity and fervour. So curious to hear news and to see sights ; so remiss to embrace humiliation and abjection. So covetous to possess much ; so sparing in giving, so close in retaining, So inconsiderate in talking ; so little able to hold thy peace. So disordered in thy manners ; so over-eager in thy actions. So immoderate in food ; so deaf to the Word of God. So ready for repose ; so slow to labour. So wakeful to hear idle tales :

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so drowsy at the sacred vigils. So hasty to finish thy devotions ; so wandering in attention. So negligent in saying thy office ; so tepid in celebrating ; so dry in communicating. So quickly distracted ; so seldom fully recollected within thyself. So suddenly moved to anger ; so apt to take offence at others. So prone to judge ; so severe in reprehending. So joyful in prosperity ; so weak in adversity. So often proposing many good things ; and bringing so little to effect.

3. Having confessed and bewailed these and other thy defects with sorrow, and great displeasure at thy own weakness, make a strong resolution of always amending thy life, and of advancing in virtue. Then with an entire resignation, and with thy whole will, offer thyself up to the honour of My Name, on the altar of thy heart, as a perpetual holocaust ; faithfully committing to Me both thy soul and body. That so thou mayest be worthy to approach to offer up Sacrifice to God, and to receive for thy salvation the Sacrament of My Body.

4. For there is no oblation more worthy, nor satisfaction greater, for the washing away of sins, than to offer thyself purely and entirely to God, together with the Oblation of the Body of Christ, in the Mass and in the Communion. If a man does what lieth in him, and is truly penitent, as often as he shall approach to Me for pardon and grace, *I live, saith the Lord, who willeth not the death of the sinner, but rather that he be converted, and live* (Ezek. xxxiii. 11), *wherefore I will no longer remember his sins, but all shall be forgiven him* (Isa. xviii. 22).

BK. IV., CH. IX.—THAT WE MUST OFFER OURSELVES, AND ALL THAT IS OURS, TO GOD, AND PRAY FOR ALL.

The Voice of the Disciple.

1. Lord, all things are Thine that are in heaven and upon earth. I desire to offer myself up to Thee as a voluntary oblation, and to remain for ever Thine. Lord, in the simplicity of my heart I offer myself to Thee this day, as Thy servant for evermore, for Thy homage, and for a sacrifice of perpetual praise. Receive me with this sacred Oblation of Thy precious Body, which I offer to Thee this day in the invisible presence of assisting Angels, that it may be for salvation unto me and all Thy people.

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2. Lord, I offer to Thee all my sins and offences, which I have committed in Thy sight and that of Thy holy Angels, from the day in which I was first capable of sin until this hour, upon Thy altar of propitiation ; that Thou mayest at the same time burn and consume them all with the fire of Thy charity, and mayest blot out all the stains of my sins, and cleanse my conscience from every fault, and restore unto me Thy grace, which I have lost by sin, fully pardoning me all, and mercifully receiving me to the kiss of peace.

3. What can I do for my sins but humbly confess and lament them, and incessantly implore Thy mercy. Hear me, I beseech Thee, in Thy mercy, when I stand before Thee, O my God. All my sins are exceedingly displeasing to me ; I will never commit them any more ; but I am sorry for them, and will be sorry for them as long as I live ; and am prepared to do penance, and to make satisfaction to the utmost of my power. Forgive, O my God, forgive me my sins, for the sake of Thy Holy Name. Save my soul, which Thou hast redeemed with Thy precious Blood. Behold, I commit myself to Thy mercy ; I resign myself into Thy hands. Deal with me according to Thy goodness, not according to my impiety and wickedness.

4. I offer also to Thee all my good works, though very few and imperfect ; that Thou mayest amend and sanctify them ; that Thou mayest have a pleasurable regard to them, and make them acceptable to Thee, and always make them tend to better ; and mayest moreover conduct me, a slothful and unprofitable creature, to a blissful and glorious end.

5. I offer to Thee also all the pious desires of devout persons ; the necessities of my parents, friends, brothers, sisters, and all those that are dear to me ; and of all such as, for the love of Thee, have been benefactors to me or others ; and who have desired and besought me to offer up prayers and Masses for themselves and all theirs, whether they are still living in the flesh or are already departed out of this world ; that they may all experience the assistance of Thy grace, the help of Thy consolation, protection from dangers, and deliverance from the punishment to come ; and that thus, freed from all evils, they may joyfully pay to Thee a noble sacrifice of praise.

6. I offer up also to Thee prayers, and this sacrifice of propitiation, for those in particular who have in any way

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injured me, grieved me, or abused me, or have inflicted upon me any hurt or injury. And for all those likewise whom I have at any time grieved, troubled, oppressed, or scandalised, by words or deeds, knowingly or unknowingly ; that it may please Thee to forgive us all our sins and offences one against another. Take, O Lord, from our hearts all suspicion, indignation, anger, and contention, and whatever else may wound charity and lessen brotherly love. Have mercy, O Lord, have mercy on those that crave Thy mercy ; give grace to the needy ; and grant us so to live, that we may be worthy to enjoy Thy grace, and that we may attain unto life everlasting. Amen.

LESSON XXVI. OF HOLY COMMUNION.

LESSON XXVI.

Of Frequent Communion : That it is Profitable to Communicate often : That Holy Communion is not lightly to be Forborne : That the Body of Christ and the Holy Scriptures are most Necessary to a Faithful Soul.

TEXTS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

A certain man made a great supper, and invited many. And he sent his servant at the hour of supper to say to them that were invited, that they should come, for now all things are ready. And they began all at once to make excuse. The first said to him, I have bought a farm, and I must needs go out and see it; I pray thee, hold me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to try them: I pray thee, hold me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. And the servant returning told these things to his lord. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant: Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor and the feeble and the blind and the lame. And the servant said: Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the lord said to the servant: Go out into the high-ways and hedges; and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. But I say unto you, that none of those men that were invited, shall taste of my supper.—Luke xiv. 16.

They that are in health, need not a physician, but they that are ill. Go then and learn what this meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice. For I am not come to call the just but sinners.—Matt. ix. 12.

Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you.—John vi. 54.

This parable plainly teaches you—1, That God loves you, and loves you with a great love, and has a great desire that you should partake of this heavenly banquet; 2, that His charity is not content with inviting all, but compels attendance; 3, that the sick should seek this Divine remedy with confidence such as they feel in an earthly physician; 4, and

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that this heavenly food is necessary to enable you to live. Both your teachers will now tell you how to accomplish what is enjoined.

INTRODUCTION—PT. II., CH. XX.—OF FREQUENTING THE HOLY COMMUNION.

1. It is said that *Mithridates*, king of *Pontus*, having invented the *Mithridate*, so strengthened his body by it, that afterwards endeavouring to poison himself, to avoid the servitude of the *Romans*, he could not possibly do it. Our Saviour has instituted the venerable Sacrament of the *Eucharist*, which contains really His Flesh and Blood, to the end that he who eats it should live eternally. Whosoever then shall use it often with devotion so confirmeth his health and the life of his soul, that it is almost impossible he should be poisoned with any kind of evil affection. We cannot be nourished with this Flesh of life, and yet live in affections of death. So that as men dwelling in the terrestrial paradise might have avoided corporal death, by virtue of the tree of life which God had planted there, they may also avoid spiritual death, through the efficacy of this Sacrament of life.

2. If delicate fruits, and those most subject to decay (as cherries, strawberries, and apricots) are easily preserved all the year long with sugar or honey, it is no wonder that our hearts, though never so frail and feeble, are preserved from the corruption of sin, when they are sugared and sweetened with the incorruptible Flesh and Blood of the Son of God. O *Philothea*, the Christians who shall be damned will be without reply, when the Just Judge shall make them see the wrong they did themselves to incur spiritual death, since it was so easy to have maintained themselves in life and health by the eating of His Body, which He had left them for that end. Miserable wretches! (will He say) why would you die, having the fruit and food of life at your command?

3. *To receive the Communion of the Eucharist every day I neither praise nor blame; but to communicate every Sunday I persuade and exhort every one, if his soul be without affection to sin.* These are the very words of *S. Augustine*, with whom I neither blame nor commend absolutely those that communicate every day, but leave that to the discretion of the ghostly father of him who would be resolved in this

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point. For as the disposition necessary for such frequent communion is one of exquisite perfection, it is not well to counsel it generally ; and because this perfect disposition may be found in many good souls, it is not well to divert or dissuade generally every one from it, but rather let this be regulated according to the inward state of each one in particular. It were indiscretion to counsel every one without distinction to this frequent communion ; but it were also indiscretion to blame any one for it, especially if he follow the advice of some worthy director. The answer of *S. Catherine of Siena* was very happy, when it was objected against her often communicating, that *S. Augustine* did neither approve nor disapprove communicating every day. Well, said she, since *S. Augustine* blamed it not, I pray you do not blame it, and I am content.

4. But *S. Augustine* as you see, *Philothea*, exhorts and counsels us earnestly to communicate every Sunday ; follow his counsel then as near as possible ; for since, as I suppose, you have no kind of affection to mortal sin, nor deliberately to venial, you are in the true disposition which *S. Augustine* requires ; yea, and in a more excellent, because you have not only no affection to commit sin, but further, you are without affection to the sin itself ; so that if your ghostly father think fit, you may profitably communicate more frequently than every Sunday.

5. Yet many lawful impediments may befall you, not on your own part but on theirs with whom you live, which may give occasion to a discreet director to forbid you to communicate so often. As, for example, if you live in any kind of subjection, and those to whom you owe obedience are so ill-instructed or so capricious that they are troubled or disquieted to see you communicate so often ; peradventure, all things well considered, it would be good to condescend to these men's infirmity, and to communicate but once a fortnight, but this is to be understood when you can by no means overcome this difficulty. No general decision can be given, in this case we must do what our ghostly father will advise ; though I may boldly say that the greatest distance between the communions of those who desire to serve God devoutly is from month to month.

6. If you are discreet and prudent you will be hindered neither by father nor mother, husband nor wife, from often

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communicating ; for, since on the day of your communion you will not neglect to do that which is requisite to your calling, but will be rather more mild and observant towards all, and not refuse them any kind of duty, there is no likelihood that they will seek to divert you from this exercise, which will bring them no inconvenience, except they may be of a very froward and unreasonable spirit : in that case, as I have said, peradventure your director will wish you to show them some condescension. As for bodily diseases, there are none which can be a lawful impediment to this holy devotion, save only that which provokes frequent vomiting.

7. To communicate every eight days, it is requisite to be guilty neither of mortal sin nor any affection to venial sin, and to have a fervent desire of coming to this heavenly banquet ; but to communicate every day, it is moreover necessary to have conquered the greatest part of your evil inclinations, and that it be by the advice of your spiritual father.

IMITATION—BK. IV., CH. III.—THAT IT IS PROFITABLE TO COMMUNICATE OFTEN.

The Voice of the Disciple.

1. Behold, I come to Thee, O Lord, that, by Thy gift, it may be well with me, and that I may be delighted in Thy holy banquet, *which Thou, O God, in Thy sweetness hast prepared for the poor* (Ps. lxvii. 11). Behold, in Thee is all that I can or ought to desire ; Thou art my salvation and redemption, my hope and my strength, my honour and my glory. *Make, therefore, the soul of Thy servant joyful this day, because unto Thee, O Lord Jesus, have I lifted up my soul* (Ps. lxxxv. 4). Now do I desire to receive Thee devoutly and reverently ; I long to bring Thee into my house, so that, with Zaccheus, I may deserve to be blessed by Thee, and to be numbered amongst the children of Abraham. My soul longeth eagerly after Thy Body, my heart desireth to be united with Thee.

2. Give Thyself to me, and it is enough ; for without Thee no comfort is of any avail. Without Thee I cannot exist ; and without Thy visitation I am unable to live. Therefore must I often come to Thee, and receive Thee as the medicine of my salvation, lest perhaps I faint in the way, should I be deprived of this heavenly food. For so Thou, O most merci-

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ful Jesus, when Thou hadst been preaching to the people and curing their various maladies, didst once say, *I will not send them fasting to their home lest they faint by the way.* (Matt. xv. 32). Deal with me, therefore, in like manner, who hast left Thyself in this Sacrament for the comfort of the Faithful. For Thou art the sweet refection of the soul, and he that shall eat Thee worthily shall be partaker and heir of everlasting glory. Necessary, indeed, is it for me, who so often fall and commit sin, so quickly grow torpid and faint, that by frequent prayers and confessions, and by the sacred receiving of Thy Body, I may again be renewed, cleansed, and inflamed, lest perhaps by longer abstaining, I fall away from my holy purpose.

3. *For the senses of man are prone to evil from his youth* (Gen. viii. 21); and unless the Divine medicine succour him, he quickly falleth to worse things. The Holy Communion, therefore, withdraweth from evil and strengtheneth in good. For if now I am so often negligent and lukewarm, whenever I communicate or celebrate, what would it be if I did not take this remedy and did not seek so great a help. And although I am not every day prepared, yet I will endeavour at proper times to receive the Divine mysteries, and to make myself a partaker of so great a grace. For this is the one chief consolation of a faithful soul, so long as she sojourneth afar off from Thee in this mortal body, that, mindful of her God, she receives her Beloved with a devout mind.

4. O wonderful condescension of Thy affection towards us! that Thou, O Lord God, the Creator and Giver of life to all spirits, shouldst vouchsafe to come to a poor soul, and with Thy whole divinity and humanity to feast her hunger with fatness. O happy mind and blessed soul! which deserveth to receive Thee, her Lord God, devoutly, and in receiving Thee to be filled with spiritual joy. Oh, how great a Lord doth she entertain! how beloved a Guest doth she bring into her house, how sweet a Companion doth she receive, how faithful a Friend doth she welcome, how beautiful and noble a Spouse doth she embrace, to be loved above all beloved, and beyond all that can be desired. Let heaven and earth, O my most sweet Beloved, with all their attire, be silent before Thy face; for whatever of glory or beauty they possess, all is the gift of Thy bounty, nor can they attain to the beauty of Thy Name, *whose wisdom is above all numbers* (Ps. cxlvi. 5).

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CH. X.—THAT THE HOLY COMMUNION IS NOT LIGHTLY TO BE FOREBORNE.

The Voice of the Beloved.

1. Thou oughtest often to have recourse to the fountain of grace and of Divine mercy, to the fountain of goodness and all purity, that thou mayest be healed of thy passions and vices, and mayest deserve to be made stronger and more vigilant against all the temptations and deceits of the devil. The enemy, knowing the very great fruit and remedy contained in the Holy Communion, striveth by every method and occasion, as far as he is able, to withdraw and hinder faithful and devout persons from it.

2. For when some are disposed to prepare themselves for the Sacred Communion, they suffer the worst assaults of Satan. This wicked spirit himself, as it is written in Job, *cometh among the sons of God* (Job i. 6), to trouble them with his accustomed malice, or to make them over-fearful and perplexed; that so he may diminish their devotion, or by his assault take away their faith, if haply they may altogether forbear Communion, or approach with tepidity. But not the least regard must be had to his wiles and suggestions, be they ever so shameful and abominable; but all such imaginations are to be turned back upon his own head. The wretch must be contemned and scorned; nor is Holy Communion to be omitted on account of any assaults and commotions which he may awaken.

3. Oftentimes also a person is hindered by too great a solicitude for having devotion, and a certain anxiety about making confession. Follow herein the counsel of the wise, and lay aside all anxiety and scruple; for it impedeth the grace of God, and destroyeth the devotion of the mind. Abandon not the Holy Communion for every trifling perturbation and heaviness; but go quickly to confession, and willingly forgive others all their offences. And if thou hast offended any one, humbly crave pardon, and God will readily forgive thee.

4. What doth it avail thee to delay for a longer time thy confession, or to put off the Holy Communion? Purge thyself as soon as possible, spit out the poison quickly, make haste to take the remedy, and thou wilt find it better for thee than if thou hadst deferred it for a longer time. If to-

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day thou lettest it alone for this cause, to-morrow perhaps some greater will fall out ; and so thou mayest a long time be hindered from Communion, and become more unfit. As quickly as thou canst, shake off present heaviness and sloth ; for it is to no purpose to continue long in uneasiness, to pass a long time in unquietness, and for these daily impediments to withdraw thyself from the Divine mysteries. Yea, rather, it is very hurtful to delay Communion long, for this usually bringeth on a heavy slothfulness. Alas ! some tepid and lax persons readily take occasion to delay going to their confession, and desire that their sacred Communion should be therefore deferred, lest they be obliged to give themselves to greater watchfulness.

5. Ah, how little charity and what slender devotion have they who so easily put off Holy Communion ! How happy is he, and how acceptable to God, who so liveth, and keepeth his conscience in such purity, as to be prepared and well disposed to communicate every day, were it permitted to him, and he might pass without observation ! If sometimes a person abstaineth out of humility, or from some legitimate preventing cause, he is to be commended for reverence. But if sloth creep in upon him, he must bestir himself, and do what lieth in him ; and the Lord will second his desire, according to his good will, which He chiefly regardeth.

6. And when, indeed, he is lawfully hindered, he should yet always have a good will and a pious intention of communicating, and so he will not be without the fruit of the Sacrament. For every devout person may, every day and every hour, without any prohibition, approach to a spiritual communion with Christ with much profit. And yet on certain days, and at appointed times, he ought to receive sacramentally, with an affectionate reverence, the Body of his Redeemer ; and rather aim at the praise and honour of God than seek his own consolation. For as often as he communicateth mystically and is invisibly refreshed, so often doth he devoutly celebrate the Mystery of Christ's Incarnation and Passion, and is inflamed with His love.

7. But he who prepareth not himself otherwise than when a festival draweth near, or when custom compelleth, shall oftentimes be unprepared. Blessed is he who offereth himself up as a holocaust to the Lord as often as he celebrateth or communicateth. Be neither too slow nor too quick in cele-

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brating ; but observe the good common medium of those with whom thou livest. Thou oughtest not to beget weariness or tedium in others ; but keep the common way, according to the institution of Superiors, and rather accommodate thyself to the utility of others than follow thine own devotion and affection.

CH. XI.—THAT THE BODY OF CHRIST AND THE HOLY SCRIPTURES ARE MOST NECESSARY TO A FAITHFUL SOUL.

The Voice of the Disciple.

1. O sweetest Lord Jesus, how great sweetness is that of a devout soul feasting with Thee in Thy banquet, in which there is no other meat set before her to be eaten but Thyself, her only Beloved, and most to be desired above all the desires of her heart ! And to me, indeed, it would be delightful, from my inmost affection, to pour out tears in Thy presence, and with loving Magdalen to wash Thy feet with my tears. But where is this devotion ? where is this so plenteous effusion of holy tears ? Of a truth, in Thy sight, and in that of Thy holy angels, my whole heart ought to be inflamed and weep for joy. For I have Thee in the Sacrament truly present, though hidden under another species.

2. For to behold Thee in Thine own real and Divine brightness mine eyes could not endure, neither could the whole world subsist in the splendour of the glory of Thy Majesty. In this, therefore, Thou consultest my weakness, that Thou hidest Thyself under the Sacrament. I truly possess and adore Him whom the angels adore in heaven ; I as yet awhile in faith, but they indeed by sight and without a veil. I must be content with the light of true faith, and walk therein till the day of eternal brightness break forth, and the shadows of figures shall have passed away. *But when that which is perfect shall come* (1 Cor. xiii. 10), the use of Sacraments shall cease ; for the blessed in heavenly glory need not the sacramental medicine. For they rejoice without end in the presence of God, beholding His glory face to face ; and transformed from brightness to brightness of the abyss of the Deity, they taste the Word of God made flesh, as He was from the beginning, and remaineth for ever.

3. When I call to mind these wonders, every spiritual comfort whatsoever becomes even tedious to me ; because as long

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as I behold not my Lord openly in His glory, I make no account of all that I see and hear in the world. Thou art my witness, O God, that no one thing can comfort me, nor any thing created give me rest, but only Thou, my God, whom I desire to contemplate for eternity. But this is not possible so long as I sojourn in this mortal life. And therefore I must set myself to much patience, and submit myself to Thee in every desire. For thus also Thy saints, O Lord, who now exult with Thee in the kingdom of heaven, whilst they were living, awaited in faith and much patience the advent of Thy glory. What they believed, I believe; what they hoped, I hope for; and whither they are arrived, I trust that I also, through Thy grace, shall arrive. In the meantime I will walk in faith, being strengthened by the examples of the Saints. I shall have, moreover, for my consolation and a mirror of life, Thy holy Books, and above all these, Thy Most Holy Body, for my special remedy and refuge.

4. For in this life I find there are two things especially necessary for me, without which this miserable life would be to me insupportable. Whilst detained in the prison of this body, I acknowledge that I need two things, viz., food and light. Thou hast therefore given to me, weak as I am, Thy Sacred Body for the nourishment of my soul and body, and Thou hast set *Thy word as a light to my feet* (Ps. cxviii. 105). Without these two I could not well live; for the Word of God is the light of my soul, and Thy Sacrament is the bread of life. These also may be called the two tables set on either side in the storehouse of Thy Holy Church. One is the table of the Holy Altar, having the holy bread, that is, the precious Body of Christ; the other is that of the Divine law, containing holy doctrine, teaching a right faith, and leading most securely even into the interior of the veil, where is the Holy of Holies.

5. Thanks be to Thee, O Lord Jesus, Light of eternal Light, for the table of holy doctrine, which Thou hast ministered to us by Thy servants the prophets and apostles and other teachers. Thanks be to Thee, O Thou Creator and Redeemer of men, who, to manifest to the whole world Thy love, hast prepared a great supper, wherein Thou hast set before us to be eaten, not the typical lamb, but Thy most Sacred Body and Blood, rejoicing all the faithful with Thy holy banquet, and inebriating them with the chalice of salva-

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tion, in which are all the delights of paradise, and the holy angels do feast with us, but with a more happy sweetness.

6. Oh, how great and honourable is the office of priests, to whom it is given to consecrate with sacred words the Lord of Majesty, to bless Him with their lips, to hold Him with their hands, to receive Him with their own mouths, and to administer Him to others! Oh, how clean ought to be the hands, how pure the mouth, how holy the body, how immaculate the heart of the priest, into whom the Author of Purity so often enters! From the mouth of a priest nothing but what is holy, no word but what is becoming and profitable, ought to proceed, who so often receiveth the Sacrament of Christ.

7. Simple and chaste should be those eyes which are accustomed to behold the Body of Christ. Pure and lifted up to heaven should be the hands which are used to handle the Creator of heaven and earth. Unto priests especially it is said in the Law, *Be ye holy; for I, the Lord your God, am holy* (Lev. xix. 2).

8. Let Thy grace, O God omnipotent, assist us, that we who have undertaken the sacerdotal office may be enabled to serve Thee worthily and devoutly, in all purity, and with a good conscience. And if we cannot live in so great innocency of life as we ought, grant us still duly to bewail the sins we have committed, and, in the spirit of humility, and the purpose of a good will, to serve Thee more fervently for the future.

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LESSON XXVII.

Of Holy Communion : With how great Reverence Christ Ought to be Received : That the great Goodness and Love of God are Shown to Man in this Sacrament : That many Benefits are Bestowed on those who Communicate Devoutly : Of the Dignity of the Sacrament, and of the Priestly State.

TEXTS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

I have compassion on the multitude, for behold they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat. And if I shall send them away fasting to their home, they will faint in the way, for some of them came from afar off.—Mark viii. 2.

For the lips of the priest shall keep knowledge, and they shall seek the law at his mouth : because he is the Angel of the Lord of hosts.—Mal. ii. 7.

Let these two texts suffice here to explain the mercy of Christ towards you, and the dignity of the priesthood. Beautiful passages follow, quoted in the Imitation, where also are suggested the most tender affections for you to entertain in Holy Communion. Only remember, the words are to be understood of lively faith, and not always of sensible feelings ; of these the soul has not control, though with the help of God she can always make acts of lively faith.

IMITATION—BK. IV.—THE VOICE OF CHRIST.

Come to Me, all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you, saith the Lord (Matt. xi. 28). The bread that I will give is My flesh, for the life of the world (John vi. 52). Take ye and eat ; this is My body, which shall be delivered for you ; this do for the commemoration of Me (Matt. xxvi. 26). He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood abideth in Me and I in Him (John vi. 55). The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life (John vi. 64).

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CH. I.—WITH HOW GREAT REVERENCE CHRIST OUGHT TO BE RECEIVED.

The Voice of the Disciple.

1. These are Thy words, O Christ, the eternal Truth, though not all uttered at one time, nor written in one place. Since, therefore, they are Thine, and true, they ought all to be thankfully and faithfully received by me. They are Thine, and Thou hast spoken them; and they are also mine, because Thou hast delivered them for my salvation. I willingly receive them from Thy mouth, that they may be the more inseparably ingrafted in my heart. Words of so great tenderness, so full of sweetness and love, encourage me; but my own sins terrify me, and an unclean conscience keeps me back from receiving so great myteries. The sweetness of Thy words beckoneth me onwards; but the multitude of my offences weigheth me down.

2. Thou commandest me to approach to Thee with confidence, if I would have part with Thee; and to receive the food of immortality, if I desire to obtain life and glory everlasting. *Come, sayest Thou, all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you.* O sweet and loving word in the ear of a sinner, that Thou, O Lord my God, dost invite the poor and needy to the Communion of Thy most holy Body! But who am I, O Lord, that I should presume to approach unto Thee? Behold, *the heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee* (3 Kings viii. 27); and Thou sayest, *Come ye all to Me.*

3. What meaneth this most loving condescension and so friendly invitation? How shall I dare to approach, who am conscious to myself of no good on which I can presume? How shall I introduce Thee into my house, who have too often offended Thy most benign countenance? The angels and the archangels stand in reverential awe; the Saints and the just are afraid; and Thou sayest, *Come ye all to Me.* Unless Thou, O Lord, didst say this, who could believe it to be true? And unless Thou didst command it, who would venture to approach?

4. Behold, Noe, a just man, laboured a hundred years in building the ark, that with a few he might be saved: and how, then, shall I be able in the space of one hour, to prepare myself to receive with reverence the Maker of the

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world? Moses, Thy great servant and Thy special friend, made an ark of incorruptible wood, which also he covered with most pure gold, that he might deposit therein the tables of the law; and I, a corrupted creature, shall I presume so easily to receive Thee, the Maker of the law, and the Giver of life? Solomon, the wisest of the kings of Israel, employed seven years in building a magnificent temple for the praise of Thy name, and for eight days he celebrated the feast of the dedication thereof; he offered a thousand peacemaking victims, and brought in a solemn manner the ark of the covenant into the place prepared for it, with sound of trumpet and rejoicing: and I, unhappy, and the vilest of men, how shall I introduce Thee into my house, who can hardly spend one half hour devoutly? And would that I had ever even spent one half hour as I ought!

5. O my God, how much did they endeavour to do to please Thee! Alas, how little is it that I do! How short a time do I spend when I prepare myself to communicate! Seldom am I wholly collected, very seldom free from all distraction. And yet, surely, in the life-giving presence of Thy Deity, no unbecoming thought should occur, nor anything created occupy my mind; for it is not an angel, but the Lord of the angels whom I am about to entertain.

6. There is, moreover, a very great difference between the Ark of the Covenant, with its relics, and Thy most pure Body, with its unspeakable virtues; between those sacrifices of the law, which were figures of things to come, and the true Sacrifice of Thy Body, which is the accomplishment of all ancient sacrifices.

7. Why, then, am I not more inflamed in seeking Thy adorable presence? Why do I not prepare myself with greater solicitude to receive Thy sacred gifts, seeing that those ancient holy patriarchs and prophets, yea, kings also, and princes, with the whole people, manifested so great affection of devotion toward Thy Divine worship?

8. The most devout king David danced with all his might before the Ark of God, as he called to mind the benefits in times past bestowed upon the fathers: he made musical instruments of various kinds; he composed psalms, and appointed them to be sung with joy, and he himself likewise often sung them upon his harp, inspired with the grace of the Holy Ghost; he taught the people of Israel to praise

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God with their whole heart, and with one harmonious voice to bless and praise Him every day. If so great devotion was then displayed, and such a memorial of the praise of God made in presence of the Ark of the Covenant, how great a reverence and devotion now ought I and all Christian people to have in presence of this Sacrament, and in receiving the most precious Body of Christ !

9. Many run to sundry places to visit the relics of the Saints, and wonder to hear of their remarkable deeds ; they behold the spacious buildings of their churches, and kiss their sacred bones, enveloped in silk and gold : And behold, Thou art here present to me on the altar, my God, the Saint of Saints, the Creator of men, and the Lord of angels. Oftentimes in seeing those things men are moved with curiosity and the novelty of sights, and carry home but little fruit of amendment ; and the more so when persons lightly run hither and thither without real contrition. But here, in the Sacrament of the altar, Thou art wholly present, my God, the Man Christ Jesus ; where also is derived, in full copiousness, the fruit of eternal salvation, as often as Thou art worthily and devoutly received. To this, indeed, we are not drawn by any levity, curiosity, or sensuality, but by a firm faith, a devout hope, and a sincere charity.

10. O God, unseen Creator of the world, how wonderfully dost Thou deal with us ! how sweetly and graciously dost Thou order all things for Thy elect, to whom Thou offerest Thyself to be received in this Sacrament ! For this exceedeth all understanding ; this in a particular manner draweth the heart of the devout, and enkindleth their love. For they, Thy true faithful ones, who dispose their whole life to amendment, frequently receive from this most august Sacrament a great grace of devotion and love of virtue.

11. Oh, the wonderful and hidden grace of the Sacrament, which only the faithful of Christ know, but which unbelievers, and such as are slaves to sin, cannot experience ! In this Sacrament is conferred spiritual grace ; virtue lost is again restored in the soul ; and beauty disfigured by sin returneth again. So great sometimes is this grace, that from the fulness of the devotion conferred, not only the mind, but the frail body also feeleth an increase of strength bestowed on it.

12. Still must we lament and deplore exceedingly our

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tepidity and negligence, that we are not drawn with greater affection to receive Christ, in whom consisteth all the hope and merit of those that are to be saved. For He is our sanctification and our redemption ; He is the consolation of pilgrims, and the eternal fruition of the Saints. Greatly to be lamented, therefore, is it, that many take so little heed of this saving Mystery, which rejoiceth heaven, and preserveth the whole world. Oh, blindness and hardness of the heart of man, that doth not more regard so unspeakable a gift, and even from a daily use of it falleth into a disregard of it !

13. For if this most holy Sacrament were celebrated in one place only, and consecrated by only one priest in the world, with how great a desire, thinkest thou, would men be affected towards that place, and to such a priest of God, that they might see the Divine Mysteries celebrated ? But now there are many priests, and Christ is offered up in many places, that the grace and love of God to man may appear so much the greater, by how much the more bounteously is this sacred Communion distributed throughout the entire world. Thanks be to Thee, O good Jesu, eternal Shepherd, who has vouchsafed to feed us poor exiles with Thy precious Body and Blood, and to invite us to the receiving these mysteries, even by the words of Thy own mouth, saying, *Come to Me, all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you.*

CH. II.—THAT THE GREAT GOODNESS AND LOVE OF GOD ARE SHOWN TO MAN IN THIS SACRAMENT.

The Voice of the Disciple.

1. Confiding, O Lord, in Thy goodness and in Thy great mercy, I come sick to my Saviour, hungry and thirsty to the Fountain of Life, needy to the King of heaven, a servant to my Lord, a creature to my Creator, and one in desolation to my loving Comforter. But whence is this to me, that Thou shouldst come to me ? who am I, that Thou shouldst give to me Thyself ? How dare a sinner appear before Thee ? and how dost Thou vouchsafe to come to a sinner ? Thou knowest Thy servant, and dost know that he has nothing of good in himself, wherefore Thou shouldst bestow this upon him. I confess, therefore, my unworthiness ; I acknow-

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ledge Thy bounty ; I praise Thy goodness ; and I give Thee thanks for Thy exceeding love. For it is for Thy own sake Thou dost this, not on account of my merits, but that Thy goodness may be the more manifest to me, that Thy love may be more abundantly imparted, and Thy humility more perfectly commended. Since, therefore, this pleaseth Thee, and Thou hast ordained it thus, Thy merciful condescension pleaseth me also ; and oh, that my iniquity may be no obstacle !

2. O most sweet and most benign Jesu, how great reverence and thanksgiving, with perpetual praise, are due to Thee for the receiving of Thy sacred Body, whose dignity no man can be found able to unfold ! But on what shall I think in this Communion, when I approach to my Lord, whom I can never duly venerate, and yet desire to receive with devotion ? What can I think on better or more salutary than to humble myself entirely before Thee, and extol Thy infinite goodness above me ? I praise Thee, O my God, and I extol Thee for ever ; I despise myself, and cast myself down into the depth of my own vileness.

3. Behold, Thou art the Saint of saints, and I am the scum of sinners. Behold, Thou bowest Thyself down to me, who am not worthy to look up to Thee. Behold, Thou comest to me ; Thou wishest to be with me ; Thou invitest me to Thy banquet ; Thou desirest to give me heavenly food, even the bread of Angels to eat ; no other, indeed, than Thyself, *the living Bread, who didst come down from heaven, and givest life to the world* (John vi.).

4. Behold, whence love proceedeth ; what a condescension shineth forth ! how great thanksgiving and praise are due to Thee for these ? Oh, how salutary and profitable was Thy design when Thou didst institute it ! how sweet and delightful this banquet, wherein Thou hast given Thyself for our food ! Oh, how admirable is Thy work, O Lord ! how mighty is Thy power ! how infallible Thy truth ! *For Thou hast spoken, and all things were made* (Ps. cxlvi.), and that which Thou commandest has been done.

5. A wonderful thing it is, and worthy of faith, and transcending all human intelligence, that Thou, O Lord my God, true God and man, art contained entire under a small form of bread and wine, art eaten by the receiver, and without being consumed. Thou, the Lord of all things, who

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standest in need of no one, art pleased by this Sacrament to dwell in us. Preserve my heart and my body without stain, that, with a joyful and pure conscience, I may often be able to celebrate Thy sacred Mysteries, and receive for my eternal salvation what Thou hast principally ordained and instituted for Thy honour and perpetual remembrance.

6. Rejoice, O my soul, and give thanks unto God for so noble a gift, and so singular a solace left to thee in this valley of tears. For as often as thou repeatest this Mystery and receivest the Body of Christ, so often dost thou perform the work of thy redemption, and art made partaker of all the merits of Christ. For the charity of Christ is never diminished, and the greatness of His propitiation is never exhausted. Therefore oughtest thou to dispose thyself for this by an ever-recurring renovation of spirit, and weigh with attentive consideration the great mystery of salvation. And as often as thou celebratest or hearest Mass, it ought to seem to thee as great, new, and delightful, as if Christ that very day first descending into the Virgin's womb was made man; or hanging on the cross, suffered and died for man's salvation.

CH. IV.—THAT MANY BENEFITS ARE BESTOWED ON THOSE WHO COMMUNICATE DEVOUTLY.

The Voice of the Disciple.

1. O Lord my God, *prevent Thy servant with the blessings of Thy sweetness* (Ps. xx. 3), that I may deserve to approach worthily and devoutly to Thy magnificent Sacrament. Raise up my heart towards Thee, and deliver me from oppressive slothfulness. Visit me with Thy saving mercy, that I may taste in spirit Thy sweetness which plentifully lieth hid in this Sacrament as in a fountain. Illuminate also my eyes to behold so great a Mystery, and strengthen me to believe it with an undoubting faith. For it is Thy work, not the power of man; Thy sacred institution, not man's invention. For no one can be found capable of himself to conceive and understand these things, which transcend even the intelligence of the angels. What, then, of so high and sacred a mystery shall I, an unworthy sinner, who am but dust and ashes, be able to investigate and comprehend?

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2. O Lord, in the simplicity of my heart, with a good and firm faith, and at Thy command, I come to Thee with hope and reverence ; and do verily believe that Thou art here present in the Sacrament, both God and Man. Thou willest, then, that I receive Thee, and unite myself to Thee in charity. Wherefore I beseech Thy clemency, and I beg of Thee to give me a special grace, that I may be wholly dissolved in Thee, and overflow with Thy love, and no more concern myself about any other kind of consolation. For this most high and most worthy Sacrament is the health of soul and body, the medicine of every spiritual malady, in which my vices are cured, my passions restrained, temptations overcome or lessened, greater grace infused, incipient virtue increased, faith confirmed, hope strengthened, and charity inflamed and enlarged.

3. For Thou hast bestowed, and still oftentimes dost bestow, many good things in this Sacrament to Thy beloved who communicate devoutly, O my God, the support of my soul, the repairer of human infirmity, and the giver of all interior consolation. For Thou impartest unto them much consolation against their various tribulations, and Thou liftest them up from the depth of their own dejection to the hope of Thy protection, and Thou dost interiorly recreate and enlighten them with a certain new grace ; so that they who first were anxious, and without sensible affection before Communion, after being refreshed with this heavenly food and drink find themselves changed for the better. And in such a way Thou art pleased to deal with Thy elect, that they may more truly acknowledge and plainly experience how great is their weakness when left to themselves, and how much of bounty and grace they receive from Thee. For of themselves they are cold, dry, and indevout ; but by Thee, they merit to become fervent, cheerful, and devout. For who, humbly approaching to the fountain of sweetness, doth not carry thence some little sweetness ? Or who, standing by a copious fire, doth not derive therefrom some little heat ? And Thou art a fountain ever full and overflowing ; thou art a fire always burning and never failing.

4. Wherefore, if I may not draw out of the fulness of the fountain, nor drink to satiety, I will at least set my mouth to the opening of this heavenly pipe, that so I may draw thence some little drop to allay my thirst, and may not wholly

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wither away. And if as yet I cannot be all heavenly and all on fire, like the Cherubim and Seraphim, I will still endeavour to follow after devotion, and to prepare my heart, that so I may acquire some small spark of Divine fire by humbly receiving this life-giving Sacrament. And whatever is wanting to me, O good Jesu, most holy Saviour, do Thou in Thy bounty and goodness supply for me, who hast vouchsafed to call all unto Thee, saying, *Come to Me, all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you* (Matt. xi. 28).

5. I labour, indeed, in the sweat of my brow, I am tortured with grief of heart, I am burdened with sins, I am troubled with temptations, I am entangled and oppressed with many evil passions; and there is no one to help me, no one to deliver and save me, but Thou, O Lord God, my Saviour, to whom I commit myself and all that is mine, that Thou mayest keep me, and bring me to everlasting life. Receive me, for the praise and glory of Thy Name, who hast prepared Thy Body and Blood for my food and drink. *Grant, O Lord God, my salvation, that with the frequenting of this Thy Mystery may increase the affection of my devotion.*

CH. V.—OF THE DIGNITY OF THE SACRAMENT, AND OF THE
PRIESTLY STATE.

The Voice of the Beloved.

1. If thou hadst the purity of an angel, and the sanctity of St. John the Baptist, thou wouldst be worthy neither to receive nor to handle this Sacrament. For this is not due to a man's merits, that a man should consecrate and handle the Sacrament of Christ, and receive for food the bread of angels. Great is the Mystery, and great the dignity of priests, to whom is given that which is not granted to the angels. For priests alone, rightly ordained in the Church, have the power of celebrating and consecrating the Body of Christ. A priest, indeed, is the minister of God, using the word of God, by the command and institution of God; but God is there the principal author and invisible worker, to whom all whatsoever He willeth is subject, and all whatsoever He commandeth is obedient. More oughtest thou, therefore, to credit God the Omnipotent, in this most excellent Sacrament, than thy own sense or any visible sign. And there-

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fore thou oughtest to approach this work with fear and reverence. Take heed to thyself, and see what kind of ministry has been delivered to thee by the imposition of the hands of the Bishop. Behold, thou art made a priest, and art consecrated to celebrate ; see now that faithfully and devoutly, in due time, thou offer up sacrifice to God, and that thou show thyself blameless. Thou hast not lightened thy burden, but art now bound by a stricter bond of discipline, and art obliged to greater perfection of sanctity. A priest ought to be adorned with all virtues, and to set the example of a good life to others. His conversation should not be with the popular and common ways of men, but with the angels in heaven, or with perfect men upon earth.

2. A priest, clad in sacred vestments, is Christ's vicegerent, that he may suppliantly and humbly pray to God for himself and all the people. He hath before and behind him the sign of the Cross of our Lord, that he may ever remember the Passion of Christ. Before him he beareth the cross on the chasuble, that he may diligently behold the footsteps of Christ, and fervently endeavour to follow after them. Behind him he is marked with the cross, that he may mildly suffer for God's sake whatsoever adversities befall him from others. He weareth the cross before, that he may bewail his own sins ; and behind, that through compassion he may lament the sins of others, and know that he is placed in the midst, between God and the sinner. Neither ought he to grow weary of prayer and the holy Oblation, until he deserve to obtain grace and mercy. When a priest celebrateth, he honoureth God, he rejoiceth the angels, he edifieth the Church, he helpeth the living, he obtaineth rest for the departed, and maketh himself partaker of all things.

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LESSON XXVIII.

How we Ought to Communicate : A Self-Interrogation concerning the Exercise Proper before Communion : Of the Oblation of Christ on the Cross, and of the Resignation of Ourselves without Reserve : With what great Diligence we Ought to Prepare.

TEXTS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

But let a man prove himself : and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of the chalice. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the body of the Lord.—1 Cor. ii. 28.

And I live, now not I : but Christ liveth in me. And that I live now in the flesh : I live in the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and delivered himself for me.—Gal. ii. 20.

If any man thirst, let him come to me, and drink. He that believeth in me, as the scripture saith, Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.—John vii. 37.

From these words you learn—1, What you should do in order fitly to approach this mystery of love ; 2, what spiritual gifts are to be sought for and hoped for ; 3, that in this mystery all is spirit and life. But both your masters will instruct you herein.

INTRODUCTION—PT. II., CH. XXI.—HOW WE OUGHT TO COMMUNICATE.

1. Begin to prepare yourself for Holy Communion the evening before, by many aspirations and ejaculations of love, retiring somewhat sooner than you may rise more early in the morning. If you chance to awake in the night, fill presently your heart and your mouth with some odoriferous words, by means of which your soul may be perfumed to receive your Spouse, who watching while you sleep prepares Himself to bring you a thousand graces and favours, if on your part you dispose yourself to receive them. In the morning get up with great joy for the happiness you expect,

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and being confessed, go with great confidence, accompanied also with humility, to receive this heavenly Food which nourishes you to immortal life. After you have recited the sacred words:—O Lord, I am not worthy, &c., move not your head or lips any more, neither to pray, nor to sigh, but opening your mouth softly and moderately, and lifting up your head as much as is needful that the priest may see what he does, full of hope, faith, and charity, receive Him whom, in whom, by whom, and for whom, you believe, hope, and love.

2. O *Philothea*, think to yourself that as the bee having gathered from the flowers the dew of heaven and the choicest juice of the earth, and having converted it into honey, carries it into her hive; so the priest having taken from the altar the Saviour of the world, the true Son of God, who as the dew is descended from heaven, and the true Son of the Virgin, who as a flower is sprung from the earth of our humanity, he puts Him as delicious Food into your mouth and body.

3. Having received Him, stir up your heart to come and do homage to this King of Salvation, treat with Him of your inward affairs, contemplate Him within you, where He is lodged for your happiness. To conclude, make Him as welcome as you possibly can, and carry yourself in such manner that men may judge by all your actions that God is with you.

4. When you cannot have the benefit of communicating really at the Holy Mass, communicate at least in heart, spiritually uniting yourself with an ardent desire to this quickening Flesh of our Blessed Saviour.

5. Your principal intent in communicating must be to advance, comfort, and strengthen yourself in the love of God: you must receive only for love, that which love alone has caused to be given you. No, you cannot consider our Saviour in any action either more loving or more tender towards us than in this Sacrament, in which He annihilates Himself in a manner, and turns Himself into meat, that so He may penetrate our souls, and unite Himself most intimately to the heart and body of His faithful.

6. If worldlings ask you why you communicate so often, tell them it is to learn to love God, to be purified from your imperfections, to be delivered from your miseries, to be com-

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forted in your afflictions, and to be strengthened in your weakness. Tell them that two sorts of persons ought to communicate often ; the perfect, because being well disposed they do themselves wrong in not approaching to the spring and fountain of perfection ; and the imperfect, that they may be able justly to aspire to perfection ; the strong, lest they become feeble, and the feeble, that they may become strong ; the sick, to be healed, and the whole, lest they fall into sickness ; and that for your own part, as one imperfect, feeble, and sick, you have need to communicate often with Him who is your perfection, strength, and health. Tell them, such as have not many worldly affairs should communicate often, because they have leisure, and such as have much temporal business should likewise do so, because they have need of it, and that he who labours much and takes great pains ought also to eat solid meats, and frequently. Tell them that you receive the Blessed Sacrament, to learn to receive it well : because no man performs an action well which he does not often practice.

7. Communicate often, *Philothea*, and as often as you can, with the advice of your ghostly father. Hares in our mountains become white in winter, because they neither see nor eat anything but snow ; so by adoring and eating beauty, goodness, and purity itself in this Divine Sacrament, you will become entirely fair, good, and pure.

IMITATION—BK. IV., CH. VI.—A SELF-INTERROGATION CONCERNING THE EXERCISE PROPER BEFORE COMMUNION.

The Voice of the Disciple.

1. When I consider Thy dignity, O Lord, and my own vileness, I am affrighted exceedingly, and am confounded within myself. For if I do not approach Thee, I fly from life ; and if I intrude myself unworthily, I incur Thy displeasure. What, then, shall I do, O my God, my Helper and Counsellor in necessities ?

2. Do Thou teach me the right way ; set before me some short exercise suitable for the Holy Communion. For it is well to know after what manner, indeed, I ought devoutly and reverently to prepare my heart for Thee, for the profitable receiving of Thy Sacrament, as well as for celebrating so great and Divine a Sacrifice.

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CH. VIII.—OF THE OBLATION OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS, AND OF THE RESIGNATION OF OURSELVES.

The Voice of the Beloved.

1. As I willingly offered Myself to God the Father for thy sins, with My hands stretched out upon the Cross, and My Body naked, so that nothing remained in Me which was not completely turned into a Sacrifice to appease the Divine wrath: even so oughtest thou willingly to offer thyself to Me daily in the Mass; as heartily as thou canst, with thy whole energies and affections, for a pure and holy oblation. What more do I require of thee, than that thou endeavour to resign thyself entirely to Me? Whatsoever thou givest except thyself, I regard not; for I seek not thy gift, but thee.

2. As it would not suffice thee, if thou hadst all things except Me, so neither can it please Me, whatever thou givest, unless thou offer Me thyself. Offer thyself to Me, and give thy whole self for God, and thy offering shall be accepted. Behold, I offered My whole Self to the Father for thee; I have given My whole Body and Blood for thy Food, that I might be all thine, and thou mightest be always Mine. But if thou wilt stand upon self, and not offer thyself freely to My will, thy offering is not complete, nor will there be an entire union between us. A spontaneous oblation of thyself into the hands of God ought to precede all thy works, if thou wouldst obtain liberty and grace. For therefore is it that so few become illuminated and internally free, because they know not how entirely to renounce themselves. My sentence standeth sure: *Unless a man renounce all, he cannot be My disciple* (Luke xiv. 33.). Thou, therefore, if thou desirest to be My disciple, offer up thyself to Me with all thy affections.

CH. XII. — WITH HOW GREAT DILIGENCE HE WHO IS TO COMMUNICATE OUGHT TO PREPARE HIMSELF FOR CHRIST.

The Voice of the Beloved.

1. I am the Lover of purity and the Giver of all sanctity. I seek a pure heart, and there is the place of My rest. Make ready for Me a large upper room furnished, and *I will eat*

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the Pasch with thee together with My disciples (Mark xiv. 15). If thou wilt have Me to come to thee and remain with thee, *purge out the old leaven* (1 Cor. v. 7), and make clean the habitation of thy heart. Shut out the whole world and all the tumult of vices; sit as a *sparrow solitary on the housetop* (Ps. ci. 8); and think of thy excesses *in the bitterness of thy soul* (Isa. xxxviii. 15). For every lover prepareth a place the best and most beautiful for her dearly beloved; since hereby is known the affection of the person entertaining the beloved.

2. Know, nevertheless, that thou canst not satisfy for this preparation by the merit of any action of thine, even shouldst thou prepare thyself thus for a whole year together, so as to think of nothing else. But it is of My mere goodness and grace that thou art suffered to come to My table; as if a beggar should be invited to the banquet of a rich man, and he had nothing else to return him for his benefits but to humble himself and give him thanks. Do, therefore, what lieth in thee, and do it diligently; not out of custom, nor from necessity, but with fear, reverence, and affection, receive the Body of thy beloved Lord God, who vouchsafeth to come to thee. I am He who hath invited thee; I have commanded it to be done; I will supply what is wanting to thee; come and receive Me.

3. When I bestow the grace of devotion, give thanks to thy God, not that thou art worthy, but because I have had compassion on thee. If thou hast not devotion, but rather findest thyself dry, persist in prayer, sigh and knock; nor desist until thou deservest to receive some crumb or drop of saving grace. Thou hast need of Me, not I of thee. Neither dost thou come to sanctify Me, but I come to sanctify and make thee better. Thou comest that thou mayest be sanctified by Me, and united to Me; that thou mayest receive new grace, and be incited anew to amendment. Neglect not this grace, but prepare thy heart with all diligence, and bring in thither to thee thy Beloved.

4. But thou oughtest not only to prepare thyself for devotion before Communion, but also carefully to keep thyself therein after the reception of the Sacrament. Neither is watchfulness less required after, than a devout preparation before; for strict guardianship afterwards is the best preparation for again obtaining a greater grace. For a person is rendered much indisposed for this, if he presently turn himself too

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eagerly after exterior consolation. Beware of much talk; remain in secret and enjoy thy God; for thou hast Him whom all the world cannot take from thee. I am He to whom thou oughtest to give thy whole self; so that henceforth thou mayest live free from all solicitude, not in thyself, but in Me.

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LESSON XXIX.

That a Devout Soul ought to Desire with the whole Heart to be United with Christ in this Sacrament: Of the Ardent Desire of some Devout Persons towards the Body of Christ: That the Grace of Devotion is acquired by Humility and Self-Abnegation.

TEXTS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

For what have I in heaven? and besides thee what do I desire upon earth? For thee my flesh and my heart hath fainted away: thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion for ever.—Ps. lxxiii. 25.

For to me, to live is Christ: and to die is gain.—Phil. i. 21.

Or do you think that the Scripture saith in vain: To envy doth the spirit covet which dwelleth in you? But he giveth greater grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.—James iv. 6.

These words teach—1, What are the affections of a soul that desires wholly to renounce all things and be united to God alone; 2, what effects in the soul the communication of the life of Christ produces; 3, that we must learn to love God alone and be humble, if we would be loved by Him and illumined with His light. Hereon read also what follows.

IMITATION—BK. IV., CH. XIII.—THAT A DEVOUT SOUL OUGHT TO DESIRE, WITH THE WHOLE HEART, TO BE UNITED TO CHRIST IN THIS SACRAMENT.

The Voice of the Disciple.

1. Who will give me, O Lord, to find Thee alone, to open my whole heart to Thee, and to enjoy Thee as my soul desireth, and that no one may henceforth despise me, nor anything created move or regard me; but that Thou alone mayest speak to me, and I to Thee, as the beloved is wont to speak to his beloved, and a friend to be entertained with a friend. For this I pray, this I desire, that I may be wholly united to Thee, and that I may withdraw my heart from all things created; and by Holy Communion, and often celebrating, I may more and more learn to relish

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things heavenly and eternal. Ah, Lord God, when shall I be wholly united to and absorbed in Thee, and altogether unmindful of myself? Thou in me, and I in Thee; and thus grant us both equally to continue in one.

2. Verily Thou art my Beloved, *the choicest among thousands* (Cant. v. 10), in whom my soul is well pleased to dwell all the days of her life. Verily Thou art my Peacemaker, in whom is sovereign peace and true rest; and out of whom is labour and sorrow and endless misery. *Thou art in truth a hidden God, and Thy counsel is not with the wicked*, (Prov. iii. 15), *but Thy conversation is with the humble and the simple* (Job xxi. 16). Oh, how sweet, O Lord, is Thy Spirit, who, to show Thy sweetness towards Thy children, vouchsafest to refresh them with that most delicious bread which cometh down from heaven! Truly, no other nation is there so great, that hath its gods so nigh to it, as Thou, our God, art present to all Thy faithful, to whom, for their daily solace, and for raising up their hearts to heaven, Thou givest Thyself to be eaten and enjoyed.

3. For what other nation is there so distinguished as the Christian people? Or what creature under heaven so beloved as a devout soul, to whom God cometh, that He may feed it with His own glorious flesh? Oh unspeakable grace! Oh wonderful condescension! Oh boundless love bestowed exclusively on man! But what shall I render to the Lord for this grace, for charity so remarkable? There is nothing that I can present to Him more acceptable than to give up my heart entirely to God, and closely unite it to Him. Then all that is within me shall rejoice exceedingly, when my soul shall have been perfectly united to its God; then will He say to me, If thou wilt be with Me, I will be with thee: and I will answer Him, Vouchsafe, O Lord, to remain with me; I will willingly be with Thee. This is my whole desire, that my heart may be united to Thee.

CH. XIV.—OF THE ARDENT DESIRE OF SOME DEVOUT PERSONS TOWARDS THE BODY OF CHRIST.

The Voice of the Disciple.

I. *Oh, how great is the multitude of Thy sweetness, O Lord, which Thou hast hidden for them that fear Thee!* (Ps. xxv. 20). When I call to mind some persons devout to Thy

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Sacrament, O Lord, who approach with the greatest devotion and affection, then am I often confounded within myself and blush that I approach so tepidly and coldly to Thy Altar, and to the Table of Holy Communion; that I remain so dry and without affection of heart; that I am not wholly set on fire in Thy presence, O my God, nor so vehemently drawn onwards and affected, as many devout persons have been, who, from excessive desire of communion and a sensible love in their hearts, were unable to contain themselves from weeping; but with the mouth both of their heart as well as of their body, did they from the very marrow of their soul pant after Thee, O God, the living fountain; not being otherwise able either to moderate or satisfy their hunger, unless by receiving Thy Body with all joy and spiritual avidity.

2. Oh, truly the ardent faith of these persons is a demonstrative existing argument of Thy sacred presence! For they truly know their Lord in the breaking of bread, whose heart burneth so mightily within them, from Jesus walking with them. Alas, far from me too often is such affection and devotion, such vehement love and ardour. Be Thou merciful to me, O good Jesus, sweet and gracious, and grant Thy poor mendicant to feel, sometimes at least, in the sacred Communion, some little of the cordial affection of Thy love, that my faith may be more strengthened, my hope in Thy goodness increased; and that charity, once perfectly enkindled, and having tasted the manna of Heaven, may never die away.

3. Powerful, indeed, is Thy mercy to give me also the desired grace, and in Thy great clemency, when the time of Thy good pleasure arrives, to visit me with the spirit of fervour. For though I burn not with so great desire as Thy specially devout servants, yet, by Thy grace, I have a desire of this same greatly inflamed desire, praying and wishing that I may be made partaker with all such fervent lovers, and be numbered in their holy company.

CH. XV.—THAT THE GRACE OF DEVOTION IS ACQUIRED BY HUMILITY AND SELF-ABNEGATION.

The Voice of the Beloved.

1. Thou oughtest to seek the grace of devotion earnestly, to ask it fervently, to wait for it patiently and confidently, to receive it thankfully, to keep it humbly, to work with it

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diligently, and to commit to God the time and manner of this heavenly visitation, until He come unto thee. Thou oughtest especially to humble thyself when thou feelest inwardly little or no devotion ; and yet not to be too much dejected, nor to grieve inordinately. God often giveth in one short moment what He hath for a long time denied. He giveth sometimes in the end that which at the beginning of prayer He deferred to grant.

2. If grace were always immediately given, and ever present at our will, it could scarcely be supported by weak man. Therefore the grace of devotion must be awaited with a good hope and humble patience. Still impute it to thyself and to thy sin when it is not given, or when also it is secretly taken away. It is sometimes a trifling matter that hindereth or hideth grace : if, indeed, that may be called trifling, and not rather important, which hindereth so great a good. But if thou wilt remove this thing, small or great as it may be, and perfectly overcome it, it shall be as thou desirest.

3. For as soon as thou hast delivered thyself up to God with thy whole heart, and neither seekest this nor that for thine own pleasure or will, but wholly placest thyself in Him, thou shalt find thyself united to Him and at peace ; for nothing will be so grateful to thee, and please thee so much, as the good pleasure of the Divine will. Whosoever, therefore, with simplicity of heart shall raise up his intention to God, and disengage himself from all inordinate love or dislike of any created being, he shall be the most fit to receive grace, and worthy of the gift of devotion. For the Lord bestoweth His benediction there where He findeth vessels empty. And the more perfectly one forsaketh the things below, and the more he dieth to self by contempt of himself, the more speedily grace cometh, the more plentifully it entereth in, and the higher it elevateth a heart that is free.

4. Then shall he see and abound, and shall admire, and his heart shall be enlarged within him, because the hand of the Lord is with him, and he hath put himself wholly into His hand, even for ever. Behold, thus shall the man be blessed who seeketh God with his whole heart, and taketh not his soul in vain. Such a one, in receiving the Holy Eucharist, obtaineth the great grace of Divine union ; because he doth not regard his own devotion and consolation, but above all devotion and consolation he regardeth the honour and glory of God.

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LESSON XXX.

That we ought to Unfold our Needs to Christ, and Crave His Grace: Of an Ardent Love and Vehement Desire to Receive Christ: That a Man should not be a Curious Searcher into this Sacrament, but Submit his Sense to Holy Faith.

TEXTS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

Be nothing solicitous: but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your petitions be made known to God.—Phil. iv. 6.

Who then shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation? or distress? or famine? or nakedness? or danger? or persecution? or the sword? (As it is written: For thy sake we are put to death all the day long. We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.) But in all these things we overcome because of him that hath loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor Angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor might, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.—Rom. viii. 35.

He that is a searcher of majesty, shall be overwhelmed by glory.—Prov. xxv. 27.

These words teach—1, how confidently you should lay before God your needs, and ask His help; 2, the inward security which charity and charity's confidence impart to devout souls, when they seek God alone, and long for union with Him; 3, and lastly, that curiosity must be restrained. But read in further explanation what follows.

CH. XVI.—**THAT WE OUGHT TO LAY OPEN OUR NECESSITIES TO CHRIST, AND CRAVE HIS GRACE.**

The Voice of the Disciple.

1. O most sweet and most loving Lord, whom I now desire to receive with all devotion, Thou knowest my infirmity and the necessity which I endure; under how great evils and vices I lie prostrate; how often I am oppressed, tempted,

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troubled, and defiled. To Thee do I come for remedy, to Thee do I pray for consolation and relief; I speak to Him who knoweth all things, to whom my whole interior is manifest, and who alone can perfectly console and assist me. Thou knowest what good things I stand most in need of, and how poor I am in virtues.

2. Behold, I stand before Thee poor and naked, begging grace and imploring mercy. Feed Thy hungry beggar, inflame my coldness with the fire of Thy love, enlighten my blindness with the brightness of Thy presence. Turn for me all earthly things into bitterness, all things grievous and gross into patience, and all low and created things into contempt and oblivion. Lift up my heart to Thee into heaven, and suffer me not to wander upon earth. Mayest Thou alone be delightful to me henceforth and for evermore. For Thou only art my meat and drink, my love and my joy, my sweetness and my whole good.

3. Oh, that with Thy Presence Thou wouldst totally inflame, consume, and transform me into Thyself, that I may be made one spirit with Thee by the grace of internal union, and by the melting of ardent love! Suffer me not to go from Thee hungry and dry; but deal with me in Thy mercy, as Thou hast often dealt so wonderfully with Thy Saints. What marvel if I should be wholly set on fire by Thee, and should die to myself, since Thou art a fire always burning and never failing, a love purifying hearts and enlightening the understanding!

CH. XVII.—OF AN ARDENT LOVE AND VEHEMENT DESIRE TO RECEIVE CHRIST.

The Voice of the Disciple.

1. With great devotion and ardent love, with all affection and fervour of heart, I desire to receive Thee, O Lord, as many Saints and devout persons, who were most pleasing to Thee in holiness of life and in the most burning devotion, have desired Thee when they communicated. O my God, Eternal Love, my whole good and never-ending happiness, I desire to receive Thee with the most vehement desire and most worthy reverence that any of the Saints have ever had, or could experience.

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2. And though I am unworthy to possess all those sentiments of devotion, nevertheless I offer Thee the whole affection of my heart, as though I alone had all those highly-pleasing and inflamed desires. Yet whatever a pious mind can conceive and desire, all this with the greatest reverence and most inward fervour I present and offer Thee. I desire to reserve nothing for myself, but freely and most willingly to immolate to Thee, myself, and all that is mine. O Lord my God, my Creator and Redeemer, I desire to receive Thee this day with such affection, reverence, praise, and honour, with such gratitude, worthiness, and love, with such faith, hope, and purity, as Thy most holy Mother, the glorious Virgin Mary, received and desired Thee, when to the Angel announcing to her the Mystery of the Incarnation she humbly and devoutly answered, *Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done unto me according to thy word* (Luke i. 38).

3. And as Thy blessed precursor, the most excellent among the Saints, John the Baptist, in Thy presence rejoicing, leapt through joy of the Holy Ghost whilst he was yet enclosed in his mother's womb; and afterwards seeing JESUS walking among men, humbling himself exceedingly, with devout affection, said, *The friend of the Bridegroom, who standeth and heareth Him, rejoiceth with joy for the voice of the Bridegroom* (John iii. 29); so I also wish to be inflamed with great and holy desires, and to present myself to Thee from my whole heart. Wherefore I here offer and present to Thee the joys of all devout hearts, their ardent affections, their ecstasies, supernatural illuminations, and heavenly visions, together with all the virtues and praises that are or shall be celebrated by all creatures in heaven and earth, for myself and all such as have been recommended to my prayers; that thus by all Thou mayest be worthily praised and glorified for ever.

4. Receive my wishes, O Lord my God, and my desires of infinite praise and boundless blessing, which, according to the multitude of Thy unspeakable greatness, are most justly due to Thee. These I render, and desire to render Thee every day and every moment of time; and I invite and entreat all the Heavenly Spirits, and all the Faithful, by prayers and affections, to render with me thanksgiving and praise.

5. Let all peoples, tribes, and tongues, praise Thee, and magnify Thy holy and most sweet Name with the highest

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jubilation and ardent devotion. And may all, whoever reverently and devoutly celebrate Thy most high Sacrament, and receive it with full faith, at Thy hands deserve to find grace and mercy, and humbly pray for me, a sinner. And when they shall have obtained their wished-for devotion and blissful union, and shall retire from Thy sacred, heavenly table, fully comforted and wonderfully refreshed, let them vouchsafe to remember poor me.

CH. XVIII. — THAT A MAN SHOULD NOT BE A CURIOUS SEARCHER INTO THIS SACRAMENT, BUT A HUMBLE FOLLOWER OF CHRIST, SUBMITTING HIS SENSE TO HOLY FAITH.

The Voice of the Beloved.

1. Thou must beware of curious and useless scrutiny into this most profound Sacrament, if thou wouldst not sink into the depth of doubt. *He that is a searcher of majesty shall be overwhelmed by glory* (Prov. xxv. 27). God is able to effect more than man is able to understand. A pious and humble inquiry after truth is permitted, as it is always prepared to be instructed, and studieth to walk in the sound doctrine of the Fathers.

2. Blessed is that simplicity which leaveth the difficult paths of questionings, and goeth on in the plain and sure path of God's commandments. Many have lost devotion, whilst they would search into lofty matters. It is faith and an upright life that are required of thee; not the loftiness of intellect, nor diving deep into the Mysteries of God. If thou dost neither understand nor comprehend those things which are beneath thee, how mayest thou comprehend such as are above thee? Submit thyself to God, and humble thy sense to faith, and the light of knowledge shall be given thee, according as shall be advantageous and necessary for thee.

3. Some are grievously tempted concerning faith and the Sacrament; but this is not to be imputed to them, but rather to the enemy. Be not thou anxious, nor stop to dispute with thy thoughts, nor answer doubts which the devil suggests; but believe the words of God, believe His Saints and Prophets, and the wicked enemy will fly from thee. It is often very profitable that the servant of God should suffer such things. For the devil tempteth not unbelievers and

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sinner, whom he already securely possesseth ; but the faithful and devout he tempteth and molesteth in many ways.

4. Go forward, therefore, with a simple and undoubting faith, and with lowly reverence approach the Sacrament : and whatsoever thou art not able to understand, securely commit to God the omnipotent. God doth not deceive thee ; but he is deceived who trusteth too much to himself. God walketh with the simple, revealeth Himself to the humble, and giveth understanding to little ones ; He discloseth His meaning to pure minds, and hideth His grace from the curious and proud. Human reason is weak, and may be deceived ; but true faith cannot be deceived.

5. All reason and natural investigation ought to follow faith, and not go before or infringe upon it. For faith and love are here most especially predominant, and work by hidden ways in this most holy and super-excellent Sacrament. God, who is eternal and incomprehensible, and of power infinite, doth things great and inscrutable in heaven and in earth ; and there is no searching out His wonderful works. If the works of God were such that they could easily be comprehended by human reason, they could neither be called wonderful nor unspeakable.

LESSON XXXI. OF THE CHOICE OF VIRTUES.

LESSON XXXI.

Of the Choice that there ought to be in the Exercise of
Virtues.

TEXTS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

Put ye on therefore, as the elect of God, holy, and beloved, the bowels of mercy, benignity, humility, modesty, patience: bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if any have a complaint against another: even as the Lord hath forgiven you, so do you also. But above all these things have charity, which is the bond of perfection: and let the peace of Christ rejoice in your hearts, wherein also you are called in one body; and be ye thankful.—Col. iii. 12.

But we entreat you, brethren, that you abound more: and that you use your endeavour to be quiet, and that you do your own business, and work with your own hands, as we commanded you: and that you walk honestly towards them that are without; and that you want nothing of any man's.—1 Thess. iv. 11.

Extinguish not the Spirit. Despise not prophecies. But prove all things: hold fast that which is good. From all appearance of evil refrain yourselves. And may the God of peace himself sanctify you in all things: that your whole spirit, and soul, and body, may be preserved blameless in the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is faithful, who hath called you, who also will do it.—1 Thess. v. 19.

But flee thou youthful desires, and pursue justice, faith, charity, and peace with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. And avoid foolish and unlearned questions, knowing that they beget strifes. But the servant of the Lord must not wrangle, but be mild towards all men, apt to teach, patient, with modesty admonishing them that resist the truth.—2 Tim. ii. 22.

And let our men also learn to excel in good works for necessary uses: that they be not unfruitful.—Titus iii. 14.

These words of Holy Writ contain the sum of Christian virtues. The mode of practising them is given by your sainted teacher, keeping, as is his wont, in all things discretion and prudence, and due regard for each one's state of life.

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INTRODUCTION—PT. III., CH. I.—OF THE CHOICE WE OUGHT TO MAKE IN THE EXERCISE OF VIRTUES.

1. The queen of the bees never goes into the fields unless environed with all her little people, and charity never enters into the heart, but she lodges with her the whole train of other virtues, exercising and setting them at work as a captain does his soldiers. But she employs them not all at once, nor all alike, nor in all seasons, nor in every place. For the just man is like a tree planted by the water side, which brings forth fruit in due season ; because charity, watering the soul, brings forth in her the works of virtue, every one in their proper time.

2. *Music, however pleasant in itself, is troublesome in time of mourning* (Eccles. xxii. 6), says the Proverb. It is a great fault in many who, undertaking the exercise of some particular virtue, resolve to produce acts of it in all sorts of occurrences, and, like the ancient philosophers, either always weep or always laugh ; and, what is yet worse, blame and censure such as do not always exercise the same virtues. We should rejoice with the joyful, and weep with the sorrowful, says the Apostle, and charity is patient, bountiful, liberal, discreet, and complying.

3. There are, notwithstanding, some virtues which should be almost universal in practice, and ought not only to make their own special acts, but also to communicate their qualities to the acts of all other virtues. Occasions are seldom presented to exercise fortitude, magnanimity, and magnificence ; but meekness, temperance, modesty and humility are virtues with which all the actions of our life ought to be tempered. There are virtues more excellent than these, but the use of these is more necessary. Sugar is more excellent than salt, but salt is more often and generally used. We must always therefore have good and ready provision of these general virtues, since the use of them must be so ordinary.

4. Among the exercise of virtues, we ought to prefer that which is conformable to our calling, not that which is most agreeable to our fancy. *S. Paula* delighted to practise severe corporal mortifications, that so she might more easily enjoy tranquillity of spirit ; but she had more obligation to obey her superiors ; and therefore *S. Jerome* says she was to be reprehended, in that she used immoderate abstinence

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against her bishop's advice. The Apostles, on the other side, appointed to preach the Gospel and distribute the bread of heaven to souls, judged exceeding well that they should do wrong to this great function, if they should employ their time in caring for the poor, although to do so were an excellent virtue. Every vocation has need to practise some special virtue: there are the virtues of a prelate, and those of a prince, and those of a soldier, the virtues of a married woman, and the virtues of a widow. And although all ought to be endowed with all virtues, yet all ought not to practise them alike, but each one to give himself in more particular manner to those virtues which are requisite to that kind of life whereto he is called.

5. Among the virtues which concern not our particular duty we must prefer the most excellent, and not the most apparent. Comets ordinarily seem greater than the stars, and to our eyes occupy much more space; whereas, indeed, they are neither in greatness nor quality comparable to the stars, neither seem they great for any other reason but because they are nearer, and are of a grosser substance than the stars. So there are virtues which, because they are nearer, sensible, and if I may so say, more material, are highly esteemed, and always preferred by the vulgar: so, commonly they prefer corporal alms before spiritual; the hair shirt, fasting, nakedness, disciplines, and other such bodily mortifications, before meekness, courtesy, modesty, and other mortifications of the mind, which, notwithstanding, are much more excellent. Choose, then, *Philothea*, the best virtues, not the most esteemed; the most excellent, not the most apparent; the chiefest, not the bravest.

6. It is profitable that every one should choose a particular exercise of virtue, not to abandon the rest, but to keep his mind in a more settled order and employment. A fair young woman, shining like the sun, royally adorned and crowned with a garland of olives, appeared to *S. John*, bishop of *Alexandria*, and said unto him: I am the King's eldest daughter. If thou canst accept of me for thy friend, I will conduct thee to his presence. He perceived that this was mercy towards the poor, which God commended to him, and therefore, ever after he gave himself in such sort to the exercise of works of mercy, as that he is generally called *S. John the Almoner*. *Eulogius* of *Alexandria*, desiring to do some

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particular service to God, and being not able to embrace a solitary life, or to resign himself to the obedience of another, took to him in his house a miserable person infected with leprosy, that he might exercise his charity and mortification on him; and to perform this with more perfection, made a vow to entertain him, honour, and serve him, as a servant does his lord and master; now upon some temptation happening as well to the leper as to *Eulogius*, to depart one from the other, they went to great *S. Anthony*, who said to them: Beware, my children, that you separate not yourselves one from the other; for you, being both near your end, if the angel find you not together, you are in great danger of losing your crowns.

7. The King *S. Louis* visited hospitals, and served the sick with his own hands, as if he had served for wages. *S. Francis* above all things loved poverty, which he termed his mistress. *S. Dominic* made choice of preaching, whereof his order takes the name. *S. Gregory the Great* took pleasure in entertaining pilgrims, following the example of the great *Abraham*, and like him, received the King of Glory in form of a pilgrim. *Tobias* exercised his charity in burying the dead. *S. Elizabeth*, great princess as she was, delighted in nothing so much as in abasing herself. *S. Catherine of Genoa*, in her widowhood, dedicated herself to serve an hospital. *Cassianus* recounts that a devout gentlewoman, desirous to exercise the virtue of patience, came to *S. Athanasius*, who, at her request, placed a poor widow with her so wayward, choleric, troublesome, and intolerable with her insolence and peevishness, that she gave the devout lady sufficient occasion to practise the virtues of meekness and patience.

8. So among the servants of God, some apply themselves to serve the sick, others to relieve the poor, others to instruct little children in the knowledge of Christian doctrine, others to recall souls that are lost and gone astray, others to adorn churches and deck altars, others to make peace and agreement among men. Wherein they imitate embroiderers, who upon divers grounds with admirable variety intermingle silk, silver, and gold, whereof they make all sorts of flowers: for so these godly souls who undertake some particular exercise of devotion, make it serve them as a groundwork for their spiritual embroidery, on which they work the variety of all other virtues, holding by that means all their actions and affections

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better united and ordered by the careful application of them to their principal exercise, and so they set forth their spirit—

“In robes of cloth of gold most skilfully
Embroidered with art's best variety.”

9. When we are assaulted by any vice, it behoves us as much as possible to practise the contrary virtue, and to apply all other virtues to the perfecting thereof ; for so we shall overcome the enemy, and advance ourselves in all other virtues. If I feel myself assaulted by pride or choler, in all my actions I will bend myself towards humility and meekness, and to that end I will apply all my other exercises of prayer, of the sacraments, of prudence, of constancy, and sobriety. For as the wild boars, to sharpen their tusks, whet and grind them with their other teeth, so that all of them reciprocally become sharp, thus, a virtuous man, having undertaken to perfect himself in that virtue of which he has most need for his defence, ought to file and whet it by the exercise of others, and in refining that one they all become more polished and excellent. So it happened to *Job*, who exercising himself particularly in patience, against so many temptations wherewith he was violently assaulted, became perfectly holy in all kinds of virtues. Yea, it has come to pass, as *S. Gregory Nazienzen* says, that by one only act of virtue well and perfectly performed a man has attained to the height of virtue ; and he alleges *Rahab*, who having exactly practised the office of hospitality, arrived at supreme glory : which is to be understood when such acts are practised with excellent fervour of charity.

CH. II.—PURSUANCE OF THE FORMER DISCOURSE ABOUT THE CHOICE OF VIRTUES.

1. *S. Augustine* excellently says, that young beginners in devotion commit certain faults, which, according to the rigour of the laws of perfection, are blameable, and yet are very commendable for the presages they give of a future excellency in piety, to which they serve as a disposition. That base and cowardly fear which begets excessive scruples in the souls of those that newly forsake the custom of sin, is a commendable virtue in beginners, and a certain sign of a future purity of conscience ; but this fear would be very re-

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prehensible in those who are far advanced, in whose heart perfect love should reign, which, by little and little, chases away this servile fear.

2. *S. Bernard*, in his beginning, was full of rigour and austerity towards those that put themselves under his conduct, to whom he declared, even at their first entrance, that they must forsake the body and come to him only with the spirit. When he heard their confessions, he detested with an extraordinary severity all kind of faults, were they never so small, and so pressed these poor novices to perfection, that, instead of putting them forward, he drew them backward; for they lost heart and breath to see themselves thus hastily driven up so high and steep an ascent. Observe, *Philothea*, it was the most ardent zeal of a perfect purity which provoked this great saint to this method, and this zeal was a great virtue; and yet it ceased not to be reprehensible. God Himself in a holy apparition corrected him for it, infusing into his soul a meek, sweet, amiable, and tender spirit, by means of which he, being wholly changed, accused himself very much for his former severity, and became so mild and condescending to every one that he made himself all to all, that he might gain them all.

3. *S. Jerome* having recounted that *S. Paula*, his ghostly child, was not only excessive but obstinate in the exercise of bodily mortifications, even to that height that she refused to hearken to the contrary advice which *S. Epiphanius*, her Bishop, had given her in this respect, and, moreover, that she gave herself over in such sort to grieve for the death of her friends that she was always in danger of death, in fine, concludes in this sort: Some will say that, instead of writing the praises of this saint, I write reproofs and reproaches; but I call *Jesus* to witness, whom she served, and whom I desire to serve, that I lie not either on the one side or on the other, but set down clearly what is to be said of her, as one Christian of another, that is to say, I write a history of her, not a panegyric, and that her vices are the virtues of others. His meaning is, that the defects of *S. Paula* would have borne the name of virtues in a soul less perfect; as, in truth, there are actions which are esteemed imperfections in such as are perfect, but would be held great perfections in those who are imperfect.

4. It is a good sign in a sick man when, at the end of his

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sickness, his legs swell ; for it shows that nature now strengthened casts out her superfluous humours, but the very same sign would be ill in one that were not sick ; for it demonstrates that nature has not force enough to resolve and dissipate the humours. My *Philothea*, we must have a good opinion of those in whom we see a practice of virtues although with imperfection, since the saints themselves have often practised them in such manner. But as for ourselves, we must have a care to exercise ourselves in them not only faithfully but discreetly : and to that end we must observe carefully the advice of the Wise Man, not to rely on our own prudence, but on the judgment of such as God has given us for Directors.

5. There are certain things by many esteemed virtues, which, in truth, are none at all, of which it is needful to speak a word or two : I mean ecstasies, raptures, insensibilities, impossibilities, deific unions, revelations, transformations, and such like perfections, of which some books treat, promising to elevate the soul even to a contemplation purely intellectual, to an essential application of the spirit, and to a supereminent life. Look you, *Philothea*, these perfections are not virtues, but rather recompenses that God gives for virtue, or rather patterns of the happiness of the life to come, which sometimes are presented to men to make them in love with the whole piece above in Heaven.

6. But we must not for all that pretend to such favours, since they are no way necessary to the well serving and loving of God, which should be our only aim ; neither are they graces that can always be obtained by travail and industry, since they are rather passions than actions, which we may well receive, but cannot produce within us.

7. I add that we have not undertaken more than to make ourselves virtuous, devout, and pious men and women ; and therefore we must employ ourselves earnestly in that ; and if it please God to raise us to those angelical perfections, we will then be also good angels : but, in the meantime, let us exercise ourselves simply, humbly, and devoutly in little virtues, the conquest of which our Saviour hath proposed to our care and industry, as patience, meekness, mortification of our hearts, humility, obedience, poverty, chastity, compassion towards our neighbours and bearing with their imperfections, diligence, and holy fervour. Let us willingly

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leave those heights to elevated souls ; we merit not so high a place in God's service ; we shall be too happy to serve Him in His kitchen, in His pantry, to be pages, porters, grooms of His chamber ; it is for Him afterwards, if He please, to promote us to His cabinet and privy council. Yes, *Philothea*, for this King of glory does not recompense His servants according to the dignity of the offices they bear, but according to the measure of the love and humility with which they serve Him.

8. *Saul* seeking his father's asses found the crown of Israel. *Rebecca* by watering *Abraham's* camels became the spouse of his son. *Ruth* gleaning after the harvest-men of *Booz*, and lying at his feet, was advanced to his side and made his wife. Certainly such high pretensions to things so extraordinary are very subject to illusions, deceits, and errors ; and it happens sometimes that those who think themselves angels are not even good men, and that they are greater in their words and phrases than in their thoughts and actions. Yet must we not lightly despise or rashly censure anything ; but, while blessing God for the supereminence of others, keep ourselves humble in our lower but safer way, less splendid, but more suitable to our insufficiency and littleness, wherein, if we converse humbly and faithfully, God will exalt us to greatness that is really great.

LESSON XXXII. OF PATIENCE.

LESSON XXXII.

Of Patience: Of acquiring Patience, and of striving against Concupiscence: That Temporal Miseries are to be borne with equanimity after the example of Christ.

TEXTS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

My brethren, count it all joy, when you shall fall into divers temptations: knowing that the trying of your faith worketh patience. And patience hath a perfect work: that you may be perfect and entire: failing in nothing.—James i. 12.

For this is thankworthy, if for conscience towards God, a man endure sorrows, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if committing sin and being buffeted for it you endure? But if doing well you suffer patiently; this is thankworthy before God. For unto this are you called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow his steps. Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth. Who, when he was reviled, did not revile: when he suffered, he threatened not: but delivered himself to him that judged him unjustly.—1 Pet. ii. 20.

And all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution.—2 Tim. iii. 12.

And therefore we also having so great a cloud of witnesses over our head, laying aside every weight and sin which surrounds us, let us run by patience to the fight proposed to us: Looking on Jesus the author and finisher of faith, who having joy set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and sitteth on the right hand of the throne of God. For think diligently upon him that endured such opposition from sinners against himself: that you be not wearied, fainting in your minds. For you have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.—Heb. xii. 1.

These words show us the excellence, necessity, and usefulness of patience. The practice is explained as follows.

INTRODUCTION—BK. III., CH. III.—OF PATIENCE.

1. *Patience is necessary for you that, performing the will of God, you may obtain the promise (Heb. x. 36), says the*

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Apostle: yea, for, as our Saviour Himself pronounced, *in your patience you shall possess your souls* (Luke xxi. 19). It is man's greatest happiness, *Philothea*, to possess his soul, and the more perfect our patience is, the more perfectly do we possess our souls. In this virtue we must become perfect. Call to mind often that our Lord has saved us by suffering and enduring, and that we ought also to work out our salvation by sufferings and afflictions, as by enduring injuries, contradictions, and crosses, with all possible meekness.

2. Limit not your patience to such and such kind of injuries and afflictions, but extend it universally to all those that God shall send and suffer to befall you. There are some who will suffer no tribulations but such as are honourable, as, for example, to be wounded in battle, to be prisoners of war, to be persecuted for religion, to be impoverished by some quarrel in which they got the mastery,—these men love not tribulation but the honour of it. He that is truly patient and a true servant of God suffers indifferently tribulations accompanied with ignominy or honour: to be despised, reprehended, and accused by wicked men, is but a pleasure to a man of courage; but to be reproached and ill-treated by the good, by our friends, by our parents, there is the true trial of patience. I more esteem the meekness with which the great *S. Charles Borromeo* suffered a long time the public reprehensions that a great preacher of an exceeding strict order uttered against him in the pulpit, than all the assaults he received from others. For as the stinging of bees is far more smarting than that of flies, so the evil we receive from good men, and the contradictions they make, are much more insupportable than others; and yet it chances very often that two good men, having both of them good intentions, through the diversity of their opinions, raise great persecutions and contradictions one against the other.

3. Be patient, not only in the main and principal afflictions which befall you, but also in their accessories and accidents. Many could be content to have afflictions, so they might not be prejudiced by them. I am not grieved, says one, that I am become poor, but that by this means I am disabled to pleasure my friends, to bring up my children, and live honourably as I desire. I would not care, says another, were it not the world will think this has come upon

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me through mine own fault. Another would be content the world should speak ill of him, and would suffer it very patiently, so that none would believe the detractor. Others there are that would willingly have some affliction, but not too much; they are not impatient, say they, that they are sick, but that they want money to cure themselves, or that they are so great a trouble to those that are about them. But I say, *Philothea*, we must have patience, not only to be sick, but to be sick of that disease which God wills, in that place where He wills, and amongst such persons as He wills, and so of the other tribulations.

4. When any evil shall happen to you, apply such remedies as shall be lawful and pleasing to God, for to do otherwise were to tempt His Divine Majesty; but having done that, attend with an entire resignation the success it shall please God to send. If He permit the remedies to overcome the evil, give Him thanks with humility; if it please Him that the evil overcome the remedies, bless Him with patience.

5. I am of opinion with *S. Gregory*: When you shall be justly accused of any fault you have committed, humble yourself, and confess that you deserve more than the accusation which is laid upon you. But if you be falsely accused, excuse yourself meekly, denying yourself to be guilty, for you owe that reverence to truth, and to the edification of your neighbour. But if, after your true and lawful excuse, men continue to accuse you, vex not yourself, nor strive to get your excuse admitted; for having done your duty to truth, you must do it also to humility. Thus you shall prejudice neither the care you ought to have of your fame, nor the love you owe to tranquillity, meekness of heart, and humility.

6. Complain as little as you can of the wrongs done you; for ordinarily he that complains sins, because self-love ever makes us believe injuries to be greater than they are. But above all, complain not to such persons as are prone to malice, and to think ill. If it be expedient to make your complaint to any, either to redress your injury, or to quiet your mind, let it be done to the peaceable, and to such as truly love God; for otherwise, instead of easing your heart, they will provoke it to greater disquiet, and, instead of pulling out the thorn that pricketh you, they will fasten it deeper into your foot.

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7. Many being sick, afflicted, and injured, refrain from complaining or showing any tenderness, judging, and that rightly, that it would too evidently testify want of courage and generosity; but yet they desire extremely and by subtleties endeavour to make other men bemoan them, take compassion on them, and esteem them, not only afflicted, but patient and courageous. Now this is a patience indeed, but a false one, which in effect is nothing else but a fine and subtle ambition and vanity. *They have glory*, says the Apostle, *but not before God* (Rom. iv. 2). The true patient man neither complains of his evils, nor desires to be lamented, he speaks of them clearly, truly, and simply, without lamentations, complaints, or aggravations; if he be pitied, he patiently suffers himself to be pitied, unless they bemoan him for some cross which he has not; for then will he modestly declare that he has no such misfortune, and in this sort continues peaceably between truth and patience, confessing, not complaining of his afflictions.

8. In the contradictions which befall you in the exercise of devotion, for they will not be wanting, remember the words of our Saviour: *A woman when she is in travail hath anguish, because her hour is come: but when she hath brought forth her child, then she remembereth not the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world* (John xvi. 21). For you have conceived in your soul the noblest child in the world, to wit, Jesus Christ, and until Christ be born again in your hearts, you cannot choose but suffer excessive pains; but be of good courage, these dolours once passed, the everlasting joy shall remain with you of having brought forth such a child to the world. Now He shall be wholly brought forth by you, when you shall have formed Him entirely in your heart, and actions, by the imitation of His life.

9. When you shall be sick, offer up all your griefs, pains, and agonies, to the service of our Lord, and beseech Him to unite them with the torments which He suffered for you. Obey your physician, take medicines, meats, and other remedies, for the love of God, remembering the gall He took for your sake; desire to be cured, that you may serve Him; grudge not to languish in sickness, that you may obey Him; and dispose yourself to die, if so it please Him, that you may praise and enjoy Him.

10. Consider that the bees, while they make their honey,

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live upon a herb that is very bitter, and we, in like manner, can never perform actions of greater meekness and patience, nor better compose the honey of true virtues, than while we eat the bread of bitterness, and live amongst afflictions. And as the honey which is gathered from thyme, a little bitter herb, is the best of all, so the virtue which is exercised in the bitterness of base and most abject tribulations is the most excellent of all.

11. Look often with your interior eyes on Christ Jesus, crucified, naked, blasphemed, slandered, forsaken, and, in a word, overwhelmed with all sorts of sorrows, griefs, and persecutions, and consider that all your sufferings, neither in quality nor quantity, are in any sort comparable to His, and that you can never suffer anything for Him in comparison of that which He has endured for you.

12. Consider the torments which heretofore the martyrs suffered, and those which many now endure, more grievous without any proportion than yours, and say: Alas! my pains are consolations, and my griefs pleasures in comparison of those who without relief, assistance, or mitigation, live in a perpetual death, overcharged with afflictions infinitely heavier than mine.

IMITATION—BK. III., CH. XII.—OF ACQUIRING PATIENCE, AND OF STRIVING AGAINST CONCUPISCENCE.

1. O Lord God, patience, as I perceive, is very necessary for me, for many adverse things happen to us in this life. For in whatsoever way I may arrange for my peace, my life cannot be without war and sorrow.

2. My son, so it is; for I would not have thee seek for such a peace as to have no temptations, or to feel no adversity, but then, indeed, think thou hast found peace, when thou shalt be exercised in divers tribulations, and tried in much adversity. If thou shalt say thou art not able to suffer much, how then wilt thou endure the fire of purgatory? Of two evils, one ought always to choose the less. That thou mayest, therefore, escape the future eternal punishment, endeavour patiently to endure present evils for God's sake. Thinkest thou that men of the world suffer nothing or but little? Thou shalt not find it so, though thou seek out the most voluptuous.

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3. But thou sayest, they follow after many delights and withal do their own will, and therefore make small account of their tribulations.

4. Be it so, that they have all they desire ; but how long, thinkest thou, will this last? Behold, as smoke shall they vanish that abound in this world, and there shall be no remembrance of their past joys. Nay, even whilst they live, they rest not in the possession of them without bitterness, weariness, and fear. From the very same thing whence they conceive delight, thence frequently do they derive the penalty of anguish. It is just it should be so with them, that since they seek and follow inordinately their pleasures, they should not enjoy them without confusion and bitterness. Oh, how short, how deceitful, how inordinate and shameful, are all these pleasures ! Yet, through sottishness and blindness, men understand this not, but like dumb animals, for the poor pleasure of this mortal life they incur the death of the soul. But thou, My son, *go not after thy concupiscence, but turn away from thy own will* (Eccles. xviii. 30). *Delight in the Lord, and He will give thee the desires of thy heart* (Ps. xxxvi. 4).

5. For if thou wouldst in truth taste of delight, and be abundantly comforted by Me, behold, in the contempt of all things worldly, and in the cutting off of every sordid gratification, shall thy blessing be, and consolation most abundant be rendered to thee. And the more thou withdrawest thyself from all solace of creatures, the sweeter and the more powerful consolations wilt thou find in Me. But thou shalt not attain to these at first without some sorrow and labour of conflict. Long-standing custom will make resistance, but by a better habit shall it be subdued. The flesh will complain, but by fervour of spirit shall it be kept under. The old serpent will instigate thee, and trouble thee anew ; but by prayer he shall be put to flight ; moreover, by useful employment his greater access to thee shall be prevented.

CH. XVIII.—THAT TEMPORAL MISERIES ARE TO BE BORNE WITH EQUANIMITY, AFTER THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST.

1. Son, I came down from heaven for thy salvation ; I took upon Me thy miseries, not of necessity, but moved thereto by charity ; that thou mightest learn patience, and

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bear without repining the miseries of this life. For from the hour of My birth until I expired upon the cross, I was not without the endurance of grief. I suffered great want of all earthly things ; I frequently heard many complaints against Me : I meekly bore disgraces and reproaches ; for benefits I received ingratitude ; for miracles, blasphemies ; for heavenly doctrine, reproofs.

2. Lord, because Thou wast patient in Thy lifetime, herein especially fulfilling the commandment of Thy Father, it is fitting that I, a wretched sinner, should, according to Thy will, bear myself patiently, and, as long as Thou pleasest, support the burden of this corruptible life, in order to my salvation. For though this present life is felt to be burdensome, yet it is now rendered, through Thy grace, very meritorious ; and, by Thy example and the footsteps of Thy saints, more bright and supportable to the weak. It is also much more full of consolation than it was formerly under the law, when the gate of heaven remained shut ; and even the way thither seemed more obscure, when so few concerned themselves to seek the kingdom of heaven. Moreover, too, they who were then just and to be saved could not enter into Thy heavenly kingdom before Thy Passion, and the payment of our debt by Thy sacred death.

3. Oh, what great thanks am I bound to render unto Thee, for having vouchsafed to show me and all the faithful a right and good way to Thine everlasting kingdom ! For Thy life is our way ; and by holy patience we walk unto Thee, who art our crown. If Thou hadst not gone before and instructed us, who would have cared to follow ? Alas, how many would have stayed afar off and a great way behind, had they not before their eyes Thy glorious example ! Behold, we are still tepid, notwithstanding all Thy miracles and instructions which we have heard ; what, then, would it be if we had not so great light to follow Thee ?

LESSON XXXIII. OF EXTERIOR HUMILITY.

LESSON XXXIII.

Of Exterior and Interior Humility : That we ought to walk before God in Truth and Humility : Of Humble Submission.

TEXTS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

Take up my yoke upon you, and learn of me, because I am meek, and humble of heart : and you shall find rest to your souls. For my yoke is sweet and my burden light.—Matt. xi. 9.

At that hour the disciples came to Jesus saying : Who thinkest thou is the greater in the kingdom of heaven ? And Jesus, calling unto him a little child, set him in the midst of them, and said : Amen I say to you, unless you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, he is the greater in the kingdom of heaven.—Matt. xviii. 1.

For if any man think himself to be something, whereas he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.—Gal. vi. 3.

Being of one mind one towards another. Not minding high things, but consenting to the humble. Be not wise in your own conceits.—Rom. xii. 16.

Let nothing be done through contention, neither by vain-glory : but in humility, let each esteem others better than themselves : each one not considering the things that are his own, but those that are other men's. For let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus : who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God ; but debased himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man. He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. For which cause God also hath exalted him, and hath given him a name which is above every name : that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth. And that every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father.—Phil. ii. 3.

These words are enough to declare the necessity, utility, and desirableness of humility. The practice both masters will explain.

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INTRODUCTION—PT. III. CH. IV.—OF EXTERIOR HUMILITY.

1. *Borrow and take many empty vessels*, said *Eliseus* to the poor widow, *and pour oil into them* (4 Kings iv.). To receive the grace of God into our hearts, they must be void of vain-glory. The kestrel, scolding and looking at larger birds of prey, affrights them by a secret property and virtue, therefore doves love her above all other birds, and live in security with her; so humility repels Satan, and conserves the grace and gifts of the Holy Ghost in us, and therefore all the saints, but especially the King of saints and His Blessed Mother, have always more esteemed this virtue than any other amongst moral virtues. We call the glory *vain* which we assume to ourselves, either for that which is not in us, or for that which is in us, and is ours, but deserves not that we should glory in it. Nobility of blood, favour of great persons, popular honour—these are things which are not in us, but either in our progenitors, or in the estimation of other men. Some there are that become proud and insolent by being upon a good horse, or for having a feather in their hat, or by wearing fine clothes. But who sees not this folly? For if there be any glory in this, it belongs to the horse, the bird, and the tailor; and what a want of courage it is to borrow estimation from a horse, from a feather, or from a founce. Others esteem and value themselves for moustaches turned up, or a well-trimmed beard, for curled locks, for soft hands, or because they can dance, sing, or play; but are not those effeminate fops who seek to raise their value and increase their reputation by such frivolous and foolish things? Others for a little knowledge would be honoured and respected in the world, as if every one ought to come to school to them, and account them their masters, and therefore they are called pedants. Others strut like peacocks in contemplation of their beauty, and think all the world in love with them. All this is extremely vain, foolish, and impertinent, and glory grounded upon such weak foundations is called vain, silly, and frivolous.

2. True goodness is known as true balm; for balm is tried by dropping it in water. If it sink down to the bottom, it is counted the most excellent and precious. Even so, to know whether a man be truly wise, learned, generous, and noble, observe whether his gifts tend to humility, modesty, and sub-

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mission, for then they shall be true virtues ; but if they swim above water, and strive to appear, they are so much the less true by how much the more they shall be apparent.

3. Pearls that are conceived and nourished during tempests and the noise of thunder, have nothing but the shell of pearl, and are void of substance, so the virtues and good qualities bred and nourished in pride, boasting, and vanity, have nothing but a simple appearance of good, without sap, without marrow, and without solidity.

4. Honours, degrees, and dignities are like saffron, which prospers best, and grows most plentifully when trodden under feet. It is no honour to be fair, when one praises one's self for it ; beauty, to have a good grace, should be neglected ; knowledge dishonours us when it puffs us up, and degenerates into pedantry.

5 If we be punctilious in dignities, precedencies, and titles, besides the exposing of our qualities to be examined, tried, and contradicted, we make them vile and contemptible ; for honour, which is estimable, being freely given, becomes base when it is sought for, required, and exacted.

6. When the peacock bristles up his train to admire himself, in raising his fair feathers he parades his worst deformities. Fair flowers that grow on the earth wither away by handling. The sweet smell of the mandragora taken afar off, and but for a short time, is most pleasing, but they that smell it very near and a long time become stupified and sick ; even so honours give a pleasant consolation to those that savour them afar off, and carelessly, without staying on them or disquieting themselves with them : but such as affect them, and feed on them, are worthy of blame and reprehension.

7. The pursuit and love of virtue begins to make us virtuous, but the pursuit and love of honour begins to make us abject and contemptible. Generous spirits busy not themselves about these poor toys of degrees of honour and salutation ; they have other things to do ; that belongs to mean and degenerate spirits.

8. He that may have pearls never loads himself with shells, and such as aspire to virtue vex not themselves for honours. Every one indeed may take the place due to him, without prejudice to humility, so that it be done carelessly, and not with contention. For as they that come from *Peru*,

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besides gold and silver, bring also apes and parrots, because they neither cost much nor are burdensome to their ship; so true pretenders to virtue neglect not to take rank and place due to them; yet so as it cost them not much care and attention, and that it may be without incurring trouble, disquiet, disputes, and contentions. Yet speak I not here of those whose dignity concerns the public, nor of certain particular occasions on which great consequences depend; for then every one ought to keep his due place with prudence and discretion, accompanied with charity and courtesy.

CH. V.—OF INTERNAL HUMILITY.

1. But you desire, *Philothea*, to be further advanced in humility; for the performance of what we have hitherto said is rather wisdom than humility; let us therefore pass on farther. Many neither will nor dare consider the graces God has given them in particular, fearing that thereby they may fall into vain-glory and self-conceit: wherein, in truth, they deceive themselves; for since the true means to attain to the love of God, as says the great angelical Doctor, is the consideration of His benefits, the more we know them, the more we shall love Him; and as particular benefits more powerfully move us than common, so ought they to be weighed more attentively.

2. Certainly nothing can so much humble us before the mercy of God as the multitude of His benefits, nor before His justice as the multitude of our offences. Let us then consider what He has done for us, and what we have done against Him; and as we consider our sins severally, so let us consider His graces one by one. Let us not fear that the knowledge He gives us will puff us up, so long as we are attentive to this truth, *that whatsoever is good in us is not of ourselves.*

3. Alas! do mules cease to be lumpish and stinking beasts because they are laden with the precious and perfumed baggage of the Prince? *What hast thou which thou hast not received*, says the Apostle, *and if thou hast received it why dost thou glory* (1 Cor. v. 7)? Nay, contrariwise, the lively consideration of favours received renders us humble, because knowledge begets acknowledgment. But if, in considering the favours God has done us, any kind of vanity should tickle us, it will be an infallible remedy to recur to the contemplation

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of our ingratitude, of our imperfections, and of our miseries. If we consider what we did when God was not with us, we shall easily know that what we do while He is with us is not of our own doing, nor of our own growth ; we shall enjoy it indeed, and rejoice for it, but we shall glorify God alone, because He is the author of it. So the Blessed Virgin confesses that God had done great things for her ; yet it is but to humble herself, and to glorify God. *My soul*, says she, *doth magnify the Lord, because He hath done great things for me* (Luke i. 46).

4. We use to say many times that we are nothing, that we are misery itself, and the corruption of the world, but we would be loath any man should take us at our word, and publish us abroad to be such as we say we are. Nay, we make as if we would run away and hide ourselves, to the end men may run after us, and seek us out ; we make show as if we would indeed be the last, and sit at the lowest end of the table, but it is in hope to be set with more advantage at the upper end. True humility never makes show of herself, nor uses many humble words ; for she desires not only to hide other virtues, but also principally to hide herself. And if it were lawful for her to lie, to dissemble, or scandalise her neighbour, she would produce actions of arrogancy and disdain, that under them she might hide herself, and be altogether covered and unknown.

5. My advice therefore is, *Philothea*, either let us use no words of humility, or let us use them with an inward reality, conformable to what we pronounce outwardly. Let us never cast down our eyes, but when we humble our hearts ; let us not seem to desire to be the lowest, unless we mean it from our heart. Now I hold this rule so general, that I bring no exception ; only I add that civility requires that we offer precedency sometimes to those who without doubt will refuse it, and yet this is no double-dealing nor false humility ; for in this case the mere offer of precedency is a beginning of honour, and since we cannot give it them entirely, we do not ill to give them the beginning. I say the same of some words of honour and respect, which in rigour seem not true, yet are true enough indeed, if the heart of him that pronounces them have a true intention to honour and respect him to whom he says these words. For although the words signify with some excess that which we would say, yet we do not ill to use them when common custom requires

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it ; but I wish our words were always suited to our affections, as near as possible to follow in all, and through all, pure simplicity and sincerity of heart. A man that is truly humble would rather another should say of him that he is miserable, that he is contemptible, and that he is nothing worth, than to say it himself ; at least if he knows any man says so, he does not gainsay it, but consents to it with all his heart ; for believing it firmly himself, he is glad to have others of the same opinion.

6. Many say that they leave mental prayer for those that are perfect, that themselves are not worthy to use it. Others protest that they dare not communicate often, because they find not themselves pure enough. Others that they fear they should disgrace devotion, if they should meddle with it, by reason of their great misery and frailty. Others refuse to employ their talent in God's service and their neighbour's, because, say they, they know their own weakness, and that they fear to become proud if they should be instruments of any good, and that in giving light to others they should consume themselves.

7. All this is nothing but artifice, and a kind of humility not only false but malicious, whereby tacitly and subtilely they endeavour to cast an aspersion upon these holy things, or at the best with the cloak of humility to cover the love of their own opinion, their own humour, and their own slothfulness. *Demand of God a sign either from heaven above, or from the depth of the sea below* (Isa. vii. 11), said the prophet to unhappy *Achaz*, and he answered : *I will demand none, neither will I tempt God.* O wicked man ! he would seem to bear great reverence to God, and under colour of humility excuse himself from aspiring to that grace which God's goodness offers him ; but sees he not that when our Lord offers us His graces it is pride to refuse them, that the gifts of God oblige us to receive them, and that true humility is to obey and follow His will as near as we can ? But God's will is that we become perfect, uniting ourselves to Him, and imitating Him the best we can.

8. The proud man who trusts in himself has just occasion not to dare to undertake anything ; but he that is humble is so much the more courageous by how much the more weak he acknowledges himself, and the more miserable he esteems himself the more confident he becomes, because he trusts entirely in God, who delights to magnify His omnipotence by

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our infirmity, His mercy by our misery. We must, then, with an humble and holy confidence, perform whatsoever is judged fit for our advancement by those that direct our souls.

9. To think we know what we know not, is direct folly, to pretend to know what all are aware we know not, is an intolerable vanity. For my part, I would not seem to know even what I do know, as contrariwise, I would not make myself out to be ignorant thereof. When charity requires it, we must freely and mildly communicate to our neighbour not only what is necessary for his instruction, but also what is profitable for his consolation; for humility, which hides and conceals virtues to the end to preserve them, discovers them nevertheless when charity requires it, in order to enlarge, increase, and perfect them. Wherein she resembles a tree in the isles of *Tylos*, which at night closes up her carnation flowers, and opens them not till the rising of the sun, so that the inhabitants of the country say that those flowers sleep by night—for so humility covers and hides all our virtues and human perfections, and lets them never appear but for the sake of charity, which being a virtue not human but heavenly, not moral, but Divine, is the true sun of virtues, over which she ought always to rule; so that humility which is prejudicial to charity is undoubtedly false.

10. I would make myself neither a fool nor a sage; for humility forbids me to counterfeit myself wise, honesty and sincerity forbid me likewise to counterfeit myself a fool; and as vanity is contrary to humility, so are affectation and dissembling to simplicity and plain dealing. And if some great servants of God have made themselves seem fools that they might be thought abject in the eyes of the world, we must admire them and not imitate them; for they had motives which induced them to this excess, which were so particular and extraordinary to themselves that no man ought from thence to draw any consequence for himself. And as for *David*, when he danced and leaped before the Ark somewhat more than ordinary decorum required, he did it not to make the world believe he was a fool, but he simply and plainly used exterior motions, conformable to the extraordinary and excessive gladness he conceived in his heart. True it is, that when *Michol* his wife reproached him for it as an act of folly, he was not sorry to see himself despised, but persevering in a true and lively representation of his joy, he testified that he was glad to receive a little shame for his God. And con-

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sequently, I say, that if for acts of true devotion the world esteem you mean, abject, and foolish, humility will make you rejoice at this happy reproach, the cause whereof is not in you, but in those that utter it against you.

IMITATION—BK. III., CH. IV.—THAT WE OUGHT TO WALK
BEFORE GOD IN TRUTH AND HUMILITY.

1. Son, walk before Me in truth ; and always seek Me in the simplicity of thy heart. He that walketh before Me in truth shall be secured from evil incursions, and the truth shall deliver him from seducers, and from the detractions of the wicked. If the truth shall have made thee free, thou shalt be free indeed, and shalt make no account of the vain words of men. Lord, it is true as Thou sayest ; so I beseech Thee, let it be done unto me. Let Thy truth teach me, let it guard me and preserve me unto a saving end. Let it deliver me from all evil affection and inordinate love, and I shall walk with Thee in great freedom of heart.

2. I will teach thee, saith the Truth, those things that are right and pleasing in My sight. Think on thy sin with great displeasure and sorrow ; and never esteem thyself to be anything on account of thy good works. Of a truth thou art a sinner, subject to, and entangled with, many passions. Of thyself thou always tendest to nothing, speedily dost thou fail, speedily art thou overcome, speedily disturbed, speedily dissolved. Thou hast not anything in which thou canst glory, but many things for which thou oughtest to abase thyself ; for thou art much weaker than thou canst comprehend.

3. Let nothing, then, seem much to thee of all that thou doest. Let nothing appear great, nothing valuable or admirable, nothing worthy of esteem, nothing high, nothing truly praiseworthy or desirable, but that which is eternal. Let the eternal Truth please thee above all things, and thy own exceeding great vileness ever displease thee. Fear nothing so much, blame and flee nothing so much, as thy vices and sins, which ought to displease thee more than the loss of anything whatsoever. Some persons walk not sincerely before Me ; but led by a certain curiosity and arrogance, desire to know My secrets, and to understand the high things of God, neglecting themselves and their own salvation. These often, because I resist them, fall into great temptations and sins through their pride and curiosity.

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4. Fear the judgments of God, dread the anger of the Almighty; yet presume not to examine the works of the Most High, but search diligently thine own iniquities, in how great things thou hast offended, and how much good thou hast neglected. Some only carry their devotions in their books, some in pictures, and some in outward signs and figures. Some have Me in their mouth but little in their heart. There are others who, being enlightened in their understanding and purified in their affections, always breathe after things eternal, are unwilling to hear of earthly things, and grieve to be subject to the necessities of nature; and such as these perceive what the spirit of truth speaks in them. For it teaches them to despise the things of the earth and to love heavenly things, to neglect the world and all the day and night to aspire after heaven.

IMITATION—BK. II., CH. II.—OF HUMBLE SUBMISSION.

1. Make no great account of who may be for thee or against thee, but mind and take care that God be with thee in everything thou doest. Have a good conscience, and God will sufficiently defend thee; for he whom God will help, no man's malice can hurt. If thou knowest only how to be silent and to suffer, thou shalt experience without doubt help from the Lord. He knoweth the time and the manner of thy deliverance; and therefore it is thy part to resign thyself into His hands. It belongs to God to help us and deliver us from all confusion. Many a time it is of great advantage towards keeping us in greater humility, that others know and reprove our faults.

2. When a man humbleth himself for his faults, then he readily pacieth others, and easily satisfieth those who are angry with him. The humble man God protecteth and delivereth; the humble He loveth and consoleth; to the humble He inclineth Himself; on the humble He bestoweth bounteous grace; and after he hath been brought low, raiseth him up unto glory. To the humble He revealeth His secrets, and sweetly inviteth and draweth him unto Himself. The humble man, in the midst of reproaches, remaineth in great peace; for his dependence is on God, and not on the world. Never think that thou hast thyself made any progress until thou feel that thou art inferior to all.

LESSON XXXIV. OF LOVE OF ABJECTION.

LESSON XXXIV.

That Humility makes us Love our own Abjection: How to keep our Good Name in the Practice of Humility: Of Bearing Injuries: Against the Tongues of Detractors.

TEXTS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people by his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore to him without the camp; bearing his reproach.—Heb. xiii. 12.

Giving no offence to any man, that our ministry be not blamed: but in all things let us exhibit ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in tribulation, in necessities, in distresses.—2 Cor. vi. 3.

Be ye subject therefore to every human creature for God's sake: whether it be to the king as excelling: or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of the good: for so is the will of God, that by doing well you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.—1 Pet. ii. 13.

But others were racked, not accepting deliverance, that they might find a better resurrection. And others had trial of mockeries and stripes, moreover also of bands and prisons: they were stoned, they were cut asunder, they were tempted, they were put to death by the sword, they wandered about in sheepskins, in goat-skins, being in want, distressed, afflicted: of whom the world was not worthy.—Heb. xi. 35.

Blessed shall you be when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the son of man's sake. Be glad in that day and rejoice; for behold, your reward is great in heaven. For according to these things did their fathers to the prophets.—Luke vi. 22.

These words teach us love of our own abjection, the right way to preserve our good name, and the spirit in which insults and injuries should be borne. The practice is explained in what follows.

INTRODUCTION—PT. III., CH. VI.—THAT HUMILITY MAKES US LOVE OUR OWN ABJECTION.

1. I go further, and advise you, *Philothea*, that in all things and everywhere you love your own abjection. But

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you will ask me what it is to love our own abjection? In Latin abjection signifies humility and humility abjection; so that when our Blessed Lady in her sacred hymn says that all generations should call her Blessed, because God had seen the humility of His Handmaid, her meaning is that the Lord beheld graciously her abjection and lowliness, to heap upon her graces and favours. Yet there is great difference between the virtue of humility and abjection; for abjection is the lowness, bareness, and poorness that is in us, we being not aware of it; but as for the virtue of humility, it is a true knowledge and voluntary acknowledgment of our abjection.

2. Now the principal point of this humility consists not only in this willing acknowledgment of our abjection, but in loving it and delighting in it, not for want of courage or generosity, but to extol so much the more the Divine Majesty, and esteem our neighbour so much better than ourselves. This is that to which I exhort you; and that you may understand it the better, know that among the afflictions which we suffer, some are abject, and others honourable: many can frame themselves to the honourable, but almost none to the abject. You see a devout hermit, all ragged and cold, each one honours his torn habit, with compassion of his sufferance; but if a poor tradesman, or a poor gentleman be in the same case, men despise and mock them, and behold how their poverty is abject. A religious man receives devoutly a sharp censure of his superior, and a child of his father, and all count this mortification, obedience and wisdom, but let a cavalier or some lady suffer the like of another, and although it be for the love of God, men will call it cowardliness and poltroonery.

3. Behold here another abjection. One has a canker in his arm, and another in his face; the first has only the disease, but the other with the disease has contempt, shame, and abjection. I say, then, that we must not only love the evil itself, which is done by the virtue of patience, but we must also love the abjection, which is done by the virtue of humility.

4. Moreover, there are abject virtues, and honourable virtues. Patience, meekness, simplicity, and humility itself are virtues which worldly men hold vile and abject; on the contrary they much esteem wisdom, valour, and liberality.

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There are also actions of one and the same virtue, whereof some are despised, and others honoured; to give alms, and to pardon injuries, are two acts of charity—the first is honoured of all men, the other contemned in the eyes of the world. A young gentleman or gentlewoman who will not give themselves over to the disorders of a wild set, to talk, play, dance, drink, dress, shall be scorned and censured, and their modesty termed hypocrisy or affectation: to love this, is to love our abjection.

5. Behold another sort of abjection. We go to visit the sick, if I am sent to the most miserable, that will be an abjection to me, according to the world, and therefore I will love it. If I am sent to a person of quality, it is an abjection to the spirit; for there is not so much virtue or merit, and therefore I will love this abjection. One falls in the midst of the street, and besides his hurt receives shame, this is an abjection to be loved. There are also faults which have no other ill in them but only the abjection, and humility requires not that we should commit them of set purpose, but it requires that we vex not ourselves when we shall have committed them. Such are certain fooleries, incivilities, and incircumspctions, which as we ought to avoid before they are committed out of civility and discretion, so when they are committed, we must be content with the abjection that comes thereby, and accept it willingly, that so we may practise holy humility.

6. I say yet more, if I have been carried away through passion or dissipation, and have spoken unbecoming words, wherewith God and my neighbour are offended, I will repent myself heartily with true sorrow, and endeavour to make the best reparation I can for the offence; but yet I will be content with the abjection and shame it brings with it, and if the one could be separated from the other, I would most cheerfully cast away the sin, and humbly retain the abjection.

7. But though we love the abjection which follows the evil, yet we must not neglect to redress the evil that caused it, by fit and lawful means, especially when the evil is of importance. If I have some shameful disease in my face, I will endeavour to have it cured, but not to have the abjection forgotten which I received by it. If I have committed some folly which is offensive to none, I will make no excuse for it;

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because, although it were a fault, yet it is not permanent; I cannot, then, excuse it, but only in respect of the abjection it brings me; and that humility permits not. But if, through folly or indiscretion, I have offended or scandalised any one, I will repair the offence by some true excuse, because the evil is permanent, and charity obliges me to remove it. Furthermore, it happens sometimes that charity commands us to remove the abjection, for the good of our neighbour, to whom our reputation is necessary; but in that case, though we remove the abjection from before our neighbour's eyes to prevent his scandal, yet must we carefully shut it up and hide it in our heart, for its edification.

8. But you would know, *Philothea*, which are the best abjections. I tell you clearly that the most profitable to our souls, and most acceptable to God, are those which come to us by accident, or by the condition of our life; because we choose them not, but receive them as they are sent by God, whose choice is always better than our own. But if we were to choose them, the greatest are the best; and those are esteemed the greatest which are most contrary to our inclinations, so that they be conformable to our vocation; for, so to speak, our own choice blasts all our virtues.

9. Oh who will give us the grace to say truly with that great king, *I have chosen to be an abject in the house of God, rather than to dwell in the tabernacles of sinners?* (Ps. lxxxiii. 11.) None certainly, dear *Philothea*, but He who to exalt us, lived and died in such sort that He was *the scorn of men, and the abjection of the people* (Ps. xxi. 7). I have said many things to you which will seem hard when you shall consider them; but believe me, they will be sweeter than sugar or honey when you shall put them in practice.

CH. VII.—HOW TO KEEP OUR GOOD NAME IN THE PRACTICE OF HUMILITY.

1. Praise, honour, and glory, are not given to men for every ordinary virtue, but for some excellent one. For by praise we seek to persuade others to value the excellency of some men; by honour we protest that we ourselves esteem them; and glory, in my judgment, is nothing else but a certain lustre of reputation, which springs from the union of many praises and honours. So that honours and praises are

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like precious stones, from a heap of which rises a lustre like enamelling. Now humility, not being able to endure that we should have any desire of excelling or being preferred before others, cannot also permit that we should hunt after praise, honour, or glory, which are due to excellency alone ; but yet she consents to the counsel of the Wise man, who admonishes us to have a care of our reputation, because a good name is an estimation not of any excellence, but only of simple and ordinary honesty and integrity of life, which humility hinders us not to acknowledge in ourselves, nor by consequence to desire the reputation of it. It is true that humility would condemn good fame, if charity stood not in need of it ; but because it is one of the foundations of human society, and that without it we are not only unprofitable but prejudicial to the public, by reason of the scandal, charity requires, and humility consents, that we should desire it and carefully preserve it.

2. Again, as leaves, which in themselves are of no great value, are nevertheless very necessary not only to beautify the trees, but also to preserve the fruit whilst it is young and tender ; so a good report, which of itself is not much to be desired, is notwithstanding most profitable, not only for the ornament of our life, but also for the preservation of our virtues, especially while they are yet weak and tender. The obligation of maintaining our reputation, and of being such as we are esteemed to be, forces a generous courage. Let us preserve our virtues, dear *Philothea*, because they are acceptable to God, the chief and sovereign Object of all our actions. But as they who would keep fruits are not content to preserve them with sugar, but put them all in vessels fit to keep them ; so although the love of God is the principal preserver of our virtues, yet may we further employ our good name, as most convenient and profitable to that purpose.

3. Yet we must not be over earnest, exact, and punctilious in this preservation : for such as are so touchy and sensitive about their reputation are like those that for every slight indisposition take physic ; for they, thinking to conserve their health, utterly overthrow it, and these, endeavouring to maintain so tenderly their reputation, entirely lose it ; for, by their touchiness, they become fantastical, froward, insolent, and provoke the malice of detractors.

4. Dissimulation, and contempt of an injury or calumny,

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is ordinarily a far better remedy than resentment, dispute, or revenge; for contempt causes them to vanish, whereas, if we resent them, we seem to avow them. Crocodiles hurt none but those that fear them, nor detraction any but such as vex themselves with it. Excessive fear of losing our good name argues a great distrust of its foundation, which is the truth of a good life. Towns that have wooden bridges over great rivers fear their being carried away by every little flood, but those that have them of stone fear only extraordinary inundations; so they that have a soul truly Christian ordinarily contemn the overflowing of injurious tongues, but those that find themselves weak are disquieted with every discourse. Indeed, *Philothea*, he that strives to keep a good reputation with all, loses it with all and he deserves to lose his honour who seeks it of those whose vices make them infamous and dishonourable.

5. Reputation is but a sign to show where virtue is lodged; it is virtue, then, that must be preferred in all and before all. Wherefore, if any call you hypocrite because you give yourself to devotion, or esteem you a coward because you have pardoned any injury, laugh at all that; for, besides that such judgments are made by foolish and ignorant people, we must not forsake virtue, nor wander out of the way of it, although we were to lose our reputation; because we must prefer the fruit before the leaves, and interior and spiritual before all external good. It is lawful to be jealous of our reputation, but not idolatrous of our reputation, and, as we must not offend the eyes of the good, so we must not strive to satisfy those of the wicked. The beard is an ornament to the face of a man, and the hair to that of a woman: if one pull away by the roots the beard from the chin, and the hair from the head, it will hardly grow again; but if it be only cut, nay, though it be shaved, it will soon come again, and will grow stronger and thicker than before; so although our reputation be cut, yea, though it be shaven by detracting tongues, which, David says, *are like sharp razors* (Ps. li. 4), we must not, therefore, be troubled, for it will soon spring forth again not only as fair as ever it was, but much more firm and durable. But if, nevertheless, our vices, our unworthiness, and wicked course of life, take away our reputation, it will very hardly return because it is pulled up by the root; for the root of renown is goodness and integrity, which, as long

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as they are in us, can always recover the honours due to them.

6. When vain conversation, frivolous friendship, and haunting of idle company blast our reputation, we must forsake them; for a good name is of more price than all vain contentments. But if, for the exercise of piety, for advancement in devotion, and aspiring to eternal happiness, men grumble and murmur at us, let us leave these dogs to bark against the moon, for if they are at any time able to cast an aspersion on our good name, and by that means cut and shave the hair and beard of our reputation, these will notwithstanding spring up again, and the razor of detraction will be as advantageous to our honour as the pruning knife to the vine, which makes it abound and multiply in fruit.

7. Let us fix our eyes always upon Jesus Christ crucified, and march on in His service with confidence and sincerity, yet prudently and discreetly: He will be the protector of our reputation, and if He suffer it to be taken from us, it will be either to render us better, or to make us profit in holy humility, whereof only one ounce is better than a thousand pounds of honours. If we are unjustly defamed, let us meekly oppose truth against calumny; if calumny persevere, let us likewise persevere in humility, resigning our reputation together with our soul into God's hands; we cannot secure it better. Let us serve God in good and ill fame, according to *S. Paul's* example, that we may say with *David*, *For Thee, O Lord, have I suffered shame, and confusion hath covered my face* (Ps. lxxviii. 8). I except, nevertheless, certain crimes, so horrid and infamous, that no man ought to suffer the shame of them if he can justly acquit himself; and also certain persons, on whose reputation depends the edification of many; for, in these cases, we must peaceably seek reparation for the wrong received, according to the opinion of all divines.

IMITATION—BK. III., CH. XIX.—OF SUPPORTING INJURIES; AND OF HIM WHO IS PROVED TO BE TRULY PATIENT.

1. What is it thou sayest, my son? Cease to complain, and consider My Passion, and that of the other Saints. Thou hast not yet resisted unto blood. Little is it that thou sufferest in comparison of those who have suffered so much; who have

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been so strongly tempted, so grievously afflicted, so many ways tried and exercised. Thou oughtest, then, to call to mind the heavier sufferings of others, that thou mayest the easier bear the very little things thou sufferest. And if to thee they seem not little, take heed lest this also proceed from thy impatience. But whether they be little or great, strive to bear them all with patience.

2. The better thou disposest thyself for suffering, the more wisely dost thou act, and the more dost thou merit; and thou wilt bear it more easily if both in mind and by habit thou art diligently prepared for it. Do not say, "I cannot endure these things from such a man, and things of this kind are not to be suffered by me, for he hath done me a great injury, and he upbraideth me with things I never thought of; but I am ready to suffer willingly from another, and as far as is fitting for me to suffer." Such a thought is foolish, which considereth not the virtue of patience, nor by whom it shall be crowned, but rather weigheth the persons and the offences committed. He is not a truly patient man who will suffer no more than he thinks good, and only from whom he pleaseth. The truly patient man mindeth not by what manner of man it is he is exercised, whether by his own superior, whether by an equal, or an inferior; whether by a good and holy man, or by one that is perverse and unworthy. But how much soever and how often soever any adversity happeneth to him from any creature, he taketh it all equally with thanksgiving as from the hand of God, and esteemeth it a great gain. For with God nothing, however trifling, suffered for God's sake, shall go unrewarded.

3. Be thou, therefore, prepared to fight, if thou desirest to gain the victory. Without conflict thou canst not attain the crown of patience. If thou wilt not suffer, thou refusest to be crowned; but if thou desirest to be crowned, fight manfully and endure patiently. Without labour there is no coming to rest, nor without fighting do we arrive at victory.

4. Make, O Lord, that possible to me by grace, which seemeth impossible to me by nature. Thou knowest how little I can bear, and that I am soon dejected when a small adversity ariseth. Let all exercises of tribulation become lovely and desirable to me for Thy Name's sake; for to suffer and to be afflicted for Thee is very healthful for my soul.

LESSON XXXIV. OF DETRACTION.

CH. XXVIII.—AGAINST THE TONGUES OF DETRACTORS.

1. Son, take it not to heart if some people think ill of thee, and say of thee what thou art not willing to hear. Thou oughtest to think worse things of thyself, and to believe no one weaker than thyself. If thou walkest interiorly, thou wilt make small account of flying words from without. It is no small prudence to be silent in the evil time, and to turn within to Me, and not to be disturbed with the judgment of man.

2. Let not thy peace depend on the tongues of men ; for whether they put a good or a bad construction on what thou doest, thou art still what thou art. Where is true peace and true glory ? is it not in Me ? And he who neither desireth to please nor feareth to displease men shall enjoy much peace. From inordinate love and vain fear ariseth all disquiet of heart and distraction of the senses.

LESSON XXXV.

Of Meekness towards our Neighbour, and Remedies against Anger : Of Meekness towards Ourselves : Of Bearing the Defects of Others : Of not Desponding because we Fall into some Defects.

TEXTS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart ; and you shall find rest for your souls.—Matt. xi. 29.

Brethren, and if a man be overtaken in any fault, you who are spiritual, instruct such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.—Gal. vi. 1.

Bear ye one another's burdens : and so you shall fulfil the law of Christ.—Gal. vi. 2.

My son, keep thy soul in meekness, and give it honour according to its desert.—Eccli. x. 31.

Let all bitterness and anger, and indignation and clamour, and blasphemy be put away from you, with all malice. And be ye kind one to another, merciful, forgiving one another, even as God hath forgiven you in Christ.—Ephes. iv. 31.

And the peace of God which surpasseth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.—Phil. iv. 7.

These words show the excellence of meekness, and the necessity of observing its rules ; and your two masters will now explain to you the practice of this virtue, which may well be called the flower of charity.

INTRODUCTION—PT. III., CH. VIII.—OF MEEKNESS TOWARDS OUR NEIGHBOURS, AND REMEDIES AGAINST ANGER.

I. The holy Chrism, which by Apostolical tradition we use in the Church of God for Confirmations and Consecrations, is composed of oil of olives mingled with balm, which amongst other things represent to us the two dear and beloved virtues which shone in the sacred Person of our Lord, and which He most particularly commended to us, as if by them our heart

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was specially to be consecrated to His service, and dedicated to His imitation. *Learn of Me*, says He, *for I am meek and humble of heart* (Matt. xi. 29). Humility makes us perfect towards God, and mildness towards our neighbour. The balm which, as I said before, sinks to the bottom, amongst all other liquors, represents humility, and the oil of olives, which swims always above, signifies mildness and affability, which are above all things, and excel amongst virtues as being the flowers of charity, which, according to *S. Bernard*, is then most perfect, when it is not only patient, but also mild and gentle. But take heed also, *Philothea*, that this mystical Chrism, composed of meekness and humility, be within thy heart; for it is one of the greatest subtleties of the enemy to make many entertain themselves with the words and exterior appearances of these two virtues, who not examining thoroughly their inward affections, esteem themselves humble and meek, whereas, in truth, they are not so at all; and this may be easily discovered, because, for all their ceremonious mildness and humility, at the least cross word or injury, they swell with incredible arrogance.

2. They say that those who have taken the preservative commonly called *the Grace of S. Paul*, swell not at all by the biting and stinging of vipers, provided the preservative be of the best; in like manner, when humility and mildness be good and true, they preserve from the heat and tumours which injuries are wont to raise in men's hearts. But if being stung and bit by detractors and enemies, we become fierce and enraged, it is a sign that our humility and meekness are not true and cordial, but artificial and counterfeit.

3. The holy Patriarch *Joseph*, sending back his brethren from *Egypt* to his father's house, gave them this only advice, *Be not angry amongst yourselves by the way* (Gen. xlv. 24). I say the same to you, *Philothea*; this wretched life is but a passage to happiness, let us not be angry one with another in the way, but march with the troop of our brethren and companions meekly, peaceably, and lovingly; but I say to you absolutely and without exception, be not angry at all, if it be possible, and entertain no pretext whatsoever to open the gate of your heart to anger; for *S. James* tells us very positively, and without reservation, *The anger of man works not the justice of God* (James i. 20). We must indeed resist the evil, and suppress the vices of those that are under our

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charge courageously and resolutely, but yet mildly and peaceably. Nothing so soon appeases an enraged elephant as the sight of a little lamb, and nothing so easily breaks the force of a cannon-shot as wool. We esteem not so much the correction which proceeds from passion, though it be accompanied with never so much reason, as that which has no other motive than reason alone; for the reasonable soul, being naturally subject to reason, is never subject to passion but through tyranny, and therefore when reason is accompanied with passion she makes herself odious, her just government being corrupted by the fellowship of tyranny.

4. Princes do honour to their people when they visit them with a peaceful train; but when they lead armies, though it be for the common good, their presence is always unwelcome; for although they cause military discipline to be rigorously observed among their soldiers, yet be they never so exact, some disorder will always arise, whereby the countryman will be oppressed. Even so, as long as reason rules, and peaceably exercises chastisements, corrections, and reprehensions, although rigorously and exactly, every man loves and approves, but when she brings with her wrath, choler, and rage, which *S. Augustine* calls her soldiers, she makes herself more feared than loved, and even her own heart becomes thereby vexed and oppressed. It is better, says the same *S. Augustine* writing to *Profuturus*, to deny just and equitable anger than to entertain it, be it never so little, because being once admitted it is hard to be quit of it; for it enters as a little twig, and in a moment grows greater and becomes a beam. If it can but once gain the night of us, and that the *sun sets on our anger* (Eph. iv. 26), which the apostle forbids, converting itself into hatred, there is almost no means to be freed from it; for it nourishes itself with a thousand false persuasions, since there was never any angry man that thought his anger unjust.

5. It is better, then, to resolve to live without choler, than to use choler moderately and discreetly; and when, by imperfection and frailty, we find ourselves surprised therewith, it is better to resist it speedily, than to dally with it; for give it never so little leisure, and it will be mistress of the place, like the serpent, who can easily draw in his whole body where he can get in his head.

6. But you will say how shall I resist it? You must, my

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Philothea, at the first touch you feel of it, speedily assemble your forces, not violently, but mildly, and yet seriously ; for as we see in the audiences of divers senates, or courts of justice, the ushers crying *Peace* make more noise than those whom they would silence, so it happens many times that endeavouring with violence to suppress our choler, we stir up more trouble in our hearts than the choler would have done, and the heart thus troubled is no more master of itself. After this meek resistance, practise the advice which *S. Augustine*, being now old, gave to the young bishop *Auxilius*. Do, says he, that which a man should do, if that befall you which befell a man of God mentioned in the Psalm, *My eyes are troubled for anger* (Ps. vi. 3) ; have recourse to God, crying, *Have mercy upon me, O Lord*, that He may stretch forth His right hand to repress your anger. I mean, we must invoke the assistance of God when we find ourselves assaulted by choler, in imitation of the Apostles when they were tossed with winds and tempests on the waters ; for He will command our passions to cease, and a great calm shall follow. But the prayer made against present and pressing choler must always be meek and calm, and not violent, and this rule is to be observed in all remedies we use against this evil. Moreover, as soon as you perceive that you have done any act of choler, repair the fault by an act of mildness exercised cheerfully towards the same person against whom you were moved. For as it is a sovereign remedy against a lie to unsay it presently, so it is a good remedy against anger to repair it instantly by a contrary act of mildness, for green wounds, they say, are most easily cured.

7. Again, when you are in tranquillity, and without any occasion of choler, make great provision of meekness and gentleness, speaking all your words and doing all your actions, little and great, in the mildest manner you can ; calling to mind that the Spouse in the Canticles has not only honey on her lips, and on the top of her tongue, but also under her tongue, that is in her breast, and not honey only but also milk : for we must not only have our words sweet towards our neighbour, but our whole breast, that is to say, the interior of our soul. Neither must we have only this sweetness of honey, which is pleasant and fragrant, that is to say, sweetness of civil conversation with strangers, but also the sweetness of milk amongst those of

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our household and our near neighbours ; wherein they greatly fail, who in the street seem angels and in their houses devils.

CH. IX.—OF MEEKNESS TOWARDS OURSELVES.

1. One of the best exercises we can perform of meekness, is that whereof the subject is in ourselves, that is, never to be vexed against ourselves, nor our imperfections. For though reason requires that we should be displeased and sorry when we commit any faults ; yet we must always avoid all malicious, spiteful, and choleric displeasure. Herein many highly offend, who, stirred up to choler, are angry and vexed to see themselves vexed, for by this means they keep their hearts steeped in choler, and though the second anger seems to destroy the first, yet, notwithstanding, it serves to open a passage for a new choler, on the first occasion that shall be offered. Besides, these angers, frettings, and vexations against ourselves tend to pride, and have no other source than self-love, which troubles and disquiets itself to see us imperfect. We must then have a dislike of our faults which should be quiet, sober, and moderate. For as a judge punishes malefactors much better when he squares his sentence by reason, and pronounces it with a calm and quiet spirit, than when he is violently transported with passion, because judging in passion he punishes the faults not according as they are but according as he himself is, so we correct ourselves much better by calm and sober repentances, than by those which are violent and choleric ; for repentance done with violence is never according to the grievousness of our faults, but according to our inclinations. For example, he that loves chastity will vex himself with an incomparable vexation at the least fault he shall commit against that virtue, and will but laugh at a gross slander he shall have uttered. On the other side he that hates detraction will afflict himself for having murmured a little, and make no account of a gross fault committed against chastity, and so of others. And this springs from no other fountain than that they judge their consciences not by reason, but by passion.

2. Believe me, *Philothea*, as the reproofs of a father given sweetly and affectionately have far more power with the child to reclaim him, than choler and anger ; so when our heart

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shall have done any fault, if we reprehend it with a quiet and sweet admonition, having more compassion on it than passion against it, and gently encouraging it to amendment; the repentance following thereupon will penetrate further, and strike deeper than a vexing, angry, and stormy repentance.

3. For myself, if, for example, I had a great affection not to fall into the sin of vanity, and yet had fallen deep into it, I would not reprehend my heart in this manner: *Art thou not miserable and abominable, that after so many resolutions hast suffered thyself to be carried away by vanity? die with shame, lift no more thy eyes to Heaven, blind, impudent, and traitor to thy God.* But I would rather thus reprehend it in reason and compassion; *Go to, my poor heart, we are now fallen into the ditch we had so often resolved to escape; well, let us out again, and forsake it for ever; let us call upon the mercy of God, and hope that it will assist us to be more constant henceforward, and let us put ourselves into the way of humility. Courage, from this day forward we will stand upon our guard: God will help us, we shall prosper.* And on this reprehension would I build a firm and constant resolution never to fall again into that fault, using to that end the means convenient, especially the advice of my director.

4. But if, notwithstanding, any man find that his heart cannot be sufficiently moved with this sweet reprehension, he may use a more sharp and rough reproof to excite it to a profound confusion, provided that after he has thus roundly rebuked his heart, he end with consolations, closing up all his anger with a sweet and holy confidence in God, imitating that great penitent, who, seeing his soul afflicted, raised it up in this manner; *Why art thou sad, O my soul, and why dost thou trouble me? Hope in God, for I will confess to Him, who is the saving health of my countenance, and my God (Ps. xli. 6).*

5. Raise up, then, your heart fair and softly, when it shall fall, humbling yourself profoundly before God, by acknowledging your own misery, without astonishment at your fall; for it is no wonder that weakness should be feeble, or misery wretched: detest, nevertheless, from your heart, the offence God has received from you, and with great courage, and confidence in His mercy, return to the way of virtue which you had forsaken.

LESSON XXXV. OF THE DEFECTS OF OTHERS.

IMITATION—BK. I., CH. XVI.—OF BEARING THE DEFECTS OF OTHERS.

1. Whatever a man cannot amend in himself or in others, he ought to bear with patience, until God ordain otherwise. Reflect that perhaps it is better so, for thy trial and patience, without which our merits are little worth. Nevertheless, it behoveth thee, under such hindrances, to pray, that God would vouchsafe to come and help thee, and that thou mayest be able to bear them in good part.

2. If any one once or twice admonished doth not comply, contend not with him; but leave it all to God, that His will may be done, and He be honoured in all His servants, who knoweth how to turn evil into good. Study to be patient in bearing the defects and infirmities of others, of what kind soever: for thou also hast many things, which others must bear with. If thou canst not make thyself such as thou wouldst be, how canst thou expect to have another exactly to thy mind? We would fain see others perfect, and yet our own faults we amend not.

3. We would have others strictly corrected, and we will not be corrected ourselves. The large liberty others take displeaseth us, and yet we ourselves will not be denied anything we ask for. We wish others to be kept within the rules, and we ourselves will not bear to be checked ever so little. And so it is clear how seldom we weigh our neighbour in the same balance with ourselves. If all were perfect, what then should we have to bear with from others for the love of God?

4. But now God hath thus ordered it, that we may learn to bear one another's burdens; for no one is without defect, no one without his burden; no one is sufficient for himself; no one is wise enough for himself; but we must support one another, comfort one another, help, instruct, and admonish one another. But the measure of each man's virtue is best seen in occasions of adversity. For occasions do not make a man frail, but they show what he is.

BOOK II., CH. III.—OF THE GOOD, PEACEABLE MAN.

1. First keep thyself in peace, and then shalt thou be able to bring others to peace. The peaceable man does more good than one that is very learned. The passionate man turneth

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even good to evil, and readily believeth evil. The good peaceable man turneth all things unto good. He that is in perfect peace suspecteth no man. But he that is discontented and disturbed is agitated by various suspicions ; he neither hath rest himself, nor suffereth others to rest. Many a time he saith what he ought not to say, and leaveth undone that which it were best for him to do. He considers what others ought to do, and neglecteth that which he is bound to do himself. Have, therefore, a zeal, in the first place, over thyself, and then mayest thou also justly exercise zeal towards thy neighbour.

2. Thou knowest well how to excuse and gloss over thine own deeds, but thou wilt not accept the excuses of others. It were more just for thee to accuse thyself, and excuse thy brother. If thou wishest to be borne with, bear also with others. See how far thou art as yet from true charity and humility ; for he that hath these knoweth not how to feel anger or indignation against any one but himself. It is no great thing to associate with the good and the gentle ; for this is naturally pleasing to all ; and every one preferreth peace, and loveth those best that agree with him. But to be able to live peacefully with the hard and the perverse, or with the undisciplined and those that contradict us, is a great grace, and a highly commendable and noble thing.

3. Some there are who keep themselves in peace, and have peace also with others ; and there are some who neither have peace themselves, nor leave others in peace ; they are troublesome to others, and still more troublesome to themselves. And there are those who keep themselves in peace, and study to restore peace to others. Nevertheless, all our peace in this miserable life must be placed rather in humble endurance than in the absence of contradiction. He who best knows how to suffer will possess the greater peace. Such a one is conqueror of himself and lord of the world, the friend of Christ, and an heir of heaven.

BK. III., CH. LVII.—THAT A MAN SHOULD NOT BE TOO MUCH DEJECTED WHEN HE FALLS INTO SOME DEFECTS.

1. Son, patience and humility under adversity please Me more than much consolation and devotion in prosperity. Why art thou afflicted at a little matter said against thee?

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If it had been more, thou oughtest not to have been disturbed. But now let it pass ; it is not the first, or anything new ; nor will it be the last, if thou live long. Thou art valiant enough, so long as no adversity cometh in thy way. Thou canst also give good advice, and knowest how to encourage others with thy speech ; but when any unexpected trouble cometh at thine own door, then thy counsel and thy courage fail thee. Consider thy great frailty, which thou often experiencest in trifling difficulties ; yet still do they happen for thy salvation, as often as these or similar trials befall thee.

2. Put it out of thy heart as well as thou canst ; and if tribulation have touched thee, yet let it not cast thee down, nor long entangle thee. At least bear it patiently, if thou canst not joyfully. And although thou be reluctant to bear it, and feelest indignation, yet repress thyself, and suffer no inordinate word to come out of thy mouth, whereby little ones may be offended. This commotion which is stirred up will quickly be allayed, and inward grief will be sweetened by returning grace. I still live, saith the Lord, ready to help thee, and comfort thee more than before, if thou put thy trust in Me, and devoutly call upon Me.

3. Be thou even-minded, and gird thyself for greater endurance. All is not lost, though thou feel thyself often afflicted or grievously tempted. Man thou art, and not God ; thou art flesh, not an angel. How canst thou continue ever in the same state of virtue, when this was wanting to the angels in heaven, and to the first man in paradise ? I am He who raiseth up to safety them that mourn ; and them that know their own infirmity I promote to My own divinity.

4. O Lord, blessed be Thy word ; it is *sweeter to my mouth than honey and the honeycomb* (Ps. xviii. 11). What should I do in my so great tribulations and necessities, didst Thou not strengthen me with Thy holy words ? Provided only I shall reach at last the haven of salvation, what doth it matter how many or how great trials I shall have endured ? Grant me a good end, grant me a happy passage out of this world. Be mindful of me, O my God, and direct me in the right path to Thy kingdom. Amen.

LESSON XXXVI. OF QUIET CAREFULNESS.

LESSON XXXVI.

That we must Transact Business with Care, but without Anxiety and Solitude : Of Good Government of ourselves in Outward Things, and having Recourse to God in Dangers: That a Man must not be too Anxious about his Affairs : Of Prudence in what we do.

TEXTS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

In carefulness not slothful. In spirit fervent. Serving the Lord.—Rom. xii. 11.

Be nothing solicitous : but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your petitions be made known to God.—Phil. iv. 6.

And that you use your endeavour to be quiet, and that you do your own business, and work with your own hands, as we commanded you : and that you walk honestly towards them that are without : and that you want nothing of any man's. — 1 Thess. iv. 11.

Be ye not many masters, my brethren, knowing that you receive the greater judgment. For in many things we all offend. If any man offend not in word ; the same is a perfect man. He is able also with a bridle to lead about the whole body.—James iii. 1.

These words teach—1, That tranquillity and diligence must unitedly rule our actions ; 2, that we should be on our guard against the tongues of others as well as our own. Hereon both your masters give you practical advice.

INTRODUCTION—PT. III., CH. X.— THAT WE MUST TREAT OF BUSINESS WITH CARE, BUT WITHOUT VEXATION AND SOLICITUDE.

1. The care and diligence we ought to have in our affairs are things much different from solicitude, anxiety, and vexation. The angels have care of our salvation, and procure it with diligence, yet they are not solicitous or anxious ; for care and diligence are part of their charity, but solicitude and anxiety would be directly contrary to their felicity ;

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since care and diligence may be accompanied with tranquillity of mind, but solicitude and anxiety never.

2. Be careful, then, and diligent, *Philothea*, in all the affairs you have in your charge; for God having entrusted them to you, He would have you take care of them; but if it be possible be not in vexation and anxiety for them, that is to say, undertake them not with unquietness and solicitude, nor spend yourself about them; for all kind of violence disturbs the reason and the judgment, and hinders us from doing that well in which we are so earnest.

3. When our Lord reprehended *S. Martha*, He said, *Martha, Martha, thou art solicitous and troublest thyself about many things* (Luke x. 41). Observe, if she had been simply careful, she had not been troubled; but because she was in anxiety and unquietness, she vexed and troubled herself, and for that our Lord reprehends her. Rivers, which glide peaceably through the valleys, bear great boats and rich merchandise; and the rain, which falls gently in the open fields, makes them fruitful in grass and corn; but torrents and rivers which run rapidly ruin the bordering country, and are unprofitable for traffic, as likewise vehement and tempestuous rains lay waste the fields and meadows. Never was work well done with too much violence and hurry. We must hasten leisurely, says the proverb; *he that hastens too much, says Solomon, is in danger of stumbling* (Prov. xix. 2) and bruising his feet. We do our business soon enough, when we do it well. Drones make more noise, and are more bustling than bees, but they make only wax and not honey; so they that spend themselves with a tormenting anxiety and fussy solicitude, never do much or well.

4. Flies disquiet us not by their strength but by their number; so great affairs vex us not so much as small ones when they are in great number. Whatsoever businesses befall you, receive them with quietness, and endeavour to despatch them in order, one after another; for if you strive to do all at once, or in disorder, you will overcharge and weaken your spirit, and probably lie down tired under the burden.

5. In all your business rely wholly on God's providence, by which alone your designs must prosper; labour, nevertheless, discreetly on your part to co-operate with it, and then believe that if you trust entirely in God, the result

LESSON XXXVI. OF GOVERNMENT OF OURSELVES.

which follows shall be always the most profitable for you, seem it to you good or bad, according to your particular judgment. Do as little children, who with one hand hold fast by their father, and with the other gather strawberries or mulberries along the hedges ; so you, gathering and managing the affairs of this world with one hand, with the other hold always fast the hand of your Heavenly Father, turning yourself towards Him from time to time, to see if your employments be pleasing to Him. And take heed, above all things, that you let not go His hand and His protection, thinking to gather more ; for if He forsake you, you will not be able to go a step without falling to the ground. My meaning is, *Philothea*, that amidst your affairs and ordinary business which require not so earnest an attention, you think more on God than on your affairs, and when your affairs are of so great importance that to be well done they require your whole attention, then also from time to time look towards God, as they do that sail on the sea, who to go to the land which they desire look more up to heaven than down on the sea whereon they sail : so will God work with you, in you, and for you, and all your labours shall be accompanied with consolations.

IMITATION—BK. III., CH. XXXVIII.—OF THE GOOD GOVERNMENT OF OURSELVES IN OUTWARD THINGS, AND OF HAVING RECOURSE TO GOD IN DANGERS.

1. Son, thou oughtest diligently to aim at this, that in every place, and in every action or external occupation, thou be inwardly free, and master of thyself ; and that all things be under thee, and not thou under them. That thou mayest be lord and ruler of thy actions, and not a slave or mercenary ; but rather a freeman and true Israelite, transferred to the lot and to the liberty of the sons of God : who stand above things present, and contemplate the eternal ; who with the left eye regard things passing, and with the right those of heaven ; whom things temporal draw not away to adhere to them ; but they rather draw these things to subserve aright the end for which they were ordained by God, and appointed by that Sovereign Artist, who has left nothing disordered in His whole creation.

2. If, likewise, in all events, thou depend not upon things

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as they appear outwardly, nor regard with a carnal eye things seen and heard, but if, on every occasion, thou enter, like Moses, into the tabernacle to consult the Lord, thou shalt sometimes hear the Divine answer, and shalt return instructed about many things present and future. For Moses always had recourse to the tabernacle for the deciding doubts and questions, and fled to the aid of prayer for succour against the dangers and wickedness of men. So must thou, in like manner, fly to the closet of thy heart, and there most earnestly implore the Divine assistance. For therefore, as thou readest, were Josue and the children of Israel deceived by the Gabaonites, *because they did not first consult the Lord* (Jos. ix. 14), but too easily giving credit to pleasant words, were deluded with counterfeit piety.

CH. XXXIX.—THAT A MAN MUST NOT BE TOO ANXIOUS ABOUT HIS AFFAIRS.

1. Son, commit thy cause to Me always ; I will dispose of it well in its due season. Await My disposal, and thou shalt find it is for thy advantage.

2. Lord, most willingly do I commit all things to Thee ; for but little can my own device avail. Would that I might not be too much set upon future events, but unhesitatingly offer myself to Thy good pleasure.

3. My son, oftentimes a man vehemently pursues something which he desires ; but when he has obtained it, he begins to be of another mind. For our affections are not wont to continue long upon the same object, but rather pass rapidly from one thing to another. It is therefore no small matter, even in things the most trifling, to relinquish self.

4. Man's true progress consists in denying himself, and the man of self-denial is very much at liberty, and secure likewise. But the old enemy, opposed to all that is good, ceaseth not from tempting, but plotteth day and night if perchance he may precipitate the unwary into his deceitful snares. *Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation* (Matt. xxvi. 41), saith the Lord.

BK. I., CH. IV.—OF PRUDENCE IN WHAT WE DO.

I. We must not trust every word or impulse, but cautiously and patiently weigh the matter according to God.

LESSON XXXVI. OF PRUDENCE.

Alas ! oftentimes is evil more readily believed and spoken of another than good ; so weak are we. But perfect men do not easily give credit to every tale-bearer, for they know human weakness is prone to evil, and very apt to slip in speech.

2. It is great wisdom not to be rash in what is to be done, and not to persist obstinately in our own opinions. It is a part of this wisdom also, not to believe everything men say, nor straightway to pour into the ears of others what we have heard or believed. Take counsel of a wise and conscientious man, and seek rather to be instructed by one that is better, than to follow thine own inventions. A good life maketh a man wise according to God, and giveth great experience. The more humble any one is in heart, and the more in subjection to God, so much the wiser will he be in all things, and the more at peace.

LESSON XXXVII. OF OBEDIENCE.

LESSON XXXVII.

Of Obedience : Of the Obedience of a Humble Subject after the Example of Jesus Christ : Of Chastity : Advice how to Preserve it : Of Poverty of Spirit.

TEXTS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

And whereas indeed he was the Son of God, he learned obedience by the things which he suffered : And being consummated, he became, to all that obey him, the cause of eternal salvation.— Heb. v. 8.

Purifying your souls in the obedience of charity, with a brotherly love, from a sincere heart love one another earnestly.— 1 Pet. i. 22.

Let your loins be girt, and lamps burning in your hands, and you yourselves like to men who wait for their lord, when he shall return from the wedding, that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open to him immediately.— Luke xii. 35.

For in the resurrection they shall neither marry nor be married, but shall be as the angels of God in heaven.— Matt. xxii. 30.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.— Matt. v. 3.

Then Jesus said to his disciples : Amen I say to you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say to you : It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven.— Matt. xix. 23.

These words clearly indicate how necessary for all Christians are obedience, chastity, and poverty of spirit ; and you will understand from the following instructions of your teachers how you are to practise them.

INTRODUCTION—PT. III., CH. XI.—OF OBEDIENCE.

I. Charity alone places us in perfection : but obedience, chastity, and poverty are the three great means to attain it. Obedience consecrates our heart, chastity our body, and poverty our goods to the love and service of God. These are three branches of the spiritual cross ; all three, however.

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grounded on the fourth, which is humility. I will say nothing of these three virtues as they are vowed solemnly, for so they concern only religious, nor as they are simply vowed, because though a vow gives always much value and merit to all virtues, yet, for our purpose, it is not necessary they should be vowed, so they be observed. For though being vowed, and especially solemnly, they place a man in the state of perfection, yet to come to perfection itself it suffices that they be observed; for there is great difference between the state of perfection and perfection itself: since all bishops and religious are in the state of perfection, yet are they not all in perfection, as is but too plainly seen. Let us endeavour, then, *Philothea*, to practise well these three virtues, every one according to his vocation; for though they place us not in the state of perfection, yet they will bring us to perfection; and we are all obliged to practise these three virtues, though not all after one fashion.

2. There are two sorts of obedience, the one necessary, the other voluntary. By the necessary, you ought humbly to obey your ecclesiastical superiors, as the Pope, and the bishop, and the curate, and such as are authorised by them. You ought to obey your civil superiors, as your prince and the magistrates whom he has established over your country; and finally you must obey your domestic superiors, as your father and mother, master and mistress. This obedience is called necessary, because no man can exempt himself from the duty of obeying these superiors; God having placed them in authority to command and govern each of us, according to the charge he has over us. Obey then their commands, that is of necessity; but to be perfect, follow their counsels also, and even their desires and inclinations, so far as charity and discretion will permit you. Obey them when they shall command anything pleasing to you, as to eat, to recreate yourself; for though it seem no great virtue to obey in these cases, yet would it be a great vice to disobey. Obey them in things indifferent, as to wear this or that suit of clothes, to go this way or that, to sing or to be silent, and this will be very commendable obedience. Obey them in hard and unpleasant things, and this will be perfect obedience. Obey, I say, mildly without reply, readily without delay, cheerfully without repining, and above all, obey lovingly for love of Him who for love of us *made Himself obedient even to the death of*

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the Cross (Phil. ii. 8), and who, as *S. Bernard* says, did choose to lose rather His life than His obedience.

3. That you may learn easily to obey your superiors, condescend easily to your equals, yielding to their opinions in what is not vicious, without contention or harshness; accommodate yourself willingly to the desires of your inferiors so far as reason will permit, and never exercise any imperious authority over them, so long as they are good. It is an abuse to believe that we would easily obey if we were religious, when we find it difficult to render obedience to such as God hath placed over us.

4. We call that obedience voluntary, whereunto we oblige ourselves by our own election, and which is not imposed upon us by another. We choose not ordinarily our prince, our bishop, our father or mother, nor even in most cases do wives choose their husbands, but we choose our confessor and director. If then in choosing, we make a vow to obey, as did the holy mother *Teresa*, who, as we have said above, besides her obedience solemnly vowed to the superior of her order, bound herself by a simple vow to obey her ghostly father, *Gratian*; or if, without a vow, we dedicate ourselves to the obedience of any one, this obedience is always called voluntary, because of its ground, which depends on our will and choice.

5. We must obey all our superiors, but every one according to the charge he has over us; as in civil and public affairs, we must obey our prince: in ecclesiastical, our prelate: in domestic, our father, husband, master: in the private conduct of the soul, our ghostly father or director.

6. Cause your ghostly father to impose upon you all the actions of piety you ought to perform, for so they will be more excellent and of a double grace and goodness: the one of themselves, because they are good, the other of the obedience by which they are commanded, and in virtue whereof they are performed. Happy are the obedient, for God will never suffer them to go astray.

IMITATION—BK. III., CH. XIII.—OF THE OBEDIENCE OF A HUMBLE SUBJECT AFTER THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS CHRIST.

1. Son, he who striveth to withdraw himself from obedience withdraweth himself from grace; and he that seeketh

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particular privileges loseth such as are in common. He who doth not freely and willingly submit himself to his superior, it is a sign that his flesh is not as yet perfectly obedient to him, but oftentimes rebelleth and murmureth. Learn, then, to submit thyself readily to thy superior, if thou desire to subdue thy own flesh. For sooner is the exterior enemy overcome, if the inward man be not laid waste. There is not a more troublesome or worse enemy to the soul than thou thyself art when not well agreeing with the spirit. Thou must in good earnest conceive a true contempt of thyself, if thou wilt prevail against flesh and blood. Because thou lovest thyself as yet too inordinately, therefore dost thou fear to resign thyself wholly to the will of others.

2. But what great matter is it, if thou, who art but dust, and a mere nothing, submit thyself to man for God's sake, when I, the Almighty and the Most High, who created all things out of nothing, have for thy sake humbly subjected Myself to man? I became the most humble and most abject of all men, that thou mightest overcome thy pride by My humility. Learn, O dust, to obey; earth and clay that thou art, learn to humble thyself, and to bow down under the feet of all. Learn to break thy own will, and to yield thyself up to all subjection.

3. Kindle wrath against thyself, suffer not the swelling of pride to live in thee; but show thyself so submissive and little that all may trample on thee, and tread thee under their feet as the dirt of the streets. What hast thou, vain man, to complain of? What answer, wretched sinner, canst thou make to those that reproach thee, thou who hast so often offended God, and so many times deserved hell? But Mine eye hath spared thee, because thy soul was precious in My sight: that thou mightest know My love, and mightest always live thankful for My favours; and that thou mightest continually give thyself to true subjection and humility, and bear patiently thy own contempt.

INTRODUCTION—PT. III., CH. XII.—OF THE NECESSITY OF CHASTITY.

1. Chastity is the lily of virtues, it makes man almost equal to angels; nothing is beautiful but by purity, and the purity of mortals is chastity. Chastity is called honesty, and the

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perfection thereof honour : it is named integrity, and the contrary thereof corruption. Briefly, it has a glory all its own, to be the fair white virtue of soul and body. Like the mother of pearl, which can receive no drop of water but such as comes from heaven, the chaste heart can entertain no pleasure but that of marriage, which is ordained from heaven.

2. For the first degree of this virtue, *Philothea*, admit nothing that is prohibited. For the second, retrench as much as possible all that is unprofitable and superfluous, although lawful and permitted. For the third, set not your affections on what is ordained ; for, though holy marriage must be used, yet the heart and mind must not be set on the use thereof.

3. Moreover, every one has great need of this virtue. Virgins have need of an extremely simple and prudent chastity, to banish from their hearts all thoughts of curiosity, and to despise with utter contempt all that is degrading. The little moth, seeing the flame, hovers curiously about it, to try whether it be as sweet as it is fair ; and, carried away by this fancy, perishes at the very first trial ; so these young people oftentimes suffer themselves to be so possessed with the false and foolish idea they have of these pleasures, that after many thoughts of curiosity they at last ruin and lose themselves in the flames ; more foolish in this than the moths, for they have some cause to imagine that the fire is sweet because it is beautiful ; but these, knowing that which they seek to be extremely dishonest, for all that cease not to over-estimate a vile and stupid pleasure. Widows have need of a courageous chastity, preserved by an excellent devotion, which, as I have often repeated, is the honey and sugar of the spirit. And for those who are married, though the ordinary run of people cannot conceive it, it is most true that chastity is necessary also for them in their state of life. *S. Catherine of Siena* saw amongst the damned many souls grievously tormented for profaning the sanctity of marriage ; which was not for the greatness of the sin, said she, for murders and blasphemies are more enormous, but because they that commit it make no conscience of it, and continue long therein.

4. You see, then, that chastity is necessary for all sorts of people. *Follow peace with all men*, says the Apostle, *and holiness of life, without which none shall see God* (Heb. xii. 14). By *holiness* is here understood chastity, as *S. Jerome* and *S. Chrysostom* agree. No, *Philothea*, none shall see God

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without chastity ; none shall dwell in His holy tabernacle that are not pure of heart ; and our Saviour Himself says, *Dogs and the unchaste shall be banished thence* (Apoc. xxii. 15), and, *Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God* (Matt. v. 8).

CH. XIII.—ADVICES HOW TO PRESERVE CHASTITY.

1. Be exceeding diligent in turning away from all occasions and temptations of incontinency ; for this vice works insensibly, and from little beginnings advances to great mischiefs, which are always more easy to avoid than to cure.

2. Human bodies are like glasses, which cannot be carried touching one another without danger of breaking, and like fruits which, though never so sound and seasonable, yet by touching one another are impaired. Water itself in a vessel, be it never so fresh, being once touched by any beast of the earth, cannot long retain its freshness. Never suffer any, *Philothea*, to touch you uncivilly, neither in mirth nor love ; for though, peradventure, chastity may be preserved in those actions, more light than malicious, yet the freshness and flower of chastity always receives detriment and loss ; but to suffer yourself to be touched dishonestly is the utter ruin of chastity.

3. Chastity depends on the heart as her source, yet regards the body as her home. And therefore she may lose herself by all the exterior senses of the body, and by the thoughts and desires of the heart. It is unchaste to behold, to hear, to speak, to touch any dishonest thing, when the heart entertains itself and takes pleasure in it. *S. Paul* says positively, *Let not fornication be so much as once named amongst you* (Ephes. v. 3).

4. The bees will not only not touch carrion, but avoid and hate extremely all unsavoury smells proceeding from it. The sacred Spouse in the Canticles has her hands distilling myrrh, the antidote against corruption ; her lips are bound up with a scarlet ribbon, the mark of modesty in words ; she has the eyes of doves, by reason of their clearness ; she wears golden ear-rings, tokens of purity ; her nose is compared to the cedars of *Libanus*, which are scented and incorruptible wood.

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Such ought to be the devout soul, chaste, honest, clean in hands, lips, eyes, and all her body.

5. Avoid those who are not modest, principally if they be impudent, as for the most part they are; for, as goats touching the sweet-almond trees with their tongues make them become bitter, so these corrupted souls and infected hearts scarce speak to any of either sex, but they cause them, in some sort, to fall from modesty; they have poison in their eyes and in their breath, like basilisks. But, on the contrary, keep company with chaste and virtuous people; meditate and read often holy things; for the Word of God is chaste, and makes them chaste that delight in it, which made *David* compare it to the topaz, a precious stone, whose property is to extinguish the fires of concupiscence.

6. Keep yourself always near and close to Jesus Christ crucified, both spiritually by meditation, and really by holy Communion; for as they who lie on the herb *Agnus castus* become chaste, so you, resting your heart upon our Saviour, who is the true, chaste, and immaculate Lamb, shall soon find your soul and your heart cleansed from all defilements.

CH. XIV.—OF POVERTY OF SPIRIT TO BE OBSERVED IN RICHES.

I. *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven* (Matt. v. 3); cursed, then, are the rich in spirit, for the misery of hell is for them. He is rich in spirit who has his riches in his spirit, or his spirit in his riches; he is poor in spirit who has no riches in his spirit, nor his spirit in riches. The halcyons make their nests like an apple, and leave only one little hole in them on the upper side; they place them on the sea-shore, and make them so firm and impenetrable that, the waves surprising them, the water can never get into them, but, keeping always above, they remain in the sea, on the sea, and masters of the sea. Your heart, dear *Philothea*, ought to be like that, open only towards heaven, and impenetrable to riches and transitory things. If you have them, keep your heart free from affection to them, let it be always above them; and amongst riches, let it be without riches, and master of riches. No,

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lodge not this heavenly spirit in earthly goods, let it always be above them, never in them.

2. There is great difference between having poison and being poisoned: almost all apothecaries have poison to use upon divers occasions, yet they are not poisoned, because they have poison not in their bodies but in their shops. So you may have riches without being poisoned with them, if you keep them in your purse, or in your house, and not in your heart. To be rich in effect and poor in affection, is the greatest happiness of a Christian. For he has by that means the commodity of riches for this world, and the merit of poverty for the world to come.

3. Alas! *Philothea*, no man will confess himself covetous; every one disavows that baseness and vileness of heart; for excuse they plead the great charge of children, which oppresses them, or prudence, which requires that men should make sure of a settled income; they never have too much; and some necessities are always found out as reasons to get more. Even the most covetous, far from confessing himself to be such, does not think in his conscience that he is so; for covetousness is a monstrous fever, which becomes so much the more insensible by how much more violent and burning it is. *Moses* saw that holy fire which burned in the bush, yet consumed it not; but this profane fire of avarice consumes and devours the covetous person, and yet burns not at all; at least, in the midst of his heats and burnings, he boasteth of the coolest freshness in the world, and esteems his insatiable drought to be a natural and pleasing thirst.

4. If you desire long, ardently, and solicitously the riches which you have not, it is useless to say that you would not have them unjustly. You do not cease to be truly covetous for all that. He who desires earnestly, constantly, and impatiently to drink, albeit he would drink water only, yet proves that he has a fever.

5. O *Philothea*! I know not whether it be a just desire, to covet to have justly that which another justly possesses; for it seems that by this desire we would profit ourselves by the damage of others. He that justly possesses anything, has he not more reason to keep it justly than we to desire it justly? and why then extend we our desire to his possession, to deprive him of it? If this desire be just, yet certainly it is not charitable, for we would not in any case that an-

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other man should desire, although justly, that which we would justly keep. This was the sin of *Achab*, who desired to have *Naboth's* vineyard justly, which *Naboth* much more justly desired to keep. *Achab* desired it ardently for a long time, and impatiently, and therefore offended God.

6. Stay, dear *Philothea*, from desiring your neighbour's goods till he desires to part with them; for then his desire will render yours not only just, but charitable also. Yes, I am willing you should take care to augment your substance, so it be done not only justly, but leisurely and charitably.

7. If you affect much the goods which you have, if you be troubled much about them, setting your heart and thoughts upon them, and fearing, with a vexing and impatient fear, to lose them, believe me, you have still some kind of fever; for, they who have fevers drink the water that is given them, with a certain haste, with a certain pleasure and greediness, which the healthy have not. It is impossible to take great pleasure in anything, without greatly setting our affection upon it.

8. If you suffer loss of goods, and find your heart disconsolate and afflicted thereat, reckon, *Philothea*, that you bear much affection to them; for nothing so much witnesses to the affection for what we have lost as affliction for the loss.

10. Desire not, then, with a full and express desire, the wealth you have not, nor settle your heart very much on what you have; discomfort not yourself for the losses which befall you, and then you shall have reason to say, and believe, that being rich in effect you are not so in affection; but that you are poor in spirit, and consequently blessed; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to you.

CH. XV.—HOW TO PRACTISE TRUE AND REAL POVERTY, BEING, NOTWITHSTANDING, REALLY RICH.

1. The painter *Parrhasius* painted the people of *Athens* by a most witty invention, representing their divers and variable dispositions, choleric, unjust, inconstant, covetous, gentle, merciful, high-minded, proud, humble, hardy, and cowardly, and all this together. But I, dear *Philothea*, would put into your heart riches and poverty together, a great care and a great contempt of temporal things.

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2. Take much more care to make your temporal goods profitable and fruitful than worldly men do. Tell me, are not the gardeners of great princes more curious and diligent to deck and trim up the gardens they have in charge than if they were their own? And why? Because doubtless they consider those gardens as kings' and princes' gardens, to whom they desire to make themselves acceptable by those services. *Philothea*, the possessions we have are not ours, God has given them to us to manage, and His will is that we render them profitable and fruitful; and therefore we do Him good service to take care of them. But, it must be a care greater and more solid than worldlings have of their riches; for their labours are but for love of themselves, and ours must be for the love of God.

3. Now as self-love is violent, turbulent, and impatient, so the care we take for it is full of vexation, anguish, and unquietness; and as the love of God is sweet, peaceable, and quiet, so the care which proceeds from it, although it be for worldly goods, is amiable, sweet, and pleasant. Let us, then, have this gentle care of preserving, yea, and of increasing our temporal goods, whensoever any just occasion shall present itself, and as far as our condition requires it; for God will have us to do so for the love of Him.

4. But take heed that self-love deceive you not; for sometimes it counterfeits so craftily the love of God that you would say it were the same. Now, that it may not deceive you, and that this care of your temporal goods may not turn into avarice, besides what I said in the former chapter, we must very often practise a true, real, and effectual poverty in the midst of all the riches and wealth that God has given us.

5. Always, then, relinquish some part of your goods, bestowing them on the poor with a willing heart; for, to give away what we have is to impoverish ourselves by so much as we give; and the more we give, the poorer we make ourselves. True it is that God will repay it again, not only in the next world, but even in this, for nothing so much prospers our temporal estate as alms. But till such time as God shall restore it, we remain poorer by what we have given. O how holy and rich is that poverty which is caused by alms!

6. Love the poor and poverty; for so shall you become truly poor, since, as the Scripture says, We are made like the things which we love. Love makes lovers equals. *Who is*

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weak, saith *S. Paul*, with whom I am not weak (2 Cor. xi. 29.)? He might have said likewise: Who is poor, with whom I am not poor? for love made him like to those whom he loved. If, then, you love the poor, you shall be truly a partaker of their poverty, and poor like them. Now, if you love the poor, be often among them, be glad to see them in your own house, visit them in theirs, converse willingly with them, rejoice that they come near you in the churches, in the streets, and elsewhere. Be poor in tongue with them, discoursing with them as their companion, but be rich in hand, giving them liberally of your goods, as having more abundance.

7. Will you yet go farther, my *Philothea*? Content not yourself to be poor as the poor, but be poorer than the poor themselves. And how may that be? The servant is less than his master, be you, then, a servant of the poor; go and serve them in their beds when they are sick; I say, serve them with your own hands, be yourself their cook, and at your own expense. Be their sempstress and laundress. O *Philothea*! this service is more glorious than a kingdom.

8. I cannot sufficiently admire the ardent affection with which this counsel was put in practice by *S. Louis*, one of the greatest kings the sun ever saw, greatest in all kinds of greatness. He served often at table the poor whom he nourished, and caused three poor men, almost every day, to come to his own table, and many times did eat the remainder of their pottage with an incomparable love. When he visited the hospitals of the sick, which he did very often, he served those ordinarily who had the most loathsome diseases, the leprous, ulcerous, and such like, and performed all this service to them bareheaded, and kneeling on the ground, respecting in their persons the Saviour of the world, and cherishing them with as tender a love as any careful mother could do her own child.

9. *S. Elizabeth*, daughter to the king of Hungary, often put herself amongst the poor, and for her recreation sometimes clothed herself like a poor woman, amongst her ladies, saying to them: If I were poor, thus would I attire myself. O good God, *Philothea*, how poor were this prince and this princess in their riches, and how rich in their poverty. Blessed are they that are poor in this sort, for to them belongs the kingdom of heaven. *I was hungry, and you gave Me to*

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eat: I was naked, and you clothed Me; possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world (Matt. xxv. 35), the King of the poor and of kings will say at His general judgment.

10. There is none but upon one occasion or other finds want of some conveniency; sometimes comes a guest to our house, whom we should and would entertain very well, but for the present we are not prepared to receive him; sometimes our best clothes are in one place, when we want them in another; it happens, another time, that all the wine in our cellar works and turns, so that there remain only gross and green wines; another time, we come to some poor village, where all things are wanting, there is neither bed-chamber, table, nor attendance. In fine, it is very ordinary to want something, be we never so rich. Now this is to be poor in effect—when we want these things. *Philothea*, be glad of such occasions, accept them with all your heart, and suffer them cheerfully.

11. When accidents happen which impoverish you, either much or little, as tempest, fire, inundations, dearth, thieves, suits of law, oh, then, indeed, is the time to practise poverty, receiving these losses with mildness, and bearing patiently and constantly this poverty. *Esau* presented himself to his father with his hands all hairy, and *Jacob* did the same; but because the hair that covered *Jacob's* hands stuck not to his skin but to his gloves, one might take away the hair without hurting him; while because the hair of *Esau's* hands grew on his own skin, being hairy by nature, he that should have endeavoured to pull off his hair should have put him to great torment—he would have cried aloud, and been earnest in his defence. When our riches cleave to our hearts,—if a tempest, if thieves, if contentious persons pull away any of them from us, what complaints, what troubles, what impatience presently have we! But when our riches are held only with the care God would have us take, and do not cleave to our heart—if they be taken from us, we lose neither senses nor quietness. This is the difference between beasts and men, as to their garments; for the garments of beasts stick fast to their flesh, and those of men are only cast about them, so that they may be put on and off at pleasure.

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CH. XVI.—HOW TO PRACTISE RICHNESS OF SPIRIT IN REAL POVERTY.

1. But if you are really poor, *Philothea*, for God's sake, be so likewise in spirit, make a virtue of necessity, and value this precious jewel of poverty at the high rate it deserves. The lustre thereof is not discovered in this world, and yet, nevertheless, it is exceeding rich and beautiful.

2. Be patient, you are in good company ; our Saviour, our Lady, the Apostles, so many Saints, both men and women, have been poor, and though they had means to be rich, yet they refused to be so. How many rich worldlings with incomparable care and great contradictions have gone to seek holy poverty in cloisters and hospitals ? Witness *S. Alexis*, *S. Paula*, *S. Paulinus*, *S. Angela*, and so many others ; and behold, *Philothea*, this holy poverty, more favourable to you, comes to present herself in your own house, you have found her without seeking, without pain ; embrace her, then, as a dear friend of Jesus Christ, who was born, who lived, and died in poverty ; she was His nurse all His life.

3. Your poverty, *Philothea*, has two great privileges, by virtue of which she can make you rich in merit. The first is, that she came not to you by your own choice, but only by the will of God, who made you poor without any concurrence of your own will. Now, that which we receive purely from the will of God is ever most acceptable to Him, provided that we receive it cheerfully, and for the love of His holy will ; where there is least of our own, there is most of God's ; the simple and pure acceptance of God's will makes the purest patience.

4. The second privilege of this poverty is, that it is a poverty truly poor. A poverty that is commended, cherished, esteemed, succoured, and assisted, is not altogether poor, having something of riches in it ; but a poverty which is despised, rejected, reproached, and abandoned, is truly poor. Such is ordinarily the poverty of secular men. Because they are not poor by their own choice, but by necessity, they are not much esteemed ; and, in that they are not esteemed, their poverty is poorer than that of religious men ; although otherwise the poverty of religious men has a very great excellency, and is much more commendable by reason of the vow, and the intention for which it is chosen.

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5. Complain not, then, my dear *Philothea*, of your poverty ; for we complain not but of that which displeases us ; and if poverty displease you, you are no more poor in spirit, but rich in affection.

6. Be not discomfited then that you are not so well succoured as it is requisite ; for in this consists the excellency of poverty. To have a desire to be poor, and not to receive the inconvenience of it, is too great an ambition, for it is to desire the honour of poverty and the commodity of riches.

7. Be not ashamed to be poor, or to ask alms in charity. Receive with humility what shall be given you, and take denials meekly. Remember often the voyage our Lady made into *Egypt* to carry thither her dear Child, and how much contempt, poverty, and misery she was forced to suffer. If you live thus you shall be most rich in your poverty.

LESSON XXXVIII.

Of Friendship : Of True and False Friendships : Of Guarding against too much Intimacy : That Peace is not to be Placed in Men.

TEXTS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you. Bless them that curse you, and pray for them that calumniate you.—Luke vi. 28.

Owe no man anything, but to love one another. For he that loveth his neighbour hath fulfilled the law.—Rom. xiii. 8.

Be ye therefore followers of God, as most dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath delivered himself for us, an oblation and a sacrifice to God for an odour of sweetness.—Ephes. v. 1.

You have heard that I said to you : I go away, and I come unto you. If you loved me, you would indeed be glad, because I go to the Father ; for the Father is greater than I.—John xiv. 28.

Now when he was at Jerusalem at the pasch, upon the festival day, many believed in his name, seeing the signs which he did. But Jesus did not trust himself unto them, for that he knew all men.—John ii. 23.

At my first answer no man stood with me, but all forsook me : may it not be laid to their charge.—2 Tim. iv. 16.

In these words you have—1, A description of what true Christian friendship is, and how it should be well-ordered, lest your own interest might be more thought of than your neighbour's good and the glory of God ; 2, a warning not to place too much confidence in men, even though they are your friends, nor to commit yourself to their imprudence or inconstancy ; 3, an example in *S. Paul's* case, how, when they are most needed, friends fail. Now heed well the teachings of both your masters on this subject.

LESSON XXXVIII. OF FALSE FRIENDSHIP.

INTRODUCTION.—PT. III., CH. XVII.—OF FRIENDSHIP, AND
FIRST OF WICKED AND FRIVOLOUS FRIENDSHIP.

1. Love has the first place among the passions of the soul. It is the king of all the motions of the heart; it changes all the others into itself, and makes us altogether such as the thing we love. Take heed, then, O *Philothea*, that you have no evil love, for with it you will become presently evil. Now, of all love friendship is the most dangerous, because other love may be without communication, but friendship being wholly grounded upon that, we can hardly have it with any person without partaking of his qualities.

2. All love is not friendship, for one may love and not be loved, and then is there love but not friendship; because friendship is a mutual love, and if the love be not mutual it is not friendship. Nor is it enough that it be mutual, but the parties that love one another must know their mutual affection, for if they know it not, it will be love, but not friendship. There must be also some kind of communication between them, which is the ground of friendship. According to the diversity of communications, friendship also is diverse, and communications are different, according to the difference of the matters communicated. If they be wicked and vain, the friendship is also false and vain; if they be virtuous, the friendship is true; and the more excellent the matters communicated are, the more excellent is the friendship. For as that honey is best which is gathered from the blossoms of the sweetest and most excellent flowers, so that love is the most excellent which is founded upon the most excellent communication. And as there is honey in *Heraclea*, a province in *Pontus*, which is venomous, and makes them mad that eat it, because it is gathered from the venomous herb aconite, which abounds in that country; even so, friendship grounded upon the communication of wicked and vicious things is altogether false and wicked. So also is that which is founded on vain and frivolous virtues, because these virtues depend only on the senses. I call frivolous virtues certain abilities and vain qualities which weak spirits call virtues and perfections. Observe the greater part of maids, women, and young people, they will not stick to say: Such a gentleman is very well qualified, and has many perfections; he

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dances well, he plays well at all games, he dresses well, he sings well, he discourses well, he is good-looking. Thus mountebanks esteem him most accomplished among them that plays the fool best.

3. But as all these things depend on the senses, so the friendships which proceed from them are termed sensual, vain, and frivolous, and deserve rather the name of fondness than friendship; such are ordinarily the friendships of young people, which are built on a fair curled lock of hair, smiling glances, good clothes, affected countenances, and idle discourse—friendship suitable to the age of those whose virtue is yet in the blossom, and their judgment in the bud; and indeed such amities are but transitory, and melt away like snow in the sun.

CH. XIX.—OF TRUE FRIENDSHIPS.

1. Love greatly every one, *Philothea*, with a charitable love; but have no friendship save with those that can communicate with you virtuous things; and the more exquisite the virtues are which shall be interchanged, the more precious will be the friendship. If this communication be in learning, the friendship will be very commendable, still more if it be in virtues, in prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. But, if your commerce be in charity, devotion, and Christian perfection, oh how precious will this friendship be! It will be excellent, because it comes from God; excellent, because it tends to God; excellent, because its very knot is God; excellent, because it shall last eternally in God. O how good it is to love on earth as they love in heaven, to learn to cherish one another in this world, as we shall do eternally in the next!

2. I speak not here of the simple love of charity, for that must be borne towards all men, but of spiritual friendship, by which two or three or many souls communicate their devotion, their spiritual affections, and make one good spirit among themselves. Such happy souls may justly sing, *Behold how good a thing it is, and how pleasant for brethren to dwell together* (Ps. cxxxii. 1). Yes, for the delicious balm of devotion distils from one heart to the other by continual participation, insomuch that it may be said God has poured out upon this friendship His blessing and life everlasting. Methinks all other friendships are but shadows in comparison of this; their bonds are but chains of glass or jet, in com-

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parison of this great bond of holy devotion, which is all of gold.

3. Make no other kind of friendship than this ; I speak of the friendships which you make, for you must not forsake or neglect the friendships which nature and existing duties oblige you to cultivate towards your parents, kindred, benefactors, neighbours, and others ; I speak of those which you choose yourself.

4. Many, peradventure, will tell you that we should have no kind of particular friendship or affection, because it distracts the mind, possesses the heart, and begets envy ; but they are deceived in their advice ; for they have seen in the writings of many devout authors that particular friendships and excessive affections infinitely prejudice Religious : they imagine that it is so with the rest of the world ; but on this there is much to say. For, since that in a well-ordered monastery the common design of all tends to true devotion, it is not requisite to make these particular communications there, lest, seeking in particular that which is common, they fall from particularities to partialities. But for those who live in the world and embrace virtue, it is necessary to unite themselves together by a holy friendship ; for by means thereof they encourage, help, and lead on one another to goodness. And as they that go on plain ground need not be led by the hand, but they who go in rugged and slippery ways hold one by the other to walk more securely, so they that are in Religion have no need of particular friendships, but they who are in the world have need of them, to succour and secure one another amongst so many dangerous passages which they are to pass. In the world, all conspire not to the same end, all are not of one mind ; we must then doubtless separate ourselves, and make friendships according to our pretensions. This particularity makes indeed a partiality ; yet 'tis a holy partiality, which makes no division but only between good and evil, sheep and goats, bees and drones, a separation most necessary.

5. No man can deny but our Blessed Saviour loved with a more tender and particular friendship *S. John, Lazarus, Martha, and Mary Magdalen* : for the Scripture testifies it. We know that *S. Peter* tenderly loved *S. Mark* and *S. Petronilla* ; as *S. Paul* his *Timothy* and *S. Thecla* ; *S. Gregory Nazianzen* boasts a hundred times of the incomparable friendship he had with the great *S. Basil*, and describes it in this

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manner: *It seemed that in the one and the other of us there was but one soul dwelling in two bodies; and if those are not to be credited who said that all things are in all things, yet must we believe that we were both in each one of us, and one within the other. We had both of us the same pretensions to advance in virtue, and to apply all the designs of our life to future hopes, going in this manner out of this mortal world before we died in it.*

6. *S. Augustine* testifies that *S. Ambrose* loved *S. Monica* entirely for the rare virtues he observed in her, and that she reciprocally revered him as an angel of God. But I am to blame to hold you so long in a matter so clear. *S. Jerome*, *S. Augustine*, *S. Gregory*, *S. Bernard*, and all the greatest servants of God had most particular amities, without any prejudice to their perfection. *S. Paul* reproaches the ill behaviour of the *Gentiles*, accusing them that they were people *without affection*, that is to say, who had no true friendship. And *S. Thomas*, with all other good philosophers, confesses that friendship is a virtue. And he speaks of particular friendship, since, as he says, perfect friendship can not be extended to many persons. Perfection, then, consists not in having no friendship, but in having none but such as is good, virtuous, and holy.

CHS. XX. AND XXI.—THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TRUE AND VAIN FRIENDSHIP.

1. But observe now this principal admonition, my *Philothea*. The honey of *Heraclea*, which is so venomous, is like the other, which is so wholesome: there is great danger in taking the one for the other, or in mingling them together, for the goodness of the one would not hinder the poison of the other. He must stand upon his guard that will not be deceived in these friendships, principally when they are contracted between persons of divers sexes, under what pretence soever, for the devil often brings a change to those who love. They begin in virtuous love, but if they are not very discreet, fond love will first mingle itself, then sensual, and afterwards wicked. Yea, there is danger even in spiritual love, if we are not very watchful, though in this it be more difficult to make a change, because the purity and candour of this love renders more apparent the faults which Satan

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endeavours to mingle with it ; and therefore, when he undertakes this, he does it more craftily, and endeavours to slip in his poison almost insensibly.

2. You may discern worldly friendship from that which is holy and virtuous, as the *Heracleian* honey is known from other honey. The honey of *Heraclea* is sweeter to the taste than the ordinary honey, because of the juice of the aconite, which gives it an additional sweetness ; so worldly amity produces ordinarily a confused rabble of honied words, flattering phrases, rapturous admirations of beauty, behaviour, and other personal qualities ; but holy friendship speaks simply and frankly, and can commend nothing but virtue and the grace of God, the only foundation on which it subsists.

3. The honey of *Heraclea* being swallowed causes a dizziness in the head ; and false friendship breeds a giddiness, which leads to those familiarities and uncivil kindnesses which are certain signs of the approaching ruin of honesty. While holy friendship has no eyes but sincere and chaste ; no caresses but pure and modest ; no sighs but for heaven ; no familiarities but spiritual ; no complaints but when God is not loved—infallible tokens of virtue. The honey of *Heraclea* troubles the sight, and this worldly friendship blinds the judgment, so that they who are infected with it think they do well when they do ill, and believe their excuses and pretexts to be true reasons ; they fear the light, and love darkness. But holy friendship has a clear sight, and never hides herself, but appears willingly before honest persons. In fine, the honey of *Heraclea* leaves a bitterness in the mouth ; so false friendships change and terminate in utter wickedness, or else in injuries, slanders, deceits, melancholy confusions and jealousies, and at last, even in madness. But holy friendship is always equally honest, civil, amiable, and never changes but into a more perfect union of spirits, a lively image of the blessed friendship exercised in heaven.

4. Young people who use glances, signs, and courtings, or speak words which they would not have heard by their fathers, mothers, husbands, wives, or confessors, sufficiently witness thereby that they treat of some other thing than honour and conscience. Our Blessed Lady was troubled when she saw an angel in the shape of a man, because she was alone, and that he gave her extraordinary, though heavenly, praises. O Saviour of the world ! purity fears an angel in the shape of

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a man, and why should not impurity fear a man though he comes in the shape of an angel, when he praises her with human and sensual commendations ?

CH. XXII.—OTHER ADVICES ON THE SUBJECT OF FRIENDSHIP.

I. Friendship requires great communication between friends, otherwise it will neither grow nor continue. Wherefore, it often happens, that with this communication of friendship other communications insensibly glide from one heart to another, by a mutual infusion and intercourse of affections, inclinations, and impressions. But this happens especially when we highly esteem him whom we love, for then we open our heart in such sort to his friendship that with it his inclinations and impressions easily enter in full stream, be they good or bad. Certainly the bees that gather the honey of *Heraclea* seek nothing but honey, yet with the honey they insensibly suck the venomous quality of the aconite from which they gather it. Well then, *Philothea*, in this case, you must put in practice the words which the Saviour of our souls was wont to speak, as the ancients have taught us. Be good treasurers or exchangers of money ; that is to say, receive not false money with the good, nor base gold with fine ; separate the dross from the precious ; yes, for there is scarce any but has some imperfection. And what reason is there to receive promiscuously the tares and imperfections of a friend with his friendship ? we must love him indeed, notwithstanding his imperfections, but we must neither love nor receive his imperfections ; for friendship requires communication of good and not of evil. Wherefore, as they that draw gravel out of the river *Tagus* separate the gold which they find, to carry it away, and leave the sand on the shore ; so they who have the communication of some good friendship ought to separate from it the sand of imperfections, and not permit it to enter into the soul. *S. Gregory Nazianzen* witnesses that many, loving and admiring *S. Basil*, were ambitious to imitate him even in his outward imperfections, as in speaking slowly, distractedly, and pensively, in the fashion of his beard and in his gait. And we see likewise, husbands, wives, children, and friends, who, having great estimation of their friends, parents, husbands, and wives, get, either by compliance or imitation, a thousand little ill humours in their communication of friendship which they have one with an-

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other. Now this ought not to be done in any sort, for every one has evil inclinations enough of his own, without charging himself with those of others, and friendship is so far from requiring this, that on the contrary it obliges mutually to endeavour the freeing of one another from all kind of imperfections. We must, indeed, meekly bear with the imperfections of our friends; but we must not lead them into imperfections, much less transfer their imperfections to ourselves. But I speak only of imperfections; for, as for sins, we must neither cause nor suffer them in our friends.

2. It is either a weak or false friendship to see our friend perish, and not to help him; to see him die of an imposture, and not to dare to open it with the lancet of correction to save his life. True and lively amity cannot subsist where sin is. They say the salamander puts out the fire in which she lies; and so sin destroys that friendship wherein it lodges. If it be a light passing sin, friendship will presently banish it by correction; but if it be a lasting sin, then friendship soon perishes, for it cannot subsist but upon true virtue; how much less then ought we to sin for friendship's sake. A friend is an enemy when he would induce us to sin, and merits to lose the friendship when he would destroy and damn the friend. Nay, it is one of the most assured marks of false friendship, to see it kept with a vicious person, in what sort of sin soever he be. If he whom we love be vicious, without doubt our friendship is vicious; for, where it cannot meet with true virtue, it must needs be grounded on some frivolous virtue or sensuality. Society, made for temporal profit among merchants, has but a shadow of true friendship, for it is not made for the love of the persons, but for the love of gain.

3. These two Divine sentences are two sure pillars to secure a Christian life; the one, of the Wise man: *He that feareth God shall likewise have a good friendship* (Ecclus. vi. 17). The other, of the Apostle S. James: *The friendship of this world is contrary to God* (James iv. 4).

IMITATION—BK. I., CH. VIII.—OF GUARDING AGAINST TOO MUCH INTIMACY.

I. *Open not thy heart to every man* (Ecclus. iii. 22), but discuss thy business with one that is wise and feareth God. Be rarely with young people and strangers. Fawn not upon the rich, and be not fond of appearing in the presence of the

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great. Keep company with the humble and the simple, with the devout and well ordered ; and converse of such things as are edifying. Be not familiar with any woman ; but in general commend all good women unto God. Desire to be intimate only with God and His holy angels ; and shun the acquaintance of men. We should have charity towards all men ; but familiarity is not expedient. It happeneth sometimes that a person when he is not known shineth by a good reputation, who, when he is present, is disagreeable to them that see him. Sometimes we think to please others with our company ; whereas we begin rather to be displeasing to them from the bad qualities they discover in us.

BK. III., CH. XLII.—THAT PEACE IS NOT TO BE PLACED IN MEN.

1. Son, if thou placest thy peace in any person, for thy own gratification, and for the sake of his society, thou shalt be unsettled and entangled. But if thou hast recourse to the ever-living and abiding Truth, thou wilt not be greatly grieved if a friend forsake thee or die. In Me the love of thy friend ought to stand ; and for Me is he to be loved, whoever he be that appeareth to thee good and much to be loved in this life. Without Me friendship can neither profit nor endure ; nor is that love true and pure which I do not bind together. Thou oughtest to be so dead towards persons beloved, as to wish, as far as thou art concerned, to be altogether without any human fellowship. So much the nearer doth man approach to God, as he withdraweth himself the farther from all earthly consolation. So much the higher also doth he ascend to God, as he descendeth the lower into himself, and becometh the viler in his own estimation.

2. But he that attributeth anything of good to himself hinders God's grace from coming into him ; for the grace of the Holy Spirit ever seeketh a humble heart. If thou knewest perfectly how to annihilate thyself, and empty thyself of all created love, then would I flow into thee with great grace. When thou lookest towards creatures, the sight of the Creator is withdrawn from thee. Learn, for the sake of the Creator, to overcome thyself in all things ; and then shalt thou be able to attain Divine knowledge. How little soever it be, if anything be inordinately loved and regarded, it keepeth thee back from the Sovereign Good, and corrupteth the soul.

LESSON XXXIX. OF EXTERIOR MORTIFICATION.

LESSON XXXIX.

Of the Exercise of Exterior Mortification : Of Company and Solitariness : Of Decency in Attire : Of Discourse : How to Speak of God : Of Civility in Talk : Of Avoiding Superfluity of Words.

TEXTS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

I chastise my body, and bring it into subjection ; lest perhaps, when I have preached to others, I myself should become a cast-away.—1 Cor. ix. 27.

Do not still drink water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake, and thy frequent infirmities.—1 Tim. v. 23.

But our conversation is in heaven : from whence also we look for the Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ.—Phil. iii. 20.

Let your speech be always in grace seasoned with salt : that you may know how you ought to answer to every man.—Col. iv. 6.

Let no evil speech proceed from your mouth : but that which is good to the edification of faith, that it may administer grace to the hearers. And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God : whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption.—Ephes. iv. 29.

But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account for it in the day of judgment.—Matt. xii. 36.

These words tell you—1. Of the necessity of leading a mortified life, which withholds superfluities from the body, but discreetly, and according to the capabilities and strength of each ; 2. of what kind should be the conversation of Christians, how they should watch their words, and refrain from idle talk. Both your teachers have something to say on this matter.

INTRODUCTION—PT. III., CH. XXIII.—OF THE EXERCISE OF EXTERIOR MORTIFICATION.

1. They who treat of husbandry and farming tell us, that if one write any word upon a very sound almond, and put it again into the shell, shutting it up very close, and so plant

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it, all the fruit which that tree produces will have the same word written and engraven upon it. For my part, *Philothea*, I could never approve of their order and method, who, to reform a man, begin with the exterior, as the gestures, apparel, and hair. On the contrary, I think it better to begin with the interior. *Be converted unto me* (Joel ii. 12), saith God, *with all your heart. Son, give me thy heart* (Prov. xxiii. 26). For the heart being the fountain of all our actions, they must needs be such as is the heart. The Divine Spouse inviting the soul: *Place me*, says He, *upon thy heart as a signet; upon thy arm* (Cant. viii. 6). Yes, for whosoever has *Jesus Christ* in his heart will quickly have Him in all his exterior actions. For this cause, dear *Philothea*, I have desired, above all things, to engrave and write in your heart this sacred word **LIVE JESUS**, assuring myself that afterwards your life, which has its beginning from the heart, as an almond tree from its kernel, will bring forth all her actions, which are her fruits, engraven and subscribed with that same word of salvation. And as this sweet *Jesus* will live in your heart, so will He also live in all your conversation, and will appear in your eyes, in your mouth, in your hands, and even in your hair; and you will be then able to say with *S. Paul*:—*I live now, not I, but Christ lives in me* (Gal. ii. 20). Briefly, he that has gained the heart of a man has gained the whole man. But even this heart, by which we should begin, requires to be instructed how it should frame its outward course and conversation, to the end men may not only see holy devotion there, but great wisdom also, and discretion; for this I will briefly give you some advices.

2. If you are able to endure fasting, you will do well to fast some days besides those which the Holy Church enjoins; for besides the ordinary effects of fasting, which are to elevate the spirit, subdue the flesh, practise virtue, and gain greater recompense in heaven, it is a sovereign benefit to keep yourself in an ability to master gluttony, and subject the sensual appetite and the body to the law of the spirit; and although we fast not much, yet the enemy fears us more when he sees we know how to fast. *Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays*, are the days in which the early Christians exercised most abstinence; take, therefore, some of them to fast on, as much as your devotion and the discretion of your ghostly director shall advise you.

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3. I would willingly say, as *S. Jerome* said to the devout lady *Læta* :—*Long and immoderate fastings do much displease me, especially in those that are yet tender in years.* I have learned by experience that the little ass being weary in his journey, seeks to go out of the way, that is to say, young people, being brought to infirmity through excess of fastings, easily take to self-indulgence. The deer run ill in two seasons, when they are too fat and when they are too lean. We are most subject to temptations, when our body is too much pampered and when it is too much weakened; for the one makes it insolent with comfort, and the other desperate with discomfort, and as we cannot bear it when it is too fat, so can it not bear us when it is too lean. The want of this moderation in fasting, in disciplining, in hair-clothes, and other austerities, make the best years of many unprofitable in the service of charity; as it did even in *S. Bernard*, who repented that he had used over much austerity. They who the more unreasonably have afflicted their bodies in their beginning, the more have been constrained in the end to favour them. Had they not done better to have mortified their bodies moderately, and proportionably to the offices and labours whereunto their condition obliged them?

4. Both fasting and labour mortify and subdue the flesh; but if the labour you shall do be necessary, or very profitable to the glory of God, I had rather you would suffer the pain of labour than that of fasting. This is the sense of the Holy Church, which, for labours that are profitable to the service of God and our neighbour, discharges such labourers even from the fasts commanded. It is a pain to some to fast, to others to serve the sick, to visit prisoners, to hear confessions, to assist the afflicted, to preach, pray, and perform such like exercises. These latter pains are better than the former, for besides that they equally subdue the body, they produce fruits much more profitable; and therefore, generally, it is better to preserve the bodily forces more than is requisite, than to weaken them too much; for we may always abate them when we will, but we cannot always repair them when we would.

5. Methinks we should greatly reverence the words which our Blessed Saviour says to His disciples :—*Eat that which shall be set before you* (Luke x. 8). It is, in my opinion, a greater virtue to eat without choice that which is set

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before you than to choose always the worst; for although this latter course of life seem more austere, the other, notwithstanding, has greater resignation; for thereby we renounce not only our own taste, but also our own choice, and it is not a small severity to conform our taste to every meat, and to keep it in subjection to all encounters. Besides, this kind of mortification makes no show, nor troubles any man, and is only proper for a civil life. To put by one meat and take another, to taste and pick at every dish, to think nothing well dressed, to make a mystery at every morsel, betokens a heart too effeminate, and too much addicted to dishes and platters. I esteem more *S. Bernard's* drinking oil instead of water and wine, than if he had drunk wormwood on purpose; for it was a plain sign that he thought not on what he drank. And in this carelessness of what we eat or drink consists the perfect performance of this sacred rule, *Eat that which shall be set before you.* I except, notwithstanding, such meats as prejudice our health or trouble the spirit, as hot, spiced, fuming and unwholesome meats; and likewise certain occasions in which nature has need to be recreated and strengthened to support some labours for God's glory. A continual and moderate sobriety is better than violent abstinences made by fits and mingled with many intermissions.

6. Disciplining has a marvellous efficacy to stir up a desire of devotion in us, when it is moderately used. The hair-shirt mortifies the flesh very much; but the ordinary use thereof is neither for married persons, nor tender complexions, nor for such as are employed in painful labours. It is true that upon some principal days of penance it may be used, with advice of a discreet confessor.

7. We must take the night to sleep in, every one as much as his constitution requires, to enable him to wake in the day, and to spend it profitably. And because the Holy Scripture, in a hundred kinds, gives us the examples of the Saints, and natural reasons do seriously recommend the morning to us as the best and most fruitful part of the day, and that our Saviour Himself is named the Sun-rising, and our Blessed Lady the Dawning of the day, I think it is a virtuous care to go to rest betimes at night, that we may wake and rise early in the morning; for certainly that time is the most quiet and least perplexed. The very birds do

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then invite us to wake and praise God, so that early rising advantages both our health and piety.

8. *Balaam* mounted on his ass went to find *Balac*, but because he had no good intention, the angel waited for him in the way, with a sword in his hand to kill him. The ass that saw the angel stood still three sundry times as restive; *Balaam*, in the meantime, beat her cruelly with his staff to make her go forward, until the silly beast, the third time falling flat down under *Balaam*, miraculously spake to him, saying: *What have I done to thee, for which thou hast beaten me now three several times* (Num. xxii. 28)? And by and by *Balaam's* eyes were opened and he saw the angel, who said to him, *Wherefore didst thou beat thy ass? if she had not turned back from before me, I had killed thee and saved her.* Then *Balaam* said to the angel, *Lord, I have sinned, for I knew not that Thou hadst placed Thyself in the way against me.* Seest thou, *Philothea*? *Balaam* is the cause of the evil, and he strikes and beats his poor ass that could not do otherwise. It is just so with us, for this woman sees her husband or her child sick, and presently she runs to fasting, to hair-cloth, and to disciplining, as *David* did in the like case. Alas! my dear friend, you beat the poor ass, you afflict your body, but it cannot help your affliction, nor divert God's sword drawn against you. Correct your heart which is an idolater of this husband, and suffers a thousand vices in this child, and destines it to pride, vanity, and ambition. This man perceives that he often falls shamefully into the sin of luxury, inward remorse comes against his conscience with a sword in its hand to pierce it with a holy fear, suddenly his heart coming to itself, says, *Ah! cursed flesh! Ah! treacherous body, thou hast betrayed me!* and presently he takes revenge on his flesh with immoderate fasting, excessive disciplining, insupportable hair-clothes. O poor soul, if your flesh could speak as *Balaam's* ass did, she would say to you: — *Wherefore, miserable man, dost thou strike me?* It is against thyself, O my soul, that God arms His vengeance, it is thou that art guilty! wherefore dost thou lead me to wicked conversation? why dost thou employ mine eyes, my lips, and my hands, in wickedness? wherefore dost thou busy me with wrong imaginations? Have thou good thoughts, and I shall have no evil feelings; frequent thou virtuous persons, and I shall not be disquieted by concupiscence. Alas! it is thou that

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throwest me into the fire, and yet thou wouldst have me not burn; thou puttest smoke into mine eyes, and forbiddest them to be distempered. And God, doubtless, on these occasions, says: Beat, break, tear, and shiver your hearts principally, for it is against them that My anger is stirred up. Certainly, to cure the itch it is not so needful to wash or bathe the body, as to purify the blood and refresh the liver; so, to cure us of our vices, it is good indeed to mortify the flesh, but it is more necessary perfectly to purify our affections and refresh our hearts. But in, and above all, let us be sure never to undertake corporal austerities except with the advice of our spiritual guide.

CH. XXIV.—OF COMPANY AND SOLITARINESS.

1. To seek company, and fly it, are two extremes to be blamed in the devotion of people in the world, which is that whereof I discourse. To shun all companies savours of disdain and contempt of our neighbour, and to seek after them is a sign of idleness. We must love our neighbour as ourselves, and to show that we love him we must not avoid his company, and to testify that we love ourselves we must take pleasure with ourselves, when we are in ourselves; and we are in ourselves when we are alone. *Think first of thyself*, says S. Bernard, *and then of others*. If, then, no occasion press you to go abroad, or to receive company at home, stay in yourself and converse with your own heart; but if company come to you, or any just cause invite you to company, go in God's name, *Philothea*, and see your neighbour with a cheerful heart and a cheerful face.

2. We call that evil company which is assembled to some evil intent, or when it is composed of indiscreet and dissolute persons; and such we must avoid as the bees use to shun a swarm of wasps or drones. For as they that are bitten by mad dogs have their sweat, breath, and spittle, infectious, especially for children and those of a tender complexion, so vicious and lawless persons cannot be frequented but with hazard and danger, and especially by those whose devotion is yet but young and tender.

3. There are some conversations profitable for nothing but only recreation, which are made merely to divert us from serious affairs; for such, though we must not be too much addicted

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to them, yet we may spare them the leisure set apart for recreation. Other conversations have civility for their end, as mutual visits, and certain meetings made to do honour to our neighbour ; touching these, we ought neither to be superstitious in the use of them, nor uncivil in contemning them, but modestly comply with our duties therein, to the end we may equally avoid both incivility and vanity.

4. There remain now the profitable conversations, such as those of devout and virtuous persons. O *Philothea*, it will be good for you to be often in these. The vine planted amongst the olive trees bears oily grapes which taste of olives, and the soul which frequents virtuous people cannot but partake of their qualities. Drones alone cannot make honey, but by the help of the bees they make it. We are much advantaged in the exercise of devotion by conversing with devout persons.

5. In all conversations sincerity, simplicity, mildness, and modesty are still to be preferred. There are some that make no gesture or motion but with so much affectation that they offend the company ; and as he that would never walk but telling his steps, nor speak but singing, would be troublesome to other men, so they who affect an artificial carriage, and do nothing but in measure, are impertinent to the company, and in these there is ever some kind of presumption. Let a moderate mirth ordinarily predominate in your conversation. *S. Romuald* and *S. Anthony* are highly commended that, notwithstanding all their austerities, they had always mirth, cheerfulness, and civility in their countenances and discourse. *Rejoice with them that rejoice* (Rom. xii. 13). I say once again with the Apostle, *Rejoice always, but in our Lord ; let your modesty appear to all men* (Phil. iv. 5). To rejoice in our Saviour, it is needful the cause of your joy be not only lawful, but also seemly ; and this I say because there are some things lawful, but yet are not seemly. And to the end your modesty may appear, keep yourself from all insolency, which is always reprehensible. To give one a fall, to black another's face, to prick or pinch a third, to hurt a madman, are foolish and insolent merriments.

6. But ever, besides mental solitude, whereto you may withdraw yourself even amidst the greatest conversations, as I have already declared, you must love to be really and locally solitary ; not to go to the desert or wilderness as *S. Mary*

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of *Egypt*, *S. Paul*, *S. Anthony*, *Arsenius*, and the other Fathers of the Desert ; but to be sometimes in your garden, or in your chamber, or in some other place where you may with most contentment retire your spirit into your heart, and recreate your soul with good thoughts and holy meditations, or by some good reading, according to the example of the great Bishop *Nazianzen*, who, speaking of himself, says : *I walked myself with myself about sunsetting, and passed the time upon the sea-shore, for I was wont to use this recreation to refresh myself, and to shake off a little my ordinary troubles*, and thereupon he discourses of the good meditation which I mentioned in another place. And according to the example of *S. Ambrose*, of whom *S. Augustine* says, that entering oftentimes into his chamber, for entrance was denied to no man, he saw him reading, and having stayed awhile for fear of troubling him, he went away without speaking a word, thinking that the little time that remained to this great pastor for reinforcing and recreating his spirit after the toils of so many businesses, ought not to be taken from him. So, after the Apostles one day had told our Lord how they had preached and laboured : *Come*, says He, *into the desert, and repose yourselves for a while* (Mark vi. 31).

CH. XXV.—OF DECENCY IN ATTIRE.

1. *S. Paul* admonishes devout women, and the same must be understood of men, to be attired in decent apparel, adorning themselves with modesty and sobriety. Now the decency of apparel and other ornaments depends on their stuff, fashion, and cleanliness. Touching cleanliness, it should be almost always alike in our apparel, on which as near as may be we should not permit any kind of spots or foulness. Exterior neatness represents in some sort the inward ; and God Himself requires corporal decency in those that approach near His altar, and have the principal charge of devotion.

2. As for the stuff and fashion of clothes, decency is to be considered according to the divers circumstances of time, age, quality, company, and occasions. Men apparel themselves ordinarily better on festival days, according to the solemnity of the feast which is celebrated. In time of penance, as in *Lent*, rich clothes are laid aside ; at weddings they put on wedding garments ; at burials, mourning ; at court men are better clad than at home. The married woman may, and

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ought to adorn herself when her husband is present and desires it ; but if she do so in his absence, she will be asked whose eyes she desires to favour with that particular respect. We give more liberty of dressing to young maids, because they may lawfully desire to please many, although with no other intent than to gain one by holy marriage. Neither is it esteemed amiss that widows who pretend to marriage dress themselves well, so they show no lightness; for having already been mothers of families, and passed through the griefs of widowhood, they are held to be of a more settled judgment. But as for those which are true widows, not only in body but in heart, no ornament becomes them but humility, modesty, and devotion. For, if they desire to make men in love with them, they are not true widows, and if they desire it not, why do they use the instrument? He that will not receive guests must pull down the sign from his house. Old people are always ridiculous when they try to deck themselves out ; these follies are not tolerable but in youth.

3. Be neat, *Philothea*, let nothing be about you loose or ill put on, it is a neglect of them with whom we converse to come into their company in uncomely apparel. But take heed withal of affectation, curiosities, effeminacies, and vanities. As far as you are able, keep yourself always in simplicity and modesty ; for without doubt it is the greatest ornament of beauty, and the best palliation of ugliness.

4. *S. Peter* admonished young women especially, not to wear their hair so curled and crisped in rings and wreaths, but men who are so effeminate as to affect such vanities are justly despised. And even women, carried away with those vanities, are counted but weak in virtue ; at least, if they have any, it appears not among so many toys and levities. They say they intend no ill in these things, but I reply, as I have elsewhere said, that yet the devil does. For my part, I would have my devout man's and my devout woman's apparel the best of all the company's, but yet the least pompous and affected ; and as is said in the proverb, I would have them adorned with gravity, decency, and honour. *S. Louis* says, in one word, that we ought to dress according to our state, so that good and grave men may not say, You do too much, nor young persons, You do too little. But if young people will not content themselves with what is becoming, we must abide by the judgment of the wise.

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CH. XXVI.—OF DISCOURSE, AND FIRST HOW TO SPEAK OF GOD.

1. Physicians gain great knowledge of the health or sickness of a man by looking at his tongue ; so our words are certain signs of the quality of our souls. *By thy words, says our Saviour, thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned* (Matt. xii. 37). Our hand soon presses on the pain we feel, and our tongue soon expresses the love we feel.

2. If then, *Philothea*, you love God, you will often speak of Him in your familiar discourses with your household, friends, and neighbours. *For the mouth of the just will meditate wisdom, and his tongue will speak judgment* (Ps. xxxvi. 30). As bees have nothing in their little mouths but honey, so shall your tongue be always sweetened with God, and shall find no greater pleasure than to send through your lips the praises and blessings of His Name ; for, so they say, *S. Francis* was wont to suck and lick his lips after he had pronounced the holy Name of our Lord, as if drawing thence the greatest sweetness in the world.

3. But speak always of God as of God, that is, reverently and devoutly ; not with a purpose to seem learned or sufficient, but with a spirit of mildness, charity, and humility ; distilling as much as you may, as it is said of the Spouse in the *Canticles*, the delicious honey of devotion and holy things, drop by drop, into the ears sometimes of one, sometimes of another, praying to God in the secret of your heart that it would please Him to make this heavenly dew pass into the hearts of those that hear you.

4. Above all things perform this angelical office mildly and sweetly, not by way of correction, but of inspiration. For it is wonderful how powerfully a sweet and gentle manner of proposing good things works on the hearts of the hearers.

5. Never, therefore, speak of God and of devotion by way of discourse and entertainment, but with attention and reverence ; which I say to make you beware of a notable vanity that is found in many who make profession of devotion ; they will, upon every occasion, utter holy and zealous discourses by way of compliment, without considering what they do and

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after they have spoken them they imagine themselves to be such as their words declare them, which indeed they are not.

CH. XXVII.—OF CIVILITY IN TALK, AND DUE RESPECT OF PERSONS.

1. *If any one offend not in word, says S. James, he is a perfect man* (James iii. 2). Beware you utter not any unseemly word, for although it proceed not from you with an ill intention, yet they that hear it may interpret it otherwise. A bad word falling into a weak heart spreads itself like a drop of oil falling on a piece of linen, and sometimes it so seizes on the heart that it fills it with a thousand bad thoughts and temptations. For as the poison of the body enters by the mouth, so the poison of the heart enters by the ear, and the tongue which utters it is a murderer. For although, peradventure, the poison which it has cast forth has not wrought its effect, because it found the hearts of the hearers prevented with some preservative, yet there wanted no malice in the tongue to commit the murder. And let no man say that he thought no evil, for our Lord, who knows all thoughts, has said, *That out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh* (Luke vi. 45). And though we think no evil, yet the devil thinks enough, and often secretly makes use of these wicked words to wound some heart. They say such as have eaten the herb Angelica have always a sweet and pleasant breath, and they that have honesty and purity, which is an angelical virtue, in their hearts, have their words always pure, civil, and chaste. As for *foolish talking and scurrility* (Ephes. v. 4), the Apostle will not once have them named among us, assuring us, *that nothing so much corrupteth good manners as wicked discourse* (1 Cor. xv. 33).

2. If uncivil words be uttered obscurely with wit and subtlety, then are they far more venomous; for as a dart the sharper it is the more easily it entereth into the body, so the more sharp a wicked word is the more it pierces the heart. And they that esteem themselves gallant men for speaking such words in company, know not indeed wherefore conversation is ordained; for they should be like swarms of bees gathered together to make honey of some pleasant and virtuous entertainment, and not like a nest of wasps who come together

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to suck corruption. If some fool speaks improper words to you, let him know that your ears are offended with it, either by turning yourself away, or by some other means, as your discretion shall guide you. It is one of the worst conditions a wit can have, to be a mocker; God extremely hates this vice, and has heretofore made strange punishments thereof. Nothing is so contrary to charity, and much more to devotion, as the despising and contemning of our neighbour. Now, derision and mockery is never without this contempt, and therefore it is a very great sin, so that the doctors have reason to say that mockery is the greatest offence man can commit against his neighbour by words; for other offences are committed always with esteem of him that is offended, but this is done with scorn and contempt.

3. As for jesting words, which are spoken by one to another with modest and innocent mirth, they belong to the virtue called *Eutrapelia* by the *Greeks*, which we may call *good conversation*, by which we take an honest and pleasant recreation on such frivolous occasions as human imperfections offer; only we must take heed of passing from this honest mirth to scoffing, for mocking causes laughter in scorn and contempt of our neighbour; but mirth and drollery provoke laughter by an innocent liberty, confidence, and familiar freedom joined to the wittiness of some conceit.

4. *S. Louis*, when religious persons would speak with him after meals of great and weighty matters, used to say: *It is not now a time to quote texts, but to recreate our spirits with mirth and pleasant conceits, let every man say decently what he will.* This he said in behalf of the nobility that were then about him to receive favour from his majesty. But, *Philothea*, let us pass the time of recreation in such sort that we keep holy eternity ours by devotion.

IMITATION—BOOK I., CH. X.—OF AVOIDING SUPERFLUITY OF WORDS.

1. Fly the tumult of men as much as thou canst; for the treating of worldly affairs is a great hindrance, even though they be discoursed of with a simple intention. For we are too easily contaminated and ensnared with vanity. I would that many a time I had kept silence, and not been in company. Why are we so fond of speaking and of talking idly

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together, when yet we seldom return to silence without some wound to conscience? The reason why we are so fond of talking is, that we seek consolation from one another by much discoursing together ; and we wish to lighten our heart, wearied with various thoughts. And we are very fond of speaking and thinking of those things we very much love or wish for, or that we feel are a contradiction to us.

2. But, alas ! it is often vainly and to no purpose ; for this outward consolation is no small hindrance to interior and Divine consolation. Therefore we must watch and pray, lest the time pass away without fruit. If it be lawful and expedient to speak, speak those things that edify. Evil custom and negligence about our spiritual advancement contribute much to the unguardedness of our tongue. But devout conferences upon spiritual things are no small help to spiritual progress ; especially where persons of congenial mind and spirit are associated together in God.

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LESSON XL.

Of Rash Judgment : Of Detraction : Of Avoiding Rash Judgments : Of Self-Consideration : Of Avoiding Curiosity about Others.

TEXTS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not : and he that eateth not, let him not judge him that eateth. For God hath taken him to him. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant ? To his own lord he standeth or falleth. And he shall stand ; for God is able to make him stand. —Rom. xiv. 3.

And why seest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, and seest not the beam that is in thy own eye ? Or how sayest thou to thy brother, Let me cast the mote out of thy eye ; and behold a beam is in thy own eye ? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thy own eye, and then shalt thou see to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye. —Matt. vii. 3.

Therefore every one of us shall render account to God for himself. Let us not therefore judge one another any more. But judge this rather, that you put not a stumbling-block or a scandal in your brother's way. —Rom. xiv. 12.

Detract not one another, my brethren. He that detracteth his brother, or he that judgeth his brother, detracteth the law, and judgeth the law. But if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. —James iv. 11.

These words clearly show how much rash judgment and detraction displease God : and how we should curb our curiosity about others, and rather attend to ourself and our own miseries. Practical rules are given to you by both your masters.

INTRODUCTION—PT. III., CH. XXVIII.—OF RASH JUDGMENT.

I. *Judge not and you shall not be judged, says the Saviour of our souls, condemn not and you shall not be condemned (Matt. vii. 1). No, says the holy Apostle, Judge not, before the time, until our Lord do come who will reveal the secrets*

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of darkness, and lay open the counsels of hearts (1 Cor. iv. 5). O how displeasing are rash judgments to God! The judgments of the children of men are rash, because they are not judges of one another, and in judging they usurp to themselves our Lord's office. They are rash, because the principal malice of sin depends on the intention and counsel of the heart, which is a secret of darkness to us. They are rash, because every one has enough to do to judge himself, without presuming to judge his neighbour. To keep ourselves from being judged, it is equally necessary to judge ourselves and not to judge others. For as our Blessed Lord forbids us the one, so His Apostle enjoins us the other, saying: *If we judged ourselves we should not be judged* (1 Cor. xi. 31). But we do the clear contrary; for what is forbidden us we cease not to do, judging our neighbour on every occasion, and what is commanded us, which is to judge ourselves, we never put in practice.

2. We must use remedies against rash judgments, according to their causes. There are some hearts harsh, bitter, and virulent by nature, which make also bitter whatsoever they receive, converting *judgment*, as the prophet says, *into worm-wood, never judging their neighbour but with rigour and bitterness* (Amos v. 7). These have great need to fall into the hands of some good spiritual physician; for this bitterness of heart being natural to them is hard to overcome, and though in itself it be no sin, but only an imperfection, yet is it dangerous, because it introduces and causes to reign in the soul rash judgment and detraction. Some judge rashly, not in bitterness, but in pride, imagining that by how much they diminish other men's honour by so much they increase their own—arrogant and presumptuous spirits who admire themselves, and place themselves so high in their own estimation that they look on everything else as base and abject. *I am not as other men*, said the foolish Pharisee. Others have not this manifest pride, but take only a certain little satisfaction to consider other men's evil, the better and more contentedly to favour the contrary good wherewith they think themselves endowed. And this complaisance is so secret, and so hard to be perceived, that without a good sight it cannot be discovered, and they themselves that are touched with it cannot know it until it be shown them. Others, to flatter and excuse themselves towards themselves, and to mitigate the

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remorse of their own consciences, very willingly judge other men faulty in the same vice to which they find themselves addicted, or some other as great, believing that the multitudes of offenders make sins less blamable. Many accustom themselves to judge rashly, only for the pleasure they take to discourse, and make conjectures of other men's manners and humours, by way of exercising their wits. And if by mischance they happen upon truth in their judgment, boldness and a desire to continue in this folly so much increase that they are hardly diverted from it. Others judge in passion, thinking always well of what they love, and always ill of what they hate, saving in one only case, very marvellous, yet true, wherein excess of love provokes them to make an ill judgment of that which they love: a monstrous effect, but proceeding always from a faulty, infirm, troubled, and imperfect love, and this is jealousy, which as every man knows, on a mere look, on the least smile in the world, condemns the party beloved of disloyalty and unfaithfulness. In fine, fear, ambition, and other such infirmities of the mind, ordinarily contribute towards the breeding of suspicious and rash judgments.

3. But what remedy? They who drink the juice of the herb in *Ethiopia* called ophiusa, imagine that they see themselves environed with horrible serpents and dreadful things. They who have swallowed down pride, envy, ambition, and hatred, think all things they see faulty and blamable. Those to be healed must drink of wine made of palms, and these must drink as much as they can of the sacred wine of charity, to purge them of these humours which cause them to make such perverse judgments. Charity is afraid to meet evil, so far is she from seeking after it; when she meets it, she turns away her face, and seems not to see it; nay, at the first noise of evil she shuts her eyes that she may not see it, and afterwards believes with a holy innocency that it was not evil but only the shadow or ghost of evil, and if she be forced to acknowledge it to be evil, she instantly turns away from it, and endeavours to forget the form thereof. Charity is the sovereign remedy against all evil, but especially against this.

4. All things seem yellow to those that are sick of the jaundice, and they say that to cure them they must wear celandine under the soles of their feet. The sin of rash judgment is a spiritual jaundice, and makes all things appear

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faulty to their eyes who are infected therewith; he that will be cured of it must apply the remedies not to his eyes, nor to his understanding, but to his affections, which are the feet of the soul. If your affections are mild, such will your judgment be, if charitable, your judgment will also be charitable. I present you with three examples. *Isaac* had said that *Rebecca* was his sister; *Abimelech* saw him playing with her, that is, making very much of her, and presently he judged she was his wife; a malicious eye would rather have judged her to have been far otherwise, but *Abimelech* followed the most charitable opinion he could gather from such conduct. We must always do the like, *Philothea*, in favour of our neighbour so much as is possible. And if one action could have a hundred faces, we should always look on the fairest. Our Blessed Lady was with child, and *S. Joseph* plainly perceived it; but because on the other side he saw her pure, holy, and angelical, he could not believe anything contrary to her sanctity; so that he resolved in forsaking her secretly to leave the judgment of it to God; and though the argument was strong to make him conceive an ill opinion of the B. Virgin, yet would he never judge her by it. And why? *Because*, says the Spirit of God, *he was just*. A just man when he can no longer excuse either the action, or the intention of him whom otherwise he knows to be an honest man, still refuses to judge, puts the remembrance of it out of his mind, and leaves the judgment to God. Our Blessed Saviour on the Cross, though He could not altogether excuse the sin of them that crucified Him, yet did He diminish the malice of it, alleging their ignorance. When we cannot excuse the sin, let us at least render it worthy of our compassion, attributing it to the most tolerable cause we may, as ignorance or infirmity.

5. But may we never then judge our neighbour? No, verily, never. It is God that judges malefactors in public justice. It is true that He uses the voice of magistrates to make Himself understood by us. They are His interpreters, and ought to pronounce nothing but what they have learned of Him, as being His oracles; if they do otherwise, following their own passions, then it is they indeed that judge, and consequently they shall be judged; for men are forbidden, as they are men, to judge others.

6. To see and know a thing is not to judge it, for judg-

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ment, at least according to the Scripture phrase, presupposes some little or great, true or apparent controversy to be ended ; wherefore it says, that *they who believe not are already judged* (John iii. 18), because there is no doubt of their damnation. It is not then ill done to doubt of our neighbour ; no, for we are not forbidden to doubt but to judge ; yet ought we neither to doubt nor suspect but precisely so far as reasons and arguments constrain us, otherwise even doubts and suspicions are rash.

7. If some evil eye had seen *Jacob* kiss *Rachel* by the well, or *Rebecca* receive earrings and bracelets from *Eliezer*, a man unknown in that country, he would no doubt have thought ill of these two patterns of chastity, but without reason and ground ; for when an action is of itself indifferent, it is rash suspicion to draw an ill consequence from it unless many circumstances give force to the argument. It is also a rash judgment to draw an argument from the action to blame the person. But of this we shall speak more clearly by and by.

8. In fine, those that take care of their consciences are not very subject to rash judgments ; for as bees seeing mists or cloudy weather retire to their hives to mind their honey, so the thoughts of good people never wander abroad on doubtful objects, or amongst the obscure actions of their neighbours ; but to avoid such occasions they retire themselves into the closet of their hearts, there to see to the good resolutions of their own amendment.

9. It is the part of an unprofitable soul to busy herself in examining other men's lives. I except such as have charge of others, as well in commonwealth as in private families ; for a great part of their conscience consists in watching diligently over that of others. Let them then do their duty with love, and that done, let them keep themselves within themselves in this particular.

CH. XXIX. OF DETRACTION.

I. Rash judgment breeds disquiet, contempt of our neighbour, pride, self-conceit, and a hundred other most pernicious effects, amongst which detraction has the first place as the true plague of conversation. O that I had one of the burning coals off the holy altar to touch the lips of men, to the end their iniquities might be abolished, and their sin cleansed, in imitation of the seraphim that purified the mouth of the

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prophet Isaias ! He that could deliver the world from detraction would free it from a great part of the sins of iniquity.

2. Whosoever takes unjustly from his neighbour his good name, besides the sin he commits, is bound to make reparation, though differently, according to the diversity of the slanders ; for no man can enter into heaven with other men's goods, and amongst all exterior goods a good name is the most precious. Slander is a kind of murder, for we have three lives—the spiritual, which consists in the grace of God ; the corporal, which is in the soul ; and the civil, which consists in our good name. Sin deprives us of the first, death of the second, and detraction of the third. But a slanderer, by one blow of his tongue, commits ordinarily three murders ; he kills his own soul, and his that hears him by a spiritual homicide, and takes away the civil life from him whom he slanders ; for as *S. Bernard* says, he that detracts, and he that hearkens to the detractor, both of them have the devil about them ; for the one hath him in his tongue, and the other in his ear. *They have whet their tongues like serpents* (Ps. cxxxix. 4), says *David*, speaking of detractors. Now the serpent's tongue is forked, as *Aristotle* says, and so is that of a detractor, who at once stings and poisons the ears of the hearer, and the reputation of him whom he slanders.

3. I conjure you then, most dear *Philothea*, that you never speak ill of any man directly or indirectly. Take heed of imposing false crimes and sins on your neighbour ; never discover his secret sins, nor aggravate those that are manifest ; never make evil interpretation of his good works ; never deny the goodness which you know to be in him, nor dissemble it maliciously, nor diminish it by words, for in all this you will highly offend God ; but most of all by false accusation and denying the truth to the prejudice of your neighbour, for it is a double sin to lie and to prejudice your neighbour both at once.

4. They that to speak ill of another make prefaces of honour, or mingle their discourse with facetious conceits, are the most dangerous and venomous detractors of all. I protest, say they, I love him, and in other things he is a gallant man, but yet the truth must be told, he did ill to commit such a treachery. She is a very virtuous maid ; but she was surprised, and such like flourishes. Seest thou not this sleight of theirs ? He that would shoot with a bow draws the

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arrow as near to himself as he can, but it is only to shoot it away with greater force. These detractors seem to draw their slanders towards themselves, but it is only to shoot them away with the greater force, that they may pierce deeper into the hearts of the hearers.

5. Detraction uttered by way of jesting is the most cruel of all; for as hemlock is not of itself a very violent but a gentle poison, and easily remedied, yet being taken with wine it is remediless; so detraction, which of itself would pass lightly in at one ear and out at the other, sticks fast in the memory of the hearers when it is couched in some subtle and merry jest. *They have, says David, the venom of asps under their lips* (Ps. xiii. 3). The stinging of the asp is scarce to be felt, and his venom at first breeds a delightful itching, by means of which the bowels and heart open themselves and receive the poison, against which afterward there is no remedy.

6. Say not such a one is a drunkard, although you have seen him drunk; for one only act gives not the name to a thing. The sun stood still once in favour of Josue's victory, and was darkened another time in favour of that of our Saviour; yet none will say that the sun is immovable, or dark. *Noe* was once drunk, and *Lot* another time; yet neither the one nor the other were drunkards. Nor was *S. Peter* a blood-shedder for having once shed blood; nor a blasphemer though he once blasphemed. To bear the name of a vice or virtue, it is necessary to make a progress and gain a habit therein. It is an imposture to say one is choleric because we have seen him once angry, or a thief because he hath once stolen. Although a man have been a long time vicious, yet we incur a danger of lying by calling him a vicious person. *Simon* the leper called *Mary Magdalen* a sinner, because she had been so not long before; yet he lied, for she was then no more a sinner, but a most holy penitent, and therefore our Saviour took her cause into His protection. The foolish pharisee held the publican for a great sinner, peradventure for an unjust man, an adulterer or extortioner, but he was much deceived, for at that very time he was justified.

7. Alas! since the goodness of God is so great that one moment suffices to obtain and receive His grace, what assurance can we have that he who was yesterday a sinner is so to-day? The day past ought not to judge the day present, nor the present that which is past, there is but the last which

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judges all. We can, then, never say a man is wicked, without danger of lying. That which we may say, in case we must speak, is, that he did such an ill act, he lived ill such a time, he doth ill for the present, but we may draw no consequences from yesterday to this day, nor from this day to yesterday, much less to-morrow.

8. Now though we must be extremely wary never to speak ill of our neighbour, yet must we take heed of an extremity into which some fall, who to avoid slander commend and speak well of vice. If you find a person be indeed a slanderer, say not to excuse him, that he is a free and liberal speaker; nor say of a notorious vain man, that he is genteel and neat; of dangerous familiarities, say not they are mere harmless follies; dissemble not disobedience with the name of zeal; nor arrogancies with the name of freedom, nor wantonness with the title of friendship. No, dear *Philothea*, thinking to avoid the sin of slandering, we must not favour, flatter, or cherish other vices, but roundly and freely speak of evil, and blame that which is blamable; for in this we glorify God, so that we observe these conditions following.

9. To reprehend safely another man's faults, it is necessary that the advantage of him of whom we speak, or of them to whom we speak, require it. I discourse before maidens of the indiscreet familiarities of such and such which are manifestly dangerous, the extravagances of this or that person in speeches or gestures which are plainly unbecoming. If I reprehend not freely this evil, but rather excuse it, these tender souls who hear me will take occasion to let themselves loose to some such mischief. Their profit then requires that I freely reprehend things at the instant, unless I may discreetly reserve this good office to a better opportunity when I may less prejudice those of whom I speak.

10. Moreover it is requisite that it belongs to me to speak on this subject, as when I am of the chief of the company, and that if I speak not it would seem that I approve of the vice; for if I be one of the least then I must not undertake to censure. But above all it is necessary that I be exactly just in my discourse, and not say one word too much. For example, if I blame the familiarity of this young man and that young maid, because it is too indiscreet and dangerous, *Philothea*, I must hold the balance so even as not to make the fault heavier, no not one grain: if there be but only a weak

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appearance, I will say no more ; if but a mere indiscretion, I will give it no worse name ; if neither indiscretion nor probable appearance of evil, but that some malicious spirit may have from thence taken occasion to speak ill, I will say so, or nothing at all. My tongue, while I judge my neighbour, is in my mouth like a razor in the hand of a surgeon that would cut between the sinews and the muscles. The blow I give must be so just that I say neither more nor less than the exact truth. In fine, it must be our principal care in blaming vice, to spare as much as may be the person in whom it is.

11. It is true that of infamous, public and notorious sinners we may speak freely, so that it be with the spirit of charity and compassion, and not in arrogancy and presumption, nor to please ourselves in the misfortunes of others, which latter is always the part of a poor and abject heart. I except always the declared enemies of God and His Church ; for those we must disparage as much as we can, as all sects of heretics, schismatics, and their leaders : it is charity to cry against the wolf when he is among the sheep, yea, wherever he is.

12. Every one takes the liberty to censure princes, and speak ill of whole nations, according to the diversity of affections that men bear them. *Philothea*, commit not this fault ; for besides the offence to God, it may raise you up a thousand sorts of quarrels.

13. When you hear any detraction, make the accusation doubtful if you can do it justly, if not, excuse the intention of the party censured ; if that cannot be done, show compassion towards his frailty, divert the discourse, remembering, and putting your hearers in mind that they who offend not owe all the thanks of it to God. Recall the detractor to himself by some mild way, and speak some good of the party slandered, if you know any.

IMITATION—BK. I., CH. XIV.—OF AVOIDING RASH JUDGMENT.

1. Turn thine eyes back upon thyself, and see that thou judge not the doings of others. In judging others a man toileth in vain, often erreth, and easily sinneth ; but in judging and scrutinising himself, he always laboureth with profit.

LESSON XL. OF SELF-CONSIDERATION.

We often judge of a thing according as we have it at heart ; for true judgment is easily lost through private affection. If God were always the only object of our desire, we should not be so easily disturbed at our own opinions being resisted.

2. But oftentimes there is something lying hid within, or occurring from without, that draws us along with it. Many secretly seek themselves in what they do, and are not aware of it. They seem also to continue in good peace, so long as things are done according to their will and judgment ; but if aught happen otherwise than they desire, they are soon disturbed, and become sad. Too often difference of feelings and opinions giveth rise to dissensions between friends and neighbours, between religious and devout persons.

3. An inveterate habit is with difficulty relinquished, and no one is willingly led beyond his own views. If thou reliest more on thine own reason or industry than on the subduing virtue of Jesus Christ, thou wilt seldom and with difficulty become an enlightened man. For God willeth us to become perfectly subject to Himself, and by the love that burneth in us to transcend all reason.

BK. II., CH. V.—OF SELF-CONSIDERATION.

1. We must not trust too much to ourselves ; for grace and understanding are often wanting to us. There is in us but little light, and this we soon lose by negligence. Oftentimes we are quite unconscious how interiorly blind we are. We often do amiss, and do worse in excusing ourselves. Sometimes we are moved by passion, and think it zeal. We blame little things in others, and overlook great things in ourselves. We are quick enough in perceiving and weighing what we bear from others ; but we think little of what others have to bear from us. He that should well and justly weigh his own doings would find little cause to judge harshly of another.

2. The interior man regardeth the care of himself before all other cares ; and he that looketh diligently to himself findeth it easy to be silent about others. Thou wilt never be interior and devout unless thou pass over in silence other men's concerns and look especially to thyself. If thou attend wholly to thyself and to God, what thou seest abroad will affect thee but little. Where art thou when thou art not present to thyself ? And when thou hast run over all things, what hath

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it profited thee if thou have neglected thyself? If thou wouldst have true peace and perfect union, thou must cast all things else aside, and keep thy eyes upon thyself alone.

3. Thou wilt make great progress if thou keep thyself free from every temporal anxiety. Thou wilt fall back exceedingly, if thou make account of anything temporal. Let there be nothing great, nothing high, nothing pleasant, nothing acceptable to thee but only God Himself, or what comes from God. Think it all vanity, whatever consolation thou mayest meet with from any creature. The soul that loveth God despiseth all things that are less than God. God only, the eternal and infinite, who filleth all things, is the solace of the soul and the true joy of the heart.

BK. III., CH. XXIV.—OF AVOIDING CURIOUS INQUIRY RESPECTING THE LIFE OF OTHERS.

1. Son, be not curious, and give not way to useless cares. What is this or that to thee? follow thou Me. For what is it to thee whether that man be such or such, or whether this man do or speak this or that? Thou dost not need to answer for others, but for thyself thou shalt give an account: why, therefore, dost thou meddle with them? Behold, I know all men, and see all things that are done under the sun; and I know how it is with every one, what he thinks, what he would have, and at what his intention aims. To Me, therefore, are all things to be committed; but do thou keep thyself in stable peace, and let the unquiet be as unquiet as he will. Whatsoever he shall do or say will come upon himself, because he cannot deceive Me.

2. Be not solicitous for the shadow of a great name, nor for acquaintance with many, nor for the particular love of individuals. For these things beget distractions and great darkness in the heart. I would gladly speak My word to thee, and reveal My secrets, if thou wouldst diligently observe My coming, and open to Me the door of thy heart. Be circumspect, and watch in prayers, and humble thyself in all things.

LESSON XLI.

**Other Advices touching Discourse : Of Avoiding Disputes :
That we should not Believe all, and how easily we Err
in Speech : Of having Confidence in God when Arrows
of Words are aimed against us.**

TEXTS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

If any man speak, let him speak as the words of God.—1 Pet. iv. 11.

For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile. Let him decline from evil, and do good: let him seek after peace, and pursue it.—1 Pet. iii. 10.

But if you have bitter zeal, and there be contentions in your hearts; glory not, and be not liars against the truth. For this is not wisdom, descending from above: but earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and contention is, there is inconstancy, and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above, first indeed is chaste, then peaceable, modest, easy to be persuaded, consenting to the good, full of mercy and good fruits, without judging, without dissimulation. And the fruit of justice is sown in peace, to them that make peace.—James iii. 14.

For every nature of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of the rest is tamed and hath been tamed by the nature of man. But the tongue no man can tame, an unquiet evil, full of deadly poison.—James iii. 7.

Remember my word that I said to you: The servant is not greater than his master. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you: if they have kept my word, they will keep yours also.—John xv. 20.

These words teach—1, That rules of wisdom and prudence must be observed in discourse; 2, that contentions must be avoided; 3, that faults are easily committed; 4, that the sharp shafts of words should be borne patiently, after the example of Christ. Hereon each of your masters has practical advice for you.

LESSON XLI. OF DISCOURSE.

INTRODUCTION—PT. III., CH. XXX.—OTHER ADVICES TOUCHING DISCOURSE.

1. Let your language be courteous, sincere, plain, innocent, and faithful; take heed of dissimulation and deceit; for though it is not always good to tell all sorts of truth, yet it is never lawful to oppose the truth. Never accustom yourself to lie wittingly, neither by way of excuse nor otherwise, remembering always that God is the God of truth. If you tell a lie unawares, and can correct it at the instant, either by some explication or reparation, fail not to do it; a true excuse has much more grace and force than a lie.

2. Though a man may sometimes prudently and discreetly disguise and cover a truth by some sleight of discourse, yet must that not be used but in matters of importance, when the glory and service of God manifestly requires it. In any other case such craft is dangerous, for as the Holy Scripture saith, *The Holy Ghost dwells not in a dissembling and double spirit* (Wis. i. 5). No cunning is so good as plain dealing. Worldly wisdom and carnal craft belong to the children of this world, but the children of God walk uprightly, and their heart is free from guile. *He that walketh innocently, says the Wise man, walketh confidently* (Prov. x. 9). Lying, double-dealing, and dissembling, are always signs of a weak and poor spirit. *S. Augustine* had said in the fourth Book of his Confessions, *that his soul and that of his friend were but one soul, and that his life was tedious to him after the death of his friend, because he could not live by halves; and yet that for the same cause he was unwilling to die, lest his friend should die wholly.* These words afterwards seemed to him too artificial and affected, insomuch that he revokes them in the Book of his Retractions, and calls them folly. Thou seest, dear *Philothea*, how tender this holy soul was of affectation in speech. Surely fidelity, plainness, and sincerity, are great ornaments to a Christian life. *I have said I will take heed to my ways, that I offend not in my tongue* (Ps. xxxviii. 2). *Set, O Lord, a watch before my mouth, and a door which may shut my lips* (Ps. cxl. 3), says David. It is an advice of the holy king *S. Louis* to contradict no man, unless it were either sin, or great prejudice to consent to him, and this is to avoid all quarrels and disputes. But when it is

LESSON XLI. OF AVOIDING EXTERIOR THINGS.

necessary to contradict, or be of an opinion contrary to that of another man, use great mildness and dexterity without forcing his spirit, for nothing is gained by rude contradiction.

3. To speak little, which is so much recommended by our wise forefathers, is not to be understood that we must speak few words, but few unprofitable words; for in this matter of discourse we regard not so much the quantity as the quality, and in my opinion we ought to fly both extremes. For to be reserved and severe, refusing to contribute to the familiar discourse used in conversation, argues either distrust or disdain; and on the other side, to prate and babble always, and give neither leisure nor opportunity to others to speak in turn, savours of shallowness and levity.

4. *S. Louis* held it not good to whisper in company, especially at the table, lest it should give occasion to others to suspect that ill is spoken of them. *He that is at table*, said he, *in good company, and has anything merry and pleasant to utter, let him speak that all the company may hear him; if it be a thing of importance, let him not speak of it at all.*

IMITATION—BK. III., CH. XLIV.—OF NOT DRAWING TO OURSELVES EXTERIOR THINGS.

1. Son, in many things it behoveth thee to be ignorant, and to esteem thyself as dead upon earth, and as one to whom the whole world is crucified. Many things also must thou pass by with a deaf ear, and think rather of the things that are for thy peace. It is more profitable to turn away thine eyes from such things as displease thee, and leave to every one his own way of thinking, than to give a loose to contentious discourses. If thou standest well with God, and regardest His judgment, thou wilt more easily bear to be overcome.

2. O Lord, to what are we come? behold, a temporal loss is bewailed: for a small gain men labour and run; but spiritual detriment is soon forgotten, and hardly ever returns to mind. That which is of little or no profit taketh up our thoughts, and that which is necessary above all is negligently passed over: for the whole man sinketh down into outward things, and unless he quickly recovereth himself, he willingly continueth immersed in external things.

LESSON XLI. OF PRUDENCE IN DISCOURSE.

CH. XLV.—THAT WE MAY NOT BELIEVE ALL, AND HOW EASILY WE ERR IN SPEECH.

1. *Grant me help, O Lord, in my tribulation, for vain is the aid of man* (Ps. lix. 3). How often have I not found faithfulness there where I thought I might depend upon it! And how often have I there found it where I the less expected it! Vain therefore is hope in man; but the salvation of the just is in Thee, O God. Blessed be Thou, O Lord my God, in all things that befall us. We are weak and unsteadfast; we are easily deceived and changed.

2. Who is the man that is able to keep himself so warily and so circumspectly in all things, as not sometimes to fall into delusion or perplexity? But he that trusteth in Thee, O Lord, and seeketh Thee with a simple heart, doth not so easily fall. And shall he perchance fall into some tribulation, how entangled soever he be therewith, he will the sooner be rescued or comforted by Thee; for Thou wilt not for ever forsake him that trusteth in Thee. Rare indeed is a faithful friend who will persevere in all the pressing necessities of his friend. Thou, O Lord, Thou alone art most faithful in all things, and besides Thee there is no other such.

3. Oh, how wise was that holy soul that said, My mind is solidly established and grounded upon Christ. Were it so with me, human fear would not so easily give me anxiety, nor the arrows of men's words move me. Who is sufficient to foresee all things? or to provide against future evils? If things foreseen do yet often hurt us, how can things unlooked for do otherwise than grievously wound us? But why have I not better provided for my wretched self? Why also have I so easily placed my confidence in others? But we are men; and no other indeed than frail men, although by many we are esteemed and called angels. To whom shall I give credit, O Lord? Whom shall I believe but Thee? Thou art the Truth, which can neither deceive nor be deceived. And again: every man is a liar, weak, unstable, and subject to fail, especially in words; so that we ought not readily to believe even that which in appearance seemeth to sound well.

4. How wisely didst Thou forewarn us to take heed of men, and that a man's enemies are those of his own household; that we are not to believe if any one should say,

LESSON XLI. OF TRUST IN GOD.

Behold here, or behold there. I have been taught to my cost, and I wish it may serve to make me more cautious, and not increase my folly. Be wary, saith a certain one ; be wary, keep to thyself what I tell thee. And whilst I keep silence, and believe the matter to be secret, he himself cannot keep the secret which he desireth me to keep, but presently betrayeth both me and himself, and goeth his way. From such foolish speech and such unwary people defend me, O Lord, that I may not fall into their hands, nor ever commit the like. Give to my mouth truth and constancy in my words, and remove far from me a crafty tongue. What I am not willing to suffer I ought by all means to shun.

5. Oh, how good and how peaceful is it to be silent about others, and not to believe all that is said, nor easily to report what one has heard : to lay oneself open to few ; always to seek Thee, the Beholder of the heart : and not to be carried about with every wind of words ; but to wish that all things, both within and without us may be accomplished according to the pleasure of Thy will ! How secure is it for the preservation of heavenly grace, to fly human appearance, not to seek those things that seem to cause admiration abroad ; but with all diligence to follow those things which bring amendment of life and fervour ! To how many hath it been hurtful to have their virtue known, and over-hastily praised ! How indeed hath grace profited when kept with silence during this frail life ! the whole of which is declared to be a temptation and a warfare.

CH. XLVI.—OF HAVING CONFIDENCE IN GOD WHEN ARROWS OF WORDS ARE AIMED AGAINST US.

I. Son, stand firm, and trust in Me ; for what are words but words ? They fly through the air, but hurt not a stone. If thou art guilty, think that thou wilt willingly amend thyself ; if thou art not conscious to thyself of anything, think that thou wilt willingly suffer this for God's sake. It is a small matter that thou shouldst sometimes bear with words, who art not able as yet to endure hard blows. And why do such trifles go to thy heart, but because thou art yet carnal, and regardest men more than thou oughtest ? For because thou art afraid of being despised, thou art not

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willing to be reprehended for thy faults, and seekest shelter in excuses.

2. But look better into thyself, and thou shalt find that the world is still within thee, and a vain fondness for pleasing men. For since thou refusest to be abased and confounded for thy defects, it is plain indeed that thou art neither truly humble, nor dead to the world, nor the world crucified to thee. But give ear to My word, and thou shalt not value ten thousand words of men. Behold if all were said against thee which with the utmost malice could possibly be invented, what hurt could they do thee, if thou wouldst let them all pass, and value them no more than a straw? Could they even so much as pluck one hair from thee!

3. But he who keepeth not his heart interiorly, nor God before his eyes, is easily moved with a word of dispraise. Whereas he that trusteth in Me, and desireth not to stand by his own judgment, will be void of human fear. For I am the Judge and Discerner of all secrets; I know how the matter passeth; I know both him that inflicteth the injury and him that suffereth it. From Me went forth this word, by My permission it happened, that the thoughts of many hearts might be revealed. I will judge the guilty and the innocent; but by a secret judgment I would try them both beforehand.

4. The testimony of men oftentimes deceiveth: but My judgment is true; it shall stand and not be overthrown. It is for the most part hidden, and to few laid open in everything; yet it never erreth, nor can it err, though to the eyes of the unwise it may seem not right. To Me, therefore, must thou run in every decision, and not depend upon thy own judgment. For the just man will not be troubled, whatever happeneth to him from God. And should even some unjust charge be preferred against him, he will not much care; yet neither will he vainly rejoice, if he be reasonably acquitted by others. For he considereth that I am He who searcheth the heart and the reins; who judgeth not according to the face, nor according to human appearance. For oftentimes that is found blameworthy in My eyes which in the judgment of men is esteemed commendable.

5. O Lord God, the just Judge, strong and patient, who knowest the frailty and depravity of men, be Thou my strength and my entire confidence, for my own conscience

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sufficeth me not. Thou knowest that which I know not ; and therefore under every reprehension I ought to humble myself, and bear it with meekness. Pardon me, therefore, in Thy mercy, as often as I have not done thus ; and give me in future the grace of greater long-suffering. For better to me is Thy abundant mercy, for the obtaining of pardon, than my own imaginary justice for the defending of my hidden conscience. And although I am not conscious to myself of anything, yet I cannot hereby justify myself ; for except through Thy mercy, no man living shall in Thy sight be justified.

LESSON XLII. OF FIDELITY.

LESSON XLII.

That we must be Faithful both in Great and Small Occasions: That we must Keep our Mind Just and Reasonable: Of Desires: Of Concealing Grace under the Guardianship of Humility.

TEXTS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in that which is greater: and he that is unjust in that which is little, is unjust also in that which is greater.—Luke xvi. 10.

All things therefore whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you also to them. For this is the law and the prophets—Matt. vii. 12.

This therefore I say, brethren: the time is short: it remaineth, that they also who have wives, be as if they had none: and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as if they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as if they used it not: for the fashion of this world passeth away. But I would have you to be without solicitude.—1 Cor. vii. 29.

Then he saith to them: My soul is sorrowful even unto death: Stay you here, and watch with me. And going a little further, he fell upon his face, praying, and saying: My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.—Matt. xxvi. 38.

These words teach you—1, What ought to be your fidelity to God; 2, your just dealing with your neighbour; 3, that it is vain to cherish and multiply desires, since you should be free from all; 4, that in spiritual aridities you have occasions to imitate Christ. Now listen to your two masters.

INTRODUCTION—PT. III., CH. XXXV.—THAT WE MUST BE FAITHFUL BOTH IN GREAT AND SMALL OCCASIONS.

1. The Sacred Spouse in the *Canticles* says that His Spouse had stolen away His heart with one of her eyes, and one of her hairs. Now among all the exterior parts of man's body none is more noble, be it for the workmanship or for

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the activity, than the eye, none is meaner than the hair. Wherefore the Divine Spouse would have us know that He accepts not only the great works of devout persons, but even the least and the meanest, and that to serve Him according to His liking we must take great care to serve Him well not only in great and high things but also in low and abject : since we may equally by the one and the other rob Him of His heart by love.

2. Prepare yourself then, *Philothea*, to suffer many great afflictions, yea, martyrdom itself, for God's sake. Resolve to give Him all that you esteem most precious, if it shall please Him to take it—father, mother, husband, wife, brother, sister, children, yea, even your own eyes and your life ; for to all this you ought to prepare your heart. But while His Divine providence sends you not afflictions so sensible and heavy, and requires not your eyes, at least give Him your hair. I mean, suffer meekly small injuries, such little inconveniences and inconsiderable losses as daily happen ; for by the means of such little occasions, managed with love and charity, you shall gain His heart entirely and make it your own. These little daily charities, this headache, this toothache, this rheum, this humour of a husband or wife, this breaking of a glass, this contempt, or that scorn, this loss of a pair of gloves, of a ring, a handkerchief, any little inconvenience in going late to bed, and rising early to pray, to communicate, the little shamefacedness we have in doing some acts of devotion in public, briefly all these little sufferings, accepted and embraced for the love of God, infinitely please His Divine goodness who for one glass of water has promised the ocean of felicity to His servants ; and because these occasions offer themselves every moment, the well managing of them will be a great means to heap up spiritual treasures.

3. When I read in the life of *S. Catherine of Siena*, so many raptures and elevations of spirit, so many wise sayings, and even sermons made by her, I doubt not but that, with this fair eye of contemplation, she had stolen away the heart of her Heavenly Spouse ; but I was no less pleased to find her in her father's kitchen turning the spit, mending the fire, dressing the meat, kneading the bread, and doing the meanest offices of the house with courage, full of love and charity towards God. And I esteem no less the little and humble

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meditations she made amidst these mean employments than the ecstasies and raptures she so often had, which, peradventure, were given her only in recompence of this humility and abjection. Now her meditations were like this: when she prepared the meat for her father, she imagined that she prepared it for our Saviour, like *S. Martha*, and that her mother was in place of our Blessed Lady, and her brothers instead of the Apostles; in this sort exciting herself to serve in spirit all the court of heaven, and employing herself with great delight in such low service, because she knew it was God's will. I have brought this example, *Philothea*, that you may know of what importance it is, rightly to direct all your actions, be they never so mean, to the service of His Divine Majesty.

4. Wherefore I earnestly counsel you to imitate the courageous woman whom the great *Solomon* so highly commends. She set her hand, as he says, to high, generous, and important things, and yet disdained not to handle the distaff and spindle. Put your hands to great things, exercising yourself in prayer and meditation, and frequenting the Sacraments, endeavouring to excite the love of God in souls, to infuse good inspirations into hearts, and, in a word, to do great and excellent good works according to your calling; but withal, forget not your distaff and spindle, that is, practise these low and humble virtues which, like flowers, grow at the foot of the Cross, as serving the poor, visiting the sick, care of your family with the works depending thereupon, and use herein all profitable diligence which will keep you from idleness. And among all these things mingle such considerations as I have related above of *S. Catherine*.

5. Great occasions of serving God present themselves but seldom, but little ones are ordinary. *Now he that shall be faithful in small matters*, says our Saviour, *shall be set over great things*. Do all things, then, in the name of God, and they will be well done. Whether you eat, drink, sleep, recreate yourself, or turn the spit, so you know how to manage your business well, you will profit much in the sight of God, doing all these things because God wills that you should do them.

LESSON XLII. OF BEING EVEN-MINDED.

CH. XXXVI.—THAT WE MUST KEEP OUR MIND JUST AND REASONABLE.

1. We are not men but by our reason, and yet it is a rare thing to find men who are truly reasonable; because self-love ordinarily decoys us away from reason, leading us insensibly to a thousand kinds of small yet dangerous injustices and partialities which, like the little foxes of the Canticles, destroy the vines; for because they are little we regard them not, and because they are many they cannot but greatly injure us.

2. Are not the things of which I am now about to speak unjust and unreasonable? We accuse our neighbours in small matters, and excuse ourselves in great; we would sell very dear, and buy very cheap; we desire that justice should be executed in another man's house, but mercy and connivance in our own. Our words must be well taken, but we are captious and touchy at those of others. We would have our neighbour leave us his goods, taking our money, but is it not more reasonable that he should keep his goods and leave us our money? We take it ill that he will not accommodate us, has he not more reason to be displeased with us for desiring to incommode him?

3. If we affect one exercise, we despise all others, and quarrel with everything that pleases not our own fancy. If there be any of our inferiors who have not pleasing manners, or to whom we have once taken a dislike, do he what he will, we take it in ill part, and never cease to vex and perplex him. On the contrary, if any man please us by a more agreeable behaviour, he can do nothing but we will excuse it. There are virtuous children whom their parents can scarce abide to look upon, because of some bodily imperfection. There are vicious children that are their favourites for some corporal handsomeness. In all things we prefer the rich before the poor, although they be neither of better condition nor so virtuous, nay, we prefer them that are best clad. We desire to have our own dues exactly, but that others should be gentle in demanding theirs. We keep our own rank very precisely, but would have others humble and complying. We complain easily of our neighbour, but none must complain of us. What we do for others always seems

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to us very much, but what others do for us seems nothing. In a word, we are like the partridges in *Paphlagonia*, which have two hearts; for we have one heart mild, favourable, and courteous towards ourselves, and another heart hard, severe, and rigorous towards our neighbour; we have two balances, one to weigh our own commodities with all advantage possible, the other to weigh those of our neighbours with as much disadvantage as we can. The Scripture says, *Deceitful lips have spoken in heart and heart* (Ps. xi. 2), that is to say, they have two hearts; and they have two weights, the one heavy wherewith to receive, and the other light wherewith to give, which is abominable in the sight of God.

4. *Philothea*, be equal and just in your actions, set yourself always in your neighbour's place, and put him in yours, and so shall you judge aright. Make yourself the seller in buying, and the buyer in selling, and you shall be sure to sell and buy justly. All these injustices are small, because they oblige not to restitution, inasmuch as we exceed not the limits of rigour in what is for our advantage, but they cease not to oblige us to mend them; for they are great defects in reason and charity, and when all is done, they are but mere fancied gain. For a man loses nothing by living generously, nobly, and freely, with a royal, upright, and liberal heart. Forget not then, *Philothea*, often to examine if your heart be such towards your neighbour as you would have his towards you if you were in his place, for this is the touchstone of true reason. *Trajan* being blamed by his friends for making the imperial majesty too accessible, said, *And ought I not to be such an emperor towards private men as I would desire an emperor to be towards me, if I were a private man myself?*

CH. XXXVII.—OF DESIRES.

I. Every one knows that we ought to refrain from desiring vicious things, for the desire of evil makes us evil. But I say yet more. *Philothea*, desire not those things which are dangerous to the soul, as dancing, gaming, and other such pastimes, nor honours, nor offices, nor visions and ecstasies; for there is much danger, vanity, and deceit in such things. Desire not things which are far off; that is, such as cannot happen in a long time, as many do, who thereby weary and distract their hearts unprofitably, and put themselves in

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danger of great disquiet. If a young man desire earnestly to be provided with some office before the time come, to what purpose, I pray, serves this? If a married woman desire to be a nun, to what purpose? If I desire to buy my neighbour's goods before he desire to sell them, lose I not my labour in this desire? If being sick I desire to preach, or to say mass, to visit others that are sick, and to perform the exercises of those who are in health, are not these vain desires, since it is not then in my power to effect them? And in the meantime these unprofitable desires fill up the place of others which I should have, of being patient, resigned, well mortified, very obedient, meek and mild in adversities, which is what God would have me to practise at that time. But our desires commonly are like whimsical women's, who long for cherries in autumn and grapes in the spring.

2. I can no way approve that persons engaged in any employment and vocation should dream of desiring any other kind of life than that which agrees with their duty, or busy themselves in exercises incompatible with their present condition; for this consumes the heart, and makes it unfit for its necessary duties. If I desire the solitude of a *Carthusian*, I lose my time, for this desire supplies the place of that which I ought to have to employ myself well in my present office. No, neither would I that one should desire better wit, or better judgment. For these desires are but vain, and fill the place of that which every one ought to have of managing his own, such as it is. Nor would I that a man should desire those means of serving God which he has not, but that he faithfully employ those which he has. Now, this is to be understood of desires which distract the heart; for simple wishes, if they be not too frequent, do no harm at all.

3. Desire not crosses except in proportion to the patience wherewith you have supported those which have been already sent you. For it is an abuse to desire martyrdom, and not have the courage to bear an injury. The enemy often provokes us to ardent desires of things absent and such as we shall never obtain, thereby to divert us from present objects, wherein, how mean soever, we might much profit ourselves. We fight with the monsters of *Africa* in imagination, and in the meantime, for want of attention, we suffer ourselves in effect to be slain by the little serpents that lie in the path. Desire not temptations, for that were rashness; but employ

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your heart to expect them courageously, and to defend yourself from them when they shall come.

4. Variety of meats, especially if the quantity be great, always overcharges the stomach, and if it be weak destroys it. Overcharge not your soul with a multitude of thoughts, neither worldly, for those will ruin you, nor yet spiritual, for these will perplex you. When the soul is purged, and finds herself free from ill humours, she has an earnest appetite for spiritual things, and as if she were famished sets her desire on a thousand sorts of exercises of piety, of mortification, of penance, of humility, of charity, and of prayer. *Philothea*, it is a good sign to have so good an appetite ; but consider whether you can well digest all that you desire to eat. Choose, then, by advice of your ghostly father, amongst so many desires those which may be practised, and put them presently in execution, and make your uttermost profit of them ; that done, God will send you others, which you shall also practise in their seasons, and so not lose your time in unprofitable desires. I say not that we should lose any good desire, but that we should produce them in order : so that those which cannot presently be effected may be locked up in some corner of our heart till their time come, and in the interim we may practise those which are already ripe and in season. This I speak not only for religious persons, but also for seculars, for without this we cannot live but in great solicitude and unquietness.

IMITATION.—BK. III., CH. VII.—OF CONCEALING GRACE
UNDER THE GUARDIANSHIP OF HUMILITY.

I. My son, it is both more advantageous and more secure for thee to keep secret the grace of devotion and not to extol thyself, nor to talk much about it, nor to ponder it overmuch ; but rather to despise thyself the more, and to tremble as if it were given to one unworthy. Thou must not tenaciously cleave to this affection which may quickly be changed into the contrary. Think with thyself, when thou hast grace, how miserable and poor thou art wont to be when deprived of it. Nor doth progress in spiritual life consist so much in having the grace of consolation as in bearing the withdrawal of it with humility, self-abnegation, and patience ; so as not then to grow remiss in the exercise of prayer, nor to suffer thyself

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to relax from any of thy accustomed good works, but according to thy ability and understanding to do willingly what lieth in thee, and not through any dryness or anxiety of mind which thou feelest, wholly to neglect thyself.

2. For many there are who, when things succeed not well with them, presently grow impatient or slothful. Now the way of man is not always in his own power, but it belongeth to God to give and to console when He willeth, as much as He willeth, and whom He will, just as it shall please Him, and no more. Some, from want of caution, have ruined themselves by reason of the grace of devotion; because they were for doing more than they could, not weighing well the measure of their own littleness, but following the affection of the heart rather than the judgment of reason. And as they presumptuously undertook greater things than were pleasing to God, therefore they quickly lost grace. Needy they became, and miserably abandoned, who had built themselves a nest in heaven; to the end that, thus humbled and impoverished, they might learn not to fly with their own pinions, but to trust under My wings. Such as are yet but novices, and inexperienced in the way of the Lord, unless they govern themselves by the counsel of the discreet, may easily be deceived and lost.

3. And if they will rather follow their own judgment than believe others who have more experience, their end will be perilous, should they still refuse to be withdrawn from their own conceits. The self-wise rarely allow themselves humbly to be ruled by others. Better is it to have but little knowledge with humility and a weak capacity, than great stores of learning with vain complacency. Better is it to have little than much, whereof thou mightest be proud. He acts not with sufficient discretion who giveth himself up wholly to joy, forgetting his former poverty, and the chaste fear of the Lord which feareth to lose grace that is proffered. Neither is he virtuously enough wise who, in time of adversity or any tribulation whatsoever, conducteth himself too despairingly, and thinketh of and repositeth less confidingly in Me than he ought.

4. He who is too secure in time of peace, will often be found too much dejected and fearful in time of war. If thou couldst always continue humble and little in thine own eyes, and keep thy spirit in due order and subjection, thou wouldst

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not fall so easily into danger and offence. It is good counsel, that when thou hast conceived the spirit of fervour, thou shouldst meditate how it will be with thee when that light shall be withdrawn. And when this shall happen, remember that the light may return again, which for a caution to thee, and for My glory, I have withdrawn for a time.

5. Such a trial is oftentimes more profitable than if thou wert always to have prosperity according to thy will. For a man's merits are not to be estimated by his having many visions or consolations, or by his knowledge of Scripture, or by his being placed in a more elevated station ; but by his being grounded in true humility and replenished with Divine charity ; by his seeking always, purely and entirely, the honour of God ; by his esteeming himself to be nothing, and by his sincerely despising himself, and being better pleased to be despised and humbled by others than to be honoured by them.

LESSON XLIII. DISREGARDING THE WORLD'S TALK

LESSON XLIII.

That we must not Regard the Discourse of the Children of the World: That we must Always have a Good Courage: Against the Vain Judgments of Men: In what Firm Peace and True Progress consist.

TEXTS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

But the sensual man perceiveth not these things that are of the Spirit of God: for it is foolishness to him, and he cannot understand: because it is spiritually examined.—1 Cor. ii. 14.

Then came his disciples, and said to him: Dost thou know that the Pharisees, when they heard this word, were scandalized? But he answering said: Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they are blind, and leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both fall into the pit.—Matt. xv. 12.

Think diligently upon him that endured such opposition from sinners against himself, that you be not wearied, fainting in your minds. For you have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.—Heb. xii. 3.

But to me it is a very small thing to be judged by you, or by man's day; but neither do I judge my own self. For I am not conscious to myself of anything, yet am I not hereby justified; but he that judgeth me is the Lord.—1 Cor. iv. 3.

These words tell you—1, What to expect from the judgment of men; 2, how to behave with regard to it; 3, that your courage should not falter, but rather increase with contradiction. Each master has advice for you on this matter.

INTRODUCTION—PT. IV., CH. I.—THAT WE MUST NOT REGARD THE DISCOURSE OF THE CHILDREN OF THE WORLD.

I. As soon as the children of this world shall perceive you desire to lead a devout life, they will discharge against you a thousand arrows of idle tales and detractions. The most malicious will brand your change with hypocrisy, dissimulation, and superstition. They will tell you that because

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the world looks ill upon you and is not your friend, you presently run to God. Your friends will strain themselves to make you a world of remonstrances, very wise and charitable as they imagine. They will tell you you will fall into some melancholy humour ; you will lose your credit in the world and render yourself unsociable ; you will grow old before your time ; your domestic affairs will suffer thereby ; you must live in the world as one in the world, and salvation may be obtained without so many mysteries, and a thousand such-like impertinences.

2. *Philothea*, all this is but vain and foolish prattling. These people regard neither your health nor business. *If you were of the world*, says our Blessed Saviour, *the world would love its own ; but because you are not of the world, therefore the world hateth you* (John xv. 19). We see gentlemen and ladies pass a whole night, nay, many nights together, at cards and chess, and is there any attention more dull or melancholy than that ? And yet worldlings say not a word, friends never trouble themselves ; but for one hour's meditation, or rising in the morning a little earlier than ordinary to prepare ourselves for communion, every one runs to the physician to cure us of hypochondriac humours and the jaundice. We may spend thirty nights in dancing, and none complains of it ; but for watching one Christmas night, every one coughs and complains of cholic the next morning. Who sees not that the world is an unjust judge—favourable and partial to its own children, sharp and rigorous to the children of God ?

3. We can never be upon good terms with the world but in casting away ourselves with it ; it is impossible for us to content it, it is too fantastical. *John came neither eating nor drinking*, says our Saviour, *and ye say the devil is in him. The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and ye say, Behold a glutton, and a drinker of wine* (Luke vii. 33). It is most true, *Philothea*, if we comply with the world, and give ourselves a liberty to laugh, to dance, and to play with it, it will be scandalized ; if we do not so, it will accuse us of hypocrisy or melancholy. If we make ourselves brave, the world will interpret it to some ill end ; if we are carefully clad, it will account us mean and abject spirits. Our mirth will be called dissolution, our mortification sullenness, and looking upon us with a malicious eye, we can never be acceptable to it. It aggravates our imperfections, publishing them for

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sins ; our venial sins, it makes mortal, and those of frailty it raises to sins of malice. Where *charity is benign*, as *S. Paul* says, the world is malicious ; where charity judges ill of none, the world, on the contrary, judges ill of all ; and when unable to accuse our actions, it accuses our intentions : have the sheep horns or no, be they white or black, the wolf will not spare to devour them if he can.

4. Do what we can, the world will still oppose us ; if we be long at confession, it will wonder how we can have so much to say ; if we stay but awhile, it will say we have not confessed all ; it will observe all our motions, and for one only little word of choler, it will protest that we are insupportable. The care of our affairs will seem to it covetousness, and our meekness silliness ; but as for the children of the world their choler is generosity, their avarice is good husbandry, their familiarities honourable entertainment. Spiders always destroy the work of the bees.

5. Let us let alone this blind world, *Philothea* ; let it cry as long as it will, like an owl, to disquiet the birds of the day. Let us be firm in our designs, constant in our resolutions, our perseverance will demonstrate whether it be in good earnest that we have sacrificed ourselves to God, and reduced ourselves to a devout life. Comets and planets are almost of an equal brightness in appearance, but comets soon vanish away, being but flying fires, whereas planets have a lasting clearness. So hypocrisy and true virtue have a great resemblance in show, but one is easily known from the other, because hypocrisy lasts not long, vanishing like smoke, but true virtue is always firm and constant.

6. It is no small help towards the securing of our devotion, to suffer reproaches and calumny in the beginning of it ; for by that means we avoid the danger of pride and vainglory, which are like midwives of *Egypt*, appointed by the infernal *Pharaoh*, to kill the male children of the *Israelites* the very day of their birth. We are crucified to the world, let the world be crucified to us. It accounts us fools, let us esteem it mad.

CH. II.—THAT WE MUST ALWAYS HAVE A GOOD COURAGE.

1. Light, though it be most beautiful and delectable to our eyes, dazzles them, notwithstanding, after they have been long in darkness. And before we are grown familiar with

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the inhabitants of any country, let them be never so courteous and friendly, we find ourselves somewhat strange amongst them. It may be, *Philothea*, that upon this change of life, divers reluctances will arise in your heart, and that this great and general farewell, which you have given to the follies and vanities of the world, will cause in you some sadness and discouragement. If that happen, have a little patience, I pray, for it will come to nothing ; it is but a little strangeness which novelty brings you ; let that pass over, and you shall receive a million of consolations.

2. It will trouble you at first, it may be, to forsake that glory which fools and flatterers gave you in your vanities ; but would you lose that eternity of true glory which God will give you ? The vain trifles and pastimes in which you employed your former years will present themselves again to your heart, to entice it, and to cause it to return to them, but can you renounce this blessed eternity for such deceitful trash ? Believe me, if you persevere, you will quickly find sweetness so heartfelt, so pleasant and delicious, that you will confess that the world has nothing but gall in comparison of this honey, and that one day of devotion is better worth than a thousand years of a worldly life.

3. But you see that the mountain of Christian perfection is exceeding high. O my God, say you, how shall I be able to climb up it ? Courage ! *Philothea*, when the little young bees begin to take shape, we call them nymphs, and then they cannot fly to the sweet flowers, or to the hills and neighbouring mountains to gather honey ; but by little and little, feeding on the honey which the old ones prepare for them, these little young ones get wings and strengthen themselves, so that afterwards they fly to gain their living all over the country. It is true we are now but little bees in devotion, and not able to fly up so high as we desire, which is even to the height of Christian perfection, but yet we begin to take shape by our desires and resolutions, and our wings begin to grow. We must then hope that we shall be one day spiritual bees and able to fly ; in the meantime, let us live upon the honey of the many good instructions which ancient devout persons have left us, and pray God to give us wings like the dove, that we may not only fly during the time of this present life, but also rest in the eternity of that to come.

LESSON XLIII. OF THE VAIN JUDGMENTS OF MEN.

IMITATION—BK. III., CH. XXXVI.—AGAINST THE VAIN
JUDGMENTS OF MEN.

1. Son, cast thy heart firmly on the Lord, and fear not human judgment, whensoever thy conscience gives testimony of thy piety and innocence. It is a good and blessed thing to suffer in such manner; neither will this be grievous to a humble man, nor to one that trusteth in God more than in himself. Many say many things, and therefore little credit must be given to them. Neither is it possible to satisfy all. Though Paul endeavoured to please all in the Lord, and became all to all, yet he made little account of being judged by man.

2. He laboured abundantly for the edification and salvation of others, as much as lay in him and as much as he could; but he could not prevent being sometimes judged and despised by others. Therefore he committed all to God who knoweth all, and defended himself by patience and humility against the tongues of those that spoke unjustly, as well as those who devised vain and lying deceits, and who, according to caprice, made accusation of whatever they wished. However, he answered them sometimes, lest his silence might give occasion of scandal to the weak.

3. *Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a mortal man?* (Isa. li. 12). To-day he is, and to-morrow he is no more seen. Fear God, and thou shalt not be afraid of the terrors of man. What can any one do against thee by words or injuries? He rather hurts himself than thee; nor will he be able, whoever he be, to escape the judgment of God. Have God before thine eyes, and do not contend with querulous words. So that if at present thou seem to be overcome, and to suffer a confusion which thou hast not deserved, do not repine at this, and do not lessen thy crown by impatience, but rather look up to Me in heaven, who am able to deliver thee from all confusion and injury, and *to render to every one according to his works* (Rom. ii. 6).

BK. III., CH. XXV.—IN WHAT FIRM PEACE OF THE HEART
AND TRUE PROGRESS DOTH CONSIST.

1. Son, I have said, Peace I leave to you, My Peace I give to you; not as the world giveth do I give to you.

LESSON XLIII. OF PEACE AND PROGRESS.

Peace all desire ; but all care not for those things which appertain to true peace. My peace is with the humble and meek of heart ; thy peace shall be in much patience. If thou wilt hear Me, and follow My voice, thou mayest enjoy much peace.

2. What, then, shall I do, Lord ?

3. In everything attend to thyself, what thou art doing, and what thou art saying ; and direct thy whole attention to this, that thou mayest please Me alone, and neither desire nor seek anything out of Me. And as for the sayings or doings of others, judge nothing rashly, neither busy thyself with things not committed to thy care ; and thus may it be brought about, that thou shalt be little or seldom disturbed. But never to feel any grief at all, nor to suffer any trouble of heart or body, is not the state of this present life, but of everlasting rest. Think not, therefore, that thou hast found true peace, if thou feel no burden ; nor that then all is well, if thou have no adversary ; nor that thou hast attained to perfection, if all things be done according to thy inclination. Neither do thou then conceive a great notion of thyself, or imagine thyself to be especially beloved, if thou experience great devotion and sweetness ; for it is not in such things as these that a true lover of virtue is known ; nor doth the progress and perfection of a man consist in these things.

4. In what, then, O Lord ?

5. In offering thyself with thy whole heart to the Divine will ; not seeking the things that are thine either in little or great, either in time or in eternity. So that with the same equal countenance thou continue giving thanks both in prosperity and adversity, weighing all things in an equal balance. If thou comest to be so valiant and longsuffering in hope, that when interior comfort is withdrawn thou canst prepare thy heart to suffer still more, and dost not justify thyself, as if thou oughtest not to suffer such and so great things, but acknowledgest Me to be just in all My appointments, and praisest My holy Name, then it is that thou walkest in the true and right way of peace, and mayest entertain an undoubting hope to see My face again with great joy. And if thou arrive at an entire contempt of thyself, know that then thou shalt enjoy an abundance of peace, as much as is possible in this thy earthly sojourn.

LESSON XLIV. OF TEMPTATIONS.

LESSON XLIV.

Of the Nature of Temptations, and the Difference between Feeling them and Consenting to them: Of the Advantage of Adversity: Of Resisting Temptations.

TEXTS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

I find then a law, that when I have a will to do good, evil is present with me. For I am delighted with the law of God, according to the inward man: but I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind, and captivating me in the law of sin, that is in my members. Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? The grace of God by Jesus Christ our Lord.—Rom. vii. 21.

And lest the greatness of the revelations should lift me up, there was given me a sting of my flesh, an angel of Satan to buffet me. For which thing thrice I besought the Lord, that it might depart from me: and he said to me: My grace is sufficient for thee: for power is made perfect in infirmity. Gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may dwell in me.—2 Cor. xii. 7.

For we have not a high-priest, who cannot have compassion on our infirmities: but one tempted in all things like as we are, without sin. Let us go therefore with confidence to the throne of grace: that we may obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid.—Heb. iv. 15.

For in that, wherein he himself hath suffered and been tempted, he is able to succour them also that are tempted.—Heb. ii. 18.

Finally, brethren, be strengthened in the Lord, and in the might of his power. . . . For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood: but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places. Therefore take unto you the armour of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and to stand in all things perfect. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breast-plate of justice. And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace: in all things taking the shield of faith, wherewith you may be able to extinguish all the fiery darts of the most wicked one. And take unto you the helmet of salvation: and the sword of the Spirit (which is the word of God).—Eph. vi. 10.

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These words show you that temptation must be endured by all ; and they state for what purpose God permits it. The example of our Divine Master ought to animate His disciples, and make them take up their spiritual arms. Your two teachers give detailed instructions for the actual conflict, discovering the snares of the foe, and showing you how to handle your weapons.

INTRODUCTION—PT. III., CH. III.—OF THE NATURE OF TEMPTATIONS, AND THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FEELING THEM AND CONSENTING TO THEM.

1. Figure to yourself, *Philothea*, a young princess extremely beloved of her husband, and that some wicked wretch, to lead her astray, send her an infamous messenger to treat with her about his mischievous design. First, this messenger proposes to the princess the intent of his master ; secondly, the princess approves or disapproves the proposition and message ; thirdly, she either consents or refuses. So the world, the flesh, and the devil, seeing a soul espoused to the Son of God, send their temptations and suggestions by which, first, sin is propounded to her ; secondly, she is either pleased or displeased with the motion ; thirdly, she either consents or refuses ; which are in sum the three steps to descend to wickedness—temptation, delectation, and consent. And though these three actions are not so manifestly discerned in other kinds of sins, yet are they palpably seen in all great and grievous sins.

2. Though the temptation of any sin whatsoever should last all our life, it could not make us displeasing to the Divine Majesty, so that it delight us not, and that we gave no consent to it. The reason is, because in temptation we are not active but passive ; and since we take no pleasure in it, we can have no guilt of it. *S. Paul* suffered a long time the temptations of the flesh, and yet was so far from being displeasing to God for it that, on the contrary, God was glorified by it. The blessed *S. Angela de Foligno* felt such vehement temptations, that she moves to compassion when she relates them. Great, likewise, were the temptations which *S. Francis* and *S. Benedict* suffered, when the one cast himself into snow, and the other into thorns, to mitigate

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them ; yet they lost nothing of God's grace for all that, but augmented it.

3. You must then be very courageous, *Philothea*, amidst temptations, and never hold yourself vanquished so long as they displease you. Observe well the difference between feeling and consenting to * temptation, which is, that we may feel them though they displease us, but we can never consent to them unless they please us ; since pleasure ordinarily serves as a step to consent. Let then the enemies of our salvation present to us as many baits as they will, let them wait always at the door of our heart to get in, let them make as many provocations as they list ; as long as we have a resolution to take no pleasure in all that, it is not possible that we can offend God, no more than the prince, husband to the princess whom I have represented, can be displeased with her for the message sent to her, if she have taken no pleasure in it. Yet there is this difference between the soul and this princess, in this particular, that the princess, having heard the unholy proposition, may, if she please, drive away the messenger and hear him no more, but it is not always in the power of the soul not to feel temptation, though it be always in her power not to consent to it. For which cause, although the temptation should last and persevere a long time, yet can it not hurt us so long as it displeases us.

4. But as to the delectation which may follow temptation, inasmuch as there are two parts of our soul, the one inferior and the other superior, and the inferior follows not always the superior, but acts by itself—it happens oftentimes that the inferior part takes delight in the temptation without the consent, nay, against the will of the superior. This is the dispute and the war which the Apostle *S. Paul* describes, when he says that his flesh rebelled against his spirit, that there is a law of the members, and a law of the spirit, and such other things.

5. Have you ever seen, *Philothea*, a great hearth covered with ashes ? whoso comes ten or twelve hours after to seek fire finds none but a little in the midst of the hearth, and that very hard to be found. Yet there it was, since there it is found, and with it all the other coals already dead are kindled. It is just so with charity, which is our spiritual

* Sentir et Consentir.

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life, amongst great and violent temptations; for temptation, casting her delectation into the inferior part, covers all the soul, as it seems, with ashes, and reduces the love of God into a narrow compass; for it appears not anywhere but in the midst of the heart, in the centre of the spirit, and yet it seems not to be there, and we have much ado to find it; but there it is, since, howsoever all may be in disorder in our soul and in our body, we still retain a resolution never to consent to sin or temptation, and the delectation which pleases the outward man displeases the inward; so that though it encompass our will, yet it is not within it; by which we see that such delectation is contrary to the will, and being so can be no sin. The combat of *S. Catherine of Siena* lasted very long, till one day our Saviour appearing to her, she said to Him: Where were you, my sweet Saviour, when my heart was so full of so great darkness and uncleanness? and He answered, I was within thy heart, My daughter. And how, replied she, could you dwell in my heart, where there was so much evil? can you dwell then in such unclean places? and our Saviour said, Tell Me, did the thoughts of thy heart bring thee pleasure or sadness, bitterness or delight? Most extreme bitterness and sorrow, said she. And our Saviour replied, Who was it, then, that put this exceeding bitterness and sorrow into thy heart but I, that lay there hidden in the midst of thy soul? Believe Me, daughter, had I not been there present, these thoughts which surrounded thy will, and could not prevail, had doubtless overcome it, and entered in, and had been received by the free-will, and so had brought death to thy soul; but because I was within, I armed thy heart with this bitterness and this resistance, by which it opposed the temptation as much as it could, and not being able to perform what it desired, conceived a vehement displeasure and deadly hatred against temptation, and against itself, and so these troubles were a great merit and advantage to thee, and an exceeding increase of thy virtue and courage.

3. Do you see, *Philothea*? The fire was covered with ashes, and temptation and delight were even entered into the heart, and had encompassed the will which, only assisted by her Saviour, made resistance by griefs, by displeasures, and detestations of the evil suggested to her, constantly refusing her consent to the sin which besieged her. Oh, what distress

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is it to a soul that loves God, not so much as to know whether He be in her or no, or whether the Divine Love for which she fights be altogether extinguished in her or no! But this is the sweetest flower of the perfection of heavenly love, to make the lover suffer and fight for love, not knowing whether he have that love for which and by which he fights.

IMITATION—BK. I., CH. XII.—OF THE GOOD OF ADVERSITY.

1. It is good for us now and then to have some troubles and adversities; for oftentimes they make a man enter into himself, that he may know that he is in exile, and may not place his hopes in anything of this world. It is good for us sometimes to suffer contradictions, and to allow people to think ill and slightingly of us, even when we do and mean well. These are often helps to humility, and rid us of vain-glory. For then we the more earnestly seek God to be witness of what passes within us, when outwardly we are slighted by men, and incur their discredit.

2. Therefore ought a man so firmly to establish himself in God, as to have no need of seeking many human consolations. When a *man of good-will* is troubled, tempted, or afflicted with evil thoughts, then he best understandeth what need he hath of God, without whom he findeth that he can do no good. Then also is he sorrowful; he sigheth and prayeth by reason of the miseries he suffereth. Then is he weary of living longer; and wisheth death to come, that he may be *dissolved, and be with Christ* (Phil. i. 23). Then also he well perceiveth that perfect security and full peace cannot be found in this world.

BK. I., CH. XIII.—OF RESISTING TEMPTATIONS.

1. As long as we live in this world, we cannot be without tribulation and temptation. Hence it is written in Job, *Man's life on earth is a temptation* (Job vii. 1). Every one, therefore, should be solicitous about his temptations, and watch in prayer, lest the devil find opportunity to catch him; who never sleepeth, but *goeth about, seeking whom he may devour* (1 Pet. v. 8). No one is so perfect and holy, as not sometimes to have temptations; and we never can be wholly free from them.

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2. Nevertheless, temptations are often very profitable to a man, troublesome and grievous though they be; for in them a man is humbled, purified, and instructed. All the Saints passed through many tribulations and temptations, and profited by them. And they that could not support temptations, became reprobate, and fell away. There is no order so holy, nor place so retired, where there are not temptations or adversities.

3. A man is never wholly secure from temptation as long as he liveth; for since we were born in concupiscence, there is within us the source of temptation. When one temptation or tribulation is over, another cometh on, and we shall always have something to suffer; for we have lost the good of our original happiness. Many seek to fly temptations, and fall the more grievously into them. By flight alone we cannot overcome; but by patience and true humility we become stronger than all our enemies.

4. He who only shunneth them outwardly, and doth not pluck out their root, will profit little; nay, temptations will the sooner return, and he will find himself in a worse condition. By degrees and by patience, with longanimity, thou wilt, by God's grace, better overcome them, than by harshness and thine own importunity. Take counsel the oftener in temptation, and do not deal harshly with one who is tempted; but pour in consolation, as thou wouldst wish to be done unto thyself.

5. Inconstancy of mind, and little confidence in God, is the beginning of all evil temptations. For as a ship without a helm is driven to and fro by the waves, so the man who is negligent, and giveth up his resolution, is tempted in many ways. *Fire trieth iron, and temptation a just man* (Eccles. xxxi. 31). We often know not what we can do, but temptation discovereth what we are. Still we must watch, especially in the beginning of temptation; for then the enemy is more easily overcome, if he be not suffered to enter the door of the mind, but is withstood upon the threshold the very moment that he knocketh. Whence a certain one hath said:—

Resist beginnings; all too late the cure,
When ills have gathered strength by long delay.*

* Ovid, Bk. ii.

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For first there cometh into the mind a simple thought; then a strong imagination; afterwards delight, and, finally, the evil motion and consent. And so, by little and little, the malignant foe gaineth full entrance, when he is not resisted in the beginning. And the longer any one hath been slothful in resisting, so much the weaker he daily becometh in himself, and the enemy so much the stronger against him.

6. Some suffer grievous temptations in the beginning of their conversion, others in the end, and some there are who, in a manner, are troubled all their lifetime. Some are very lightly tempted, according to the wisdom and equity of the ordinance of God, who weigheth man's condition and merits, and pre-ordaineth all things for the salvation of His elect.

7. We must not, therefore, despair when we are tempted, but on that account pray the more fervently to God that He would vouchsafe to help us in every tribulation; who of a truth, according to the saying of *S. Paul*, *will make such issue with the temptation, that we may be able to sustain it* (1 Cor. x. 13). *Let us, then, humble our souls under the hand of God* (Judith viii. 16) in every temptation and tribulation; *for the humble in spirit He will save and exalt* (Ps. xxxiii. 19).

8. In temptations and tribulations it is proved what progress a man hath made; and therein also there is greater merit, and virtue is made more manifest. Nor is it much if a man be devout and fervent when he feels no trouble; but if, in time of adversity, he suffereth patiently, then will there be hopes of greater profit. Some are preserved from great temptations, and are often overcome in daily little ones; that, thus humbled, they may never presume upon themselves in great trials, when they are weak in such trifling occurrences.

LESSON XLV.

An Encouragement to a Soul in Temptation : How Temptation and Delectation may be Sin : Of the Small Number of the Lovers of the Cross of Jesus : That there is no Being Secure from Temptation in this Life : Of the Consideration of Human Misery.

TEXTS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

Blessed is the man that endureth temptation ; for when he hath been proved, he shall receive the crown of life, which God hath promised to them that love him.—James i. 12.

And God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able : but will make also with temptation issue, that you may be able to bear it.—1 Cor. x. 13.

But every man is tempted by his own concupiscence, being drawn away and allured. Then when concupiscence hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin ; but sin, when it is completed, begetteth death.—James i. 14.

From that time Jesus began to show to his disciples, that he must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the ancients, and scribes, and chief priests, and be put to death, and the third day rise again. And Peter taking him, began to rebuke him, saying, Lord, be it far from thee, this shall not be unto thee. Who turning, said to Peter, Go behind me, Satan ; thou art a scandal unto me : because thou savourest not the things that are of God, but the things that are of men. Then Jesus said to his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.—Matt. xvi. 21.

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert, to be tempted by the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterwards he was hungry.—Matt. iv. 1.

For we also, who are in this tabernacle, do groan, being burdened : because we would not be unclothed, but clothed upon, that that which is mortal may be swallowed up by life. Now he that maketh us for this very thing, is God, who hath given us the pledge of the Spirit. Therefore having always confidence, knowing that, while we are in the body, we are absent from the Lord.—2 Cor. v. 4.

LESSON XLV. ENCOURAGEMENT FOR THE TEMPTED.

These words ought greatly to encourage you ; for they declare the blessing that temptation is, and the help and favour of God to those who are faithful, and the way our Lord drives from Him those who are remiss and cowardly. When Christ Himself suffers, and is tempted in His assumed Nature, who shall claim exemption? Considering then the miseries of this life, like a brave soldier be generous, and choose rather to strive against and overcome difficulties than be enervated under the yoke of the passions in laziness and sloth. Thus also speak your masters.

INTRODUCTION, PT. IV., CH. V.—AN ENCOURAGEMENT TO A SOUL IN TEMPTATION.

1. These assaults and strong temptations, *Philothea*, are never permitted by God but against those souls which He means to elevate to His pure and excellent love. Yet it follows not that after all they shall be sure to attain to it ; for it often happens that those who have been constant in violent assaults, afterwards not corresponding faithfully with the grace of God, are overcome with very small temptations. This, I say, to the end that, if you chance at any time to be afflicted with so great temptations, you may know that God favours you with an extraordinary grace, by which He declares that He will exalt you in His sight, and that nevertheless you may be always humble and timorous, not assuring yourself to be able to overcome small temptations after you have prevailed against great ones, saving only by continued fidelity towards His Majesty.

2. What temptations soever, then, shall happen to you, and what delectation soever follows upon them, so long as your will shall refuse her consent both to the temptation and to the delectation, trouble not yourself by any means, for God is not offended with you. When a man is in a trance, so that there appears no sign of life in him, they usually lay their hands on his heart, and by the least motion they feel there they judge him alive, and that, by means of some precious water or restorative, he may return to his strength and senses. So it happens sometimes that, by the violence of temptation, our soul seems to be fallen into so utter a decay of all her forces that, being as in a trance, she has no more

LESSON XLV. OF TEMPTATION AND DELECTATION.

spiritual life or motion ; but if we will know in what state she is, let us lay our hand on the heart. Let us consider if the heart and will do yet retain their spiritual motion, that is, if they do their duty in refusing consent and compliance with the temptation and delectation ; for so long as this motion of refusal is in our heart, we may be assured that charity, the life of our soul, remains yet in us, and that Jesus Christ, our Saviour, is there present, though hidden and secretly ; so that by virtue of continual prayer, of the Sacraments, and of confidence in God, we shall recover our forces, and live a secure and delectable life.

CH. VI.—HOW TEMPTATION AND DELECTATION MAY BE SIN.

1. The princess of whom we have spoken could not hinder the dishonest suit made to her, because, as we have presupposed, it happened to her against her will ; but if, on the contrary, she had given encouragement by showing a willingness to correspond with him that tempted her, doubtless she would have been guilty of the suit itself, and though she might dissemble, she would nevertheless deserve blame and punishment. So happens it sometimes that temptation alone brings us into sin, because we are the cause of it. For example, I know that in playing I fall easily into fury and blasphemy, and that gaming serves me as a temptation to those sins ; I sin, therefore, as often as I play, and am guilty of the temptation which shall happen to me in play. Again, if I know certainly that any one's conversation brings me into temptation and danger, and yet I go willingly into it, I am doubtless guilty of all the temptations which I shall receive there.

2. When the delectation which proceeds from the temptation may be avoided, it is always a sin to receive it ; which sin is great or little, according as the pleasure which we take in it and the consent which we give to it are great or little, of long or short continuance. It is always a thing reprehensible in the young princess of whom we spake, not only to hearken to the dishonourable proposition made to her, but also after she has heard it, to take pleasure in it, entertaining her heart with contentment on this object. For although she will not consent to the real execution of what is proposed to her, she consents, notwithstanding, in the interior con-

LESSON XLV. OF TEMPTATION AND DELECTATION.

pliance of her heart, by the contentment which she takes. And it is always dishonesty to apply either heart or body to any dishonest object; nay, dishonesty consists so much in the application of the heart, that without it there can be no sin at all.

3. When you shall then be tempted by any sin, consider whether you have willingly given occasion to the temptation; for then the temptation itself puts you in a state of sin by reason of the hazard to which you have exposed yourself; and that is to be understood when you might commodiously have avoided the occasion, and that you did foresee or might have foreseen the coming of the temptation; but if you have given no occasion to the temptation, it can be in no sort imputed to you for a sin.

4. When the delectation following the temptation might have been shunned, and yet has not been avoided, there is always some kind of sin, according to the time we continue, and the cause of the delectation which we have taken in it. A woman, who has given no occasion to be sought, yet takes pleasure therein, ceases not to be blamable if her pleasure is caused solely by her being sought. For example, if the gallant who sues to her plays exactly well upon the lute, and she takes pleasure, not in the attentions he pays, but in the harmony and sweetness of his lute, there is no sin in that; yet she ought not to continue long in this pleasure, for fear she pass from that to a delectation in being sought. Likewise, if any one propound to me some stratagem full of invention and cunning to take revenge upon mine enemy, and I take no delight in, and give no consent to, the revenge which is proposed, but am pleased only with the subtlety of the invention, without doubt I sin not, though it be not expedient that I continue long in this delight, for fear lest by little and little it might induce me to a delectation in the revenge itself.

5. We are sometimes surprised with some sensation of delectation, which immediately follows the temptation before we are well aware of it; and that can be but a light venial sin which grows greater if, after we perceive the danger we are in, we negligently lose time in considering whether we should admit or reject that delectation; and the sin increases yet more, if being aware of the delectation, we dwell in it some time by mere negligence without any pur-

LESSON XLV. OF LOVING THE CROSS.

pose to reject it ; but when voluntarily and of set purpose we resolve to please ourselves in that delectation, this very deliberate purpose is a great sin, if the object of the delectation be notoriously evil.

IMITATION—BK. II., CH. XI.—OF THE SMALL NUMBER OF THE LOVERS OF THE CROSS OF JESUS.

1. Jesus hath now many lovers of His heavenly kingdom, but few bearers of His cross. He hath many that are desirous of consolation, but few of tribulation. He finds many companions of His table, but few of His abstinence. All desire to rejoice with Him, but few are willing to endure anything for His sake. Many follow Jesus to the breaking of bread, but few to the drinking the chalice of His passion. Many reverence His miracles, but few follow the ignominy of His cross. Many love Jesus as long as they meet with no adversity ; many praise Him and bless Him as long as they receive some consolation from Him, but if Jesus hide Himself, and leave them for a little while, they either murmur or fall into excessive dejection.

2. But they that love Jesus, for Jesus' sake, and not for the sake of some consolation of their own, bless Him no less in tribulation and anguish of heart than in the greatest consolation. And if He should never give them consolation, yet would they always praise Him, and always give Him thanks.

3. Oh, how much is the pure love of Jesus able to do, when it is not mixed with any self-interest or self-love ! Are not all they to be called mercenaries who are ever seeking consolations ? Do not they prove themselves to be rather lovers of themselves than of Christ, who are always thinking of their own advantage and gain ? Where shall we find a man that is willing to serve God disinterestedly ?

4. Seldom do we find one so spiritual, as to be stripped of all things. For who shall be able to find the man that is truly poor in spirit and divested of attachment to all created things. *His value is* (as of things that are brought) *from afar, and from the remotest coasts* (Prov. xxxi. 10). *If a man give his whole substance, still it is nothing* (Cant. viii. 7). And if he do great penance, it is but little. And if he attain to all knowledge (1 Cor. xiii. 2), he is far off still. And if he

LESSON XLV. NO SECURITY FROM TEMPTATION.

have great virtue and very fervent devotion, there is still much wanting to him, namely, the one thing which is supremely necessary for him. What is that? That having left all things else, he leave also himself, and wholly go out of himself, and retain nothing of self-love. And when he shall have done all things which he knows he ought to do, let him think that he has done nothing.

5. Let him not make great account of that which may appear much to be esteemed; but let him in truth acknowledge himself to be an unprofitable servant; as the Truth Himself has said: *When ye shall have done all things that have been commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants* (Luke xvii. 16). Then may he be truly poor in spirit, and may say with the Psalmist, *I am alone and poor* (Ps. xxiv. 16). Yet there is no one richer than such a man, none more powerful, none more free; who knoweth how to leave himself and all things, and to put himself in the very lowest place.

BK. III., CH. XXXV.—THAT THERE IS NO BEING SECURE FROM TEMPTATION IN THIS LIFE.

1. Son, thou art never secure in this life; but as long as thou livest spiritual weapons are always necessary for thee. Thou art in the midst of enemies, and art assaulted on the right hand and on the left. If, therefore, thou dost not make use of the buckler of patience on every occasion, thou wilt not be long without a wound. Moreover, if thou dost not set thy heart fixedly on Me, with a sincere will of suffering all things for My sake, thou canst never sustain the heat of this warfare, nor attain to the palm of the Blessed. It behoveth thee, therefore, to go through all manfully, and to use a strong hand against whatsoever withstandeth thee. For *to him that overcometh is given manna* (Apoc. ii. 17), but to the sluggard is left much misery.

2. If in this life thou seekest rest, how then wilt thou come to the eternal rest? Set not thyself for much rest, but for great patience. Seek true peace not upon earth, but in heaven; not in men nor in other creatures, but in God alone. Thou must be willing, for the love of God, to suffer all things, labours and sorrows, temptations, vexations, anxieties, necessities, infirmities, injuries, detractions, reproofs, humiliations,

LESSON XLV. OF HUMAN MISERY.

confusions, contempts. These help to virtue, these prove the novice of Christ, these things weave a celestial crown. I will give thee back for this short labour a reward eternal, and for transitory confusion glory that is infinite.

3. Dost thou think always to have spiritual consolations when thou pleasest? My Saints had not so; but they met with many troubles, and various temptations, and great desolations. But they bore all with patience, and confided more in God than in themselves, knowing that *the sufferings of this life are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to come* (Rom. viii. 18). Wouldst thou have that immediately which others, after many tears and great labours, have hardly obtained? Wait upon the Lord, do manfully, and be of good heart; do not despond, do not fall off, but offer with constancy both soul and body for the glory of God. I will reward thee most abundantly; I will be with thee in all thy tribulations.

BK. I., CH. II.—OF THE CONSIDERATION OF HUMAN MISERY.

1. Wretched art thou, wheresoever thou be and whithersoever thou turn thee, unless thou turn thyself unto God. Why art thou troubled that things go not with thee as thou wishest and desirest? Who is there that hath all things according to his will? Neither I, nor thou, nor any man upon earth. There is no man in the world without some trouble or affliction, be he King or Pope. Who, then, is the best off? Truly he that is able to suffer something for the sake of God.

2. Weak-minded and inconstant people often say, See what a happy life that man leadeth! how rich he is, how great, how powerful and exalted! But take heed to heavenly riches, and thou wilt see that all these temporal ones are nothing; yea, most uncertain, and rather a heavy burden, since they never are possessed without anxiety and fear. Man's happiness consisteth not in having temporal things in abundance, but a moderate portion sufficeth. Truly it is a misery to live upon the earth. The more a man desireth to be spiritual, the more distasteful doth this present life become to him, for he the better understandeth and more clearly seeth the defects of human corruption. For to eat, to drink, to watch, to sleep, to rest, to labour, and to be subject to the other necessities of nature, truly is a great

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misery and affliction to a devout man, who longeth to be released, and to have done with all sin.

3. For the interior man is greatly weighed down by the necessities of the body in this life. Hence the Prophet devoutly prayeth that he may be free from them, saying, *From my necessities deliver me, O Lord* (Ps. xxiv. 17). But woe to them that know not their own misery; and still more woe to them that make this wretched and perishable life the object of their love. For some there are who cling to it so closely (though even by labouring or by begging they hardly have bare necessaries), that could they live here always, they would care nothing for the kingdom of God.

4. Oh, senseless people, and unbelieving in heart, to lie buried so deep in earthly things as to relish nothing but what is carnal! Miserable men! yet a while and they will feel bitterly what a worthless thing, and even nothing, it was that they have loved so much. But the saints of God and all devoted friends of Christ looked not to what pleased the flesh, nor to what flourished for the time of this life, but all their hopes and aims aspired after the good things that are eternal. All their desire tended upwards to the things everlasting and invisible, for fear lest by the love of things visible they should be dragged down to things below. Lose not, brother, thy confidence of making spiritual progress; thou hast yet time, the hour is not yet past.

5. Why wilt thou put off thy purpose from day to day? Arise, and begin this very instant, and say, Now is the time to do, now is the time to fight, now is the proper time to amend my life. When thou art troubled and afflicted, then is the time of merit. Thou must pass through fire and water before thou come to refreshment. Except thou do violence to thyself thou wilt not overcome vice. As long as we carry about this frail body, we cannot be free from sin, nor live without weariness and sorrow. Fain would we be at rest from all misery; but since we have lost innocence through sin, we have lost also true blessedness. We must therefore have patience and wait God's mercy, *till iniquity pass away* (Ps. lvi. 2), *and this mortality be swallowed up in life* (2 Cor. v. 4).

6. Oh, how great is human frailty, which is ever prone to vice! To-day thou confessest thy sins, and to-morrow thou again committest what thou didst confess. Now thou pur-

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posest to be upon thy guard, and an hour after thou art acting as if thou hadst made no resolution. Justly then may we humble ourselves, and never think anything great of ourselves, since we are so frail and unstable. And even what we have at last just acquired through grace, and with great labour, may soon be lost through negligence.

7. What will become of us in the end, if we begin so early to grow lukewarm? Woe to us if we thus wish to turn aside to rest, as if there were already peace and security, when there does not as yet appear a trace of true holiness in our deportment! Very useful would it be for us to be yet again instructed, like good novices, in the highest morality—if, haply, there might be hope of some future improvement and greater spiritual progress.

LESSON XLVI. OF GREAT TEMPTATIONS.

LESSON XLVI.

Remedies against Great Temptations: That we must resist Small Temptations: How to Overcome them: How in Tribulation we must Invoke God.

TEXTS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

Watch ye, and pray that ye enter not into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh weak.—Matt. xxvi. 41.

Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh in its concupiscences.—Rom. xiii. 14.

Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, to refrain yourselves from carnal desires which war against the soul.—1 Pet. ii. 11.

Labour as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No man being a soldier to God, entangleth himself with secular businesses; that he may please him to whom he hath engaged himself. For he also that striveth for the mastery, is not crowned except he strive lawfully.—2 Tim. ii. 3.

Be sober and watch: because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour. Whom resist ye, strong in faith: knowing that the same affliction befalls your brethren who are in the world. But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory in Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a little, will himself perfect you, and confirm you, and establish you. To him be glory and empire for ever and ever. Amen.—1 Pet. v. 8.

These words offer you the best remedies against all sorts of temptations. They bid you watch, pray, practise mortification, avoid occasions, and stand firm in hope and confidence in God. Learn from your two masters how to put them in practice.

INTRODUCTION—PT. IV., CH. VII.—REMEDIES AGAINST GREAT TEMPTATIONS.

I. As soon as you find yourself in any temptation, do as little children when they see a wolf or a bear in the field; for presently they run into their father's or mother's arms,

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or at least call them to their help and succour. Run you in like manner to God, imploring His mercy and assistance : it is the remedy which our Saviour Himself taught us, saying, *Pray lest you enter into temptation* (Matt. xxvi. 41). If you find the temptation notwithstanding this to continue or increase, hasten in spirit to embrace the Holy Cross, imagining you see our Saviour Jesus Christ crucified thereon ; protest that you will never consent to the temptation, and demand aid against it, and continue always protesting not to consent so long as the temptation shall last.

2. But in making these protestations and refusals of consent, look not the temptation in the face, but look only on our Blessed Saviour ; for if you look upon the temptation, principally when it is strong, it may shake your courage. Divert your mind with some good and commendable exercises : for such exercises, entering and taking place in your heart, will chase away the evil temptations and suggestions.

3. The sovereign remedy against all temptations, great or small, is to lay open our heart, and communicate the suggestions, apprehensions, and affections which we have, to our spiritual director ; for, observe well, that the first condition the devil makes with a soul whom he would seduce is to be silent, as they who would deceive maidens or women at the very first forbid them to communicate the proposition to their parents or husbands ; whereas God, on the other side, in His inspirations requires above and before all things that we make them known to our superiors and directors.

4. If, after all this, the temptation continue obstinately to vex and persecute us, we have nothing to do but on our part to persevere as obstinately in our protestation that we will never consent to it ; for as maids can never be married so long as they say, No : so the soul, although she may be troubled, yet can never be prejudiced so long as she says, No !

5. Dispute not with your enemy ; never answer him one word, unless it be that which our Saviour answered, where-with He confounded him, *Away, Satan ; the Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and Him only thou shalt serve* (Matt. iv. 10). A true wife would not answer one word, nor look once in the face of that wicked person who tempted her to dishonesty, but cutting him off short, would at the instant turn her heart towards her husband, and confirm the loyalty which she has vowed to him, without entering into dispute

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with the other. So the devout soul, assaulted by any temptation, ought by no means to lose time in disputing or answering, but resolutely to turn herself towards Jesus Christ her Spouse, and renew her protestation of fidelity to remain solely and entirely His for ever.

CH. VIII.—THAT WE MUST RESIST SMALL TEMPTATIONS.

1. Although we must fight against great temptations with an invincible courage, and that the victory gained against them be extremely profitable, yet it may happen that we may profit more in resisting small temptations ; for as great temptations exceed in quality, so the lesser infinitely exceed in number, so that the victory over them may be equal to that over the great. Wolves and bears are without doubt more dangerous than flies, yet do they not vex and importune us so much, nor exercise our patience so often. It is an easy thing to abstain from murder, but hard to avoid small choleric passions, of which occasions are presented to us every moment. It is very easy to forbear stealing other men's goods, but hard not so much as to covet or desire them ; very easy not to bear false witness in judgment, but uneasy not to lie in conversation ; very easy not to be drunk, but hard to be sober ; very easy not to desire another man's death, but hard not to desire some inconvenience to him ; easy to forbear defaming our adversary, but hard not to despise him.

2. In a word, these little temptations of choler, of suspicion, of jealousy, of envy, of coquetry, of immodesty, of dissimulation, of affection, of cunning, of wrong thoughts, are continual vexations to those who are most devout and resolute. We must therefore prepare ourselves, my dear *Philothea*, with great care and diligence, for this spiritual combat ; and assure ourselves that as many victories as we shall win over these enemies, so many precious stones shall be put into the crown of glory which God has prepared for us in heaven. Therefore I say, if we mean to fight valiantly against greater temptations when they come, we must well and diligently defend ourselves against these small and weak assaults.

CH. IX.—REMEDIES AGAINST THESE SMALL TEMPTATIONS.

1. Now concerning these small temptations of vanity, suspicion, anxiety, jealousy, envy, coquetry, and such trifles,

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which, like flies and gnats, hover before our eyes, and sometimes sting us upon the cheek, sometimes upon the nose, because it is impossible to be altogether free from their importunity, the best resistance we can make is not to vex ourselves for them; for they cannot hurt us, though they trouble us, so that we be thoroughly resolved to serve God.

2. Despise then petty assaults, and vouchsafe not so much as to think on that which they suggest; let them buzz about your ears as long as they will, and fly round about you here and there like flies, and when they begin to sting, and that you shall see them alight upon your heart, do nothing, but merely remove them, not fighting against them, nor answering them, but performing some actions contrary to them, whatsoever they are, and especially of the love of God. For, if you will believe me, you shall not strive too much to oppose the virtue contrary to the temptation which you feel, because that would be as it were to dispute with it, but having performed only one action of this same virtue directly contrary to the temptation, if you have had leisure to inform yourself of the quality of the temptation, turn your heart quietly towards Jesus Christ crucified, and by an act of love towards Him kiss His sacred Feet. This is the best means to conquer our enemy as well in little as in great temptations. For the love of God, containing in itself the perfections of all virtues, and far more excellently than the virtues themselves, is also a more sovereign remedy against all vices; and your soul, accustoming herself in all temptations to recur to this general rendezvous, shall not need to examine what temptations she has, but, feeling herself troubled, will, without further pain, quiet herself by this general remedy, which, besides, is so terrible to our ghostly enemy, that, when he once sees his temptations provoke us to this Divine love, he ceases to raise more. And thus much concerning small and frequent temptations, wherewith whosoever shall trouble himself more particularly shall spend his time without profit.

IMITATION—BK. III., CH. XXIX.—HOW, WHEN TRIBULATION PRESSETH, WE MUST CALL UPON AND BLESS GOD.

1. Blessed, O Lord, be Thy Name for ever, who hast been pleased that this trial and tribulation should come upon me. I cannot escape it, but must of necessity fly to Thee;

LESSON XLVI. OF INVOKING GOD IN TRIBULATION.

that Thou mayest help me, and turn it to my good. Lord, I am now in tribulation, and my heart is not at ease; but I am much afflicted with my present suffering. *And now, Beloved Father, what shall I say?* I am taken, Lord, in these straits: *O save me from this hour* (John xii. 27). But for this reason I came unto this hour, that Thou mightest be glorified, when I shall have been exceedingly humbled, and delivered by Thee. *May it please Thee, O Lord, to deliver me* (Ps. xxxix. 14); for, poor wretch that I am! what can I do, and whither shall I go without Thee? Give me patience, O Lord, even at this time. Help me, O my God, and I will not fear, how much soever I may be distressed.

2. And now, in the midst of these things, what shall I say? *Lord, Thy will be done* (Matt. vi. 10). I have well deserved to be afflicted and distressed. It behoves me to bear it,—and would that it were with patience,—till the storm pass over and it grow better. But Thy almighty hand is able to take away from me this temptation also, and to moderate its violence, that I sink not altogether under it; as Thou hast often done heretofore for me, *O my God, my mercy!* (Ps. lviii. 17). And how much the more difficult this is to me, so much the easier to Thee is *this change of the right hand of the Most High* (Ps. lxxvi. 11).

LESSON XLVII.

How to Strengthen our Hearts against Temptations : Of the Royal Road of the Holy Cross : Of the Proof of a True Lover.

TEXTS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

I say then, walk in the spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the spirit : and the spirit against the flesh ; for these are contrary one to another : so that you do not the things that you would.—Gal. v. 16.

For whosoever will save his life, shall lose it ; for he that shall lose his life for my sake, shall save it.—Luke ix. 24.

Persevere under discipline. God dealeth with you as with his sons : for what son is there, whom the father doth not correct ? But if you be without chastisement, whereof all are made partakers ; then are you bastards, and not sons. Moreover we have had fathers of our flesh, for instructors, and we revered them : shall we not much more obey the Father of spirits, and live ?—Heb. xii. 7.

And if sons, heirs also : heirs indeed of God, and joint heirs with Christ : yet so if we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified with him.—Rom. viii. 17.

But he that keepeth his word, in him in very deed the charity of God is perfected : and by this we know that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also to walk, even as he walked.—1 John ii. 5.

These words—1, Teach you to fight by opposing to the desires of the flesh those of the spirit ; 2, show you that the only way to the kingdom prepared by God is through the Cross ; 3, declare that God acts as our Father when He sends tribulation and suffering ; 4, bid us prove our love not by tasting the consolations of Tabor, but by following in deed the examples our Lord has left us in His life. Practise all this according to the advice here given you by your two masters.

LESSON XLVII. HOW TO STRENGTHEN OUR HEARTS.

INTRODUCTION—PT. IV., CH. X.—HOW TO STRENGTHEN OUR HEARTS AGAINST TEMPTATIONS.

1. Consider from time to time what passions reign most in your soul, and, having discovered them, take a course of life clean contrary to them in thought, word, and deed. For example, if you find yourself inclined to the passion of vanity, think often on the misery of this mortal life, how anxious those vanities will make our consciences at the hour of our death, how unworthy they are of a generous heart, that they are but trifles and toys for little children, and such-like considerations. Speak also earnestly and often against vanity, and, although it seem to be against your heart, cease not to despise it; for by this means you shall in a manner engage yourself in reputation to the contrary virtue, and by much speaking against a thing we come to hate it, though at first we loved it. Exercise works of humility and abjection as much as you can, even against your inclination; for so you shall quickly get a habit of humility, and weaken your vanity in such sort as when the temptation shall happen, your inclination will not be able to take part with it, and so you will have more strength to resist it.

2. If you are inclined to covetousness, think often on the folly of this vice, which renders us slaves to that which was created to serve us. Think how at our death we must forsake all and leave it in the hands of those that will scatter it away, and to whom it may be a cause of ruin and damnation. Speak much against avarice, and praise the contempt of the world; enforce yourself oftentimes to give alms and do works of charity, and let slip some opportunity of gain.

3. If you are inclined to coquetry, think how dangerous this folly is, as well to yourself as to others. Consider what an unworthy thing it is to profane and employ idly the noblest perfection of our soul; how worthy it is to be blamed as extreme lightness of spirit. Speak often in praise of chastity and purity of heart, and conform your actions as near as you can to your discourse, avoiding all fondness and affectation.

4. To be brief, in time of peace, that is, when the temptations of those sins to which you are most subject do not trouble you, make many acts of the contrary virtues; and, if occasions do not present themselves, seek some; for by this means will your heart be armed against future temptations.

LESSON XLVII. ROYAL ROAD OF THE HOLY CROSS.

IMITATION—BK. II., CH. XII.—OF THE ROYAL ROAD OF THE HOLY CROSS.

1. To many this seemeth a hard saying, *Deny thyself, take up thy cross, and follow Jesus* (Luke ix. 23). But it will be much harder to hear that last word, *Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire* (Matt. xxv. 41). For they who now love to hear and follow the word of the Cross shall not then fear the sentence of eternal condemnation. *The sign of the Cross shall be in heaven when the Lord shall come to judge* (Matt. xxiv. 30). Then all the servants of the Cross, who in their lifetime have conformed themselves to Him that was crucified shall come to Christ their Judge with great confidence.

2. Why, then, art thou afraid to take up thy cross, which leadeth to the kingdom? In the Cross is salvation; in the Cross is life; in the Cross is protection from enemies. In the Cross is infusion of heavenly sweetness; in the Cross is strength of mind; in the Cross is joy of spirit. In the Cross is height of virtue; in the Cross is perfection of sanctity. There is no health of soul nor hope of eternal life but in the Cross. Take up, therefore, thy cross, and follow Jesus, and thou shalt go into life everlasting. He is gone before thee carrying His cross; and He died for thee upon the cross, that thou mayest also bear thy cross, and love to die on the cross. Because if thou die with Him, thou shalt also live with Him; and if thou art His companion in suffering, thou shalt also be His companion in glory.

3. Behold in the Cross all doth consist, and all lieth in our dying; and there is no other way to life and to true interior peace but the way of the Holy Cross and of daily mortification. Go where thou wilt, seek what thou wilt, thou shalt not find a higher way above, nor a safer way below, than the way of the Holy Cross. Dispose and order all things according as thou wilt, and as seemeth best to thee; and thou wilt still find something to suffer, either willingly or unwillingly; and so thou shalt always find the Cross. For either thou shalt feel pain in the body, or sustain in thy soul tribulation of spirit.

4. Sometimes thou shalt be deserted by God; at other times thou shalt be afflicted by thy neighbour; and what is more, thou shalt often be a trouble to thyself. Neither canst thou be delivered or eased by any remedy or comfort; for as

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long as it shall please God, thou must bear it. For God willeth that thou learn to suffer tribulation without comfort, and wholly submit thyself to Him, and become more humble by tribulation. No man hath so heartfelt a sense of the Passion of Christ as he whose lot it hath been to suffer like things. The Cross, therefore, is always ready, and everywhere awaiteth thee. Thou canst not escape it, whithersoever thou runnest; for wheresoever thou goest thou carriest thyself with thee, and shalt always find thyself. Turn thyself upward, or turn thyself downward; turn thyself inward, or turn thyself outward; everywhere thou shalt find the Cross. And everywhere thou must of necessity hold fast patience, if thou desirest inward peace, and wouldst merit an eternal crown.

5. If thou carry the Cross willingly, it will carry thee, and bring thee to thy desired end, namely, to that place where there will be an end of suffering, though here there will be no end. If thou carry it unwillingly, thou makest it a burden to thee, and loadest thyself the more, and nevertheless thou must bear it. If thou fling away one cross, without doubt thou wilt find another, and perhaps a heavier.

6. Dost thou think to escape that which no mortal ever could avoid? What saint ever was in the world without his cross and tribulation. For even our Lord Jesus Christ Himself was not for one hour of His life without the anguish of His Passion. *It behoved, said He, that Christ should suffer and rise from the dead, and so enter into His glory* (Luke xxiv. 46). And how dost thou seek another way than this royal way, which is the way of the holy Cross?

7. The whole life of Christ was a cross and a martyrdom; and dost thou seek for thyself rest and joy? Thou errest, thou errest, if thou seekest aught else than to suffer tribulation; for this whole mortal life is full of miseries and everywhere marked with crosses. And the higher a person is advanced in spirit, the heavier crosses shall he often meet with; because the pain of his banishment increaseth in proportion to his love.

8. Yet such a one, thus many ways afflicted, is not without some relief of consolation; because he is sensible of the very great profit he reaps by bearing the Cross. For whilst he willingly resigns himself to it, all the burden of tribulation is converted into an assured hope of comfort from God. And

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the more the flesh is brought down by affliction, the more is the spirit strengthened by interior grace. And sometimes he gaineth such strength through affection to tribulation and adversity by his love of conformity to the Cross of Christ, as not to be willing to be without suffering and affliction; because such a one believeth himself to be so much the more acceptable to God, the more and more grievous things he shall be able to bear for His sake. This is not man's power, but the grace of Christ, which doth and can effect such great things in frail flesh, that what it naturally abhors and flies, even this, through fervour of spirit, it now embraces and loves.

9. To bear the Cross, to love the Cross, to chastise the body and bring it under subjection; to fly honours, to love to suffer insults, to despise oneself, and to wish to be despised; to bear all adversities and losses, and to desire no prosperity in this world—all this is not according to man's natural inclination. If thou lookest unto thyself, thou canst do nothing of this sort of thyself. But if thou confidest in the Lord, strength will be given to thee from heaven, and the world and the flesh shall be made subject to thee. Neither shalt thou fear thine enemy the devil, if thou art armed with faith, and signed with the Cross of Christ.

10. Set thyself, then, like a good and faithful servant of Christ, to bear manfully the Cross of thy Lord, for the love of Him who was crucified for thee. Prepare thyself to suffer many adversities and divers evils in this miserable life; for so it will be with thee, wherever thou art, and so indeed wilt thou find it, wheresoever thou hide thyself. It must be so, and there is no remedy against *tribulation and sorrow* (Ps. cvi. 39), but to bear them patiently. Drink of the chalice of thy Lord lovingly, if thou desirest to be His friend and to have part with Him. Leave consolations to God, to do with them as best pleaseth Him. But be ready on thy part to bear tribulations, and account them the greatest consolations; for *the sufferings of this life are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come* (Rom. viii. 18), although thou alone couldst suffer them all.

11. When thou shalt arrive thus far that tribulation shall be sweet to thee, and thou shalt relish it for the love of Christ, then think that it is well with thee, for thou hast found a paradise upon earth. As long as suffering is grievous

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to thee, and thou seekest to fly from it, so long shall it be ill with thee ; and the desire of flying from tribulation shall pursue thee everywhere.

12. If thou set thyself to what thou oughtest, that is, to suffer and to die, it will quickly be better with thee and thou shalt find peace. Although thou shouldst have been rapt to the third heaven with S. Paul, thou art not thereby secured that thou shalt suffer no adversity. *I, said Jesus, will show him how great things he must suffer for My name* (Acts ix. 16). To suffer, therefore, is what awaits thee, if thou art resolved to love Jesus and constantly to serve Him.

13. Would to God thou wert worthy to suffer something for the name of Jesus ! how great glory would remain unto thyself, how great joy would it be to all the Saints of God, and how great edification to thy neighbour ! All recommend patience, but, alas ! how few are there that desire to suffer. With good reason oughtest thou willingly to suffer a little for Christ, since many suffer greater things for the world.

14. Know for certain that thou must lead a dying life ; and the more a man dieth to himself, the more doth he begin to live unto God. No man is fit to comprehend heavenly things who hath not resigned himself to suffer adversities for Christ. Nothing is more acceptable to God, nothing more salutary for thee in this world, than to suffer willingly for Christ. And if thou couldst make choice, thou oughtest to prefer to suffer adversities for Christ than to be delighted with much consolation ; because thou wouldst more resemble Christ, and be more likened to all the Saints. For our merit and the advancement of our state consists not in having many sweetnesses and consolations, but rather in bearing great afflictions and tribulations. If, indeed, there had been anything better and more beneficial to man's salvation than suffering, Christ certainly would have showed it by word and example. For He manifestly exhorts both His disciples that followed Him, and all that desire to follow Him, to bear the Cross, saying, *If any one will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me* (Matt. xvi. 24). So that when we have read and searched all, let this be the final conclusion, that *through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God* (Acts xiv. 21).

LESSON XLVII. OF THE TRUE LOVER.

BK. III., CH. VI.—OF THE PROOF OF A TRUE LOVER.

1. My son, thou art not yet a valiant and a prudent lover. Why, O Lord? Because thou fallest off from what thou hast begun upon meeting with a little adversity, and too eagerly seekest after consolation. A valiant lover standeth his ground in temptations, and yieldeth not to the crafty persuasions of the enemy. As I please him when in prosperity, so I displease him not in adversity.

2. A prudent lover considereth not so much the gift of the lover as the love of the giver. He looketh more at the goodwill than the value, and setteth every gift beneath the beloved. A generous lover resteth not in the gift, but in Me, above every gift. All therefore is not lost if sometimes thou hast not that feeling of devotion towards Me or My Saints which thou wouldst have. That good and delightful affection which thou sometimes perceivest is the effect of present grace, and a certain foretaste of thy heavenly country, upon which thou oughtest not to lean too much, because it goeth and cometh. But to fight against the evil motions of the mind which arise, and to despise the suggestions of the devil, is a sign of virtue and of great merit.

3. Let not, therefore, strange phantasies of whatever kind trouble thee. Keep thy resolution firm, and thy intention upright towards God. Neither is it an illusion, because sometimes thou art rapt in ecstasy, and presently returnest to the accustomed follies of thy heart. For these thou rather sufferest against thy will than occasionest; and as long as they displease thee, and thou resistest them, it is merit and not loss.

4. Know that the old enemy striveth by all means to hinder thy desire after good, and to draw thee from every devout exercise, namely, from the veneration of the Saints, from the pious remembrance of My Passion, from the profitable calling to mind of thy sins, from watchfulness over thy own heart, and from a firm purpose of advancing in virtue. He suggesteth many evil thoughts, that he may cause thee tediousness and horror, that he may call thee away from prayer and holy reading. He is displeased with humble confession; and if he could, he would cause thee to cease from Communion. Give no credit to him, care not for him, although he often set for thee a snare of deception. Charge him with it when

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he suggests wicked and unclean things, and say to him : Be gone, unclean spirit ; be ashamed, miserable wretch ; most unclean art thou to suggest such things in my ears. Depart from me, thou most wicked seducer ; thou shalt have no part in me ; but Jesus will be with me as a valiant warrior, and thou shalt stand confounded. I would rather die, and undergo any torment whatsoever, than consent to thee. *Hold thy peace, and be silent* (Mark iv. 36) ; I will hear thee no further, although thou many times molest me. *The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear ?* (Ps. xxvi. 1). *If whole armies should stand together against me, my heart shall not fear. The Lord is my helper and my Redeemer* (Ps. xviii. 15).

5. Fight like a good soldier ; and if sometimes thou fall through frailty, resume greater courage than before, confiding in My more abundant grace. But take very great care against vain complacency and pride. Through this many are led into error, and sometimes fall into almost incurable blindness. Let this fall of the proud, who foolishly presume on themselves, serve thee as a warning, and keep thee always humble.

[O Christian souls ! why search elsewhere for instructions how to overcome temptations, relieve interior mental anguish, pursue the path of holiness courageously, and recognise the secret and mysterious ways by which God wills to raise His servants from what is human to what is supernatural and divine ? At the foot of your crucifixes, humble and reverent, when in tribulation and affliction, read and re-read this Lesson. It will be a salve to your wound. Patiently make trial of this most precious remedy, and you will find herein such virtue and efficacy that you will exclaim, like the people of Samaria, *We ourselves have heard*, and we know that these our Masters are true disciples of the Saviour of the world, and are animated with His spirit.]

LESSON XLVIII. OF UNQUIETNESS.

LESSON XLVIII.

Of Unquietness : Of Sadness : Of Asking the Divine Assistance, and of Confidence of Recovering Grace.

TEXTS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

And that you use your endeavour to be quiet, and that you do your own business, and work with your own hands, as we commanded you.—1 Thess. iv. 11.

And they indeed for a few days according to their own pleasure instructed us ; but he, for our profit, that we might receive his sanctification. Now all chastisement for the present indeed seemeth not to bring with it joy, but sorrow ; but afterwards it will yield, to them that are exercised by it, the most peaceable fruit of justice. Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down and the feeble knees. And make straight steps with your feet : that no one, halting, may go out of the way ; but rather be healed.—Heb. xii. 10.

Let us go therefore with confidence to the throne of grace ; that we may obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid.—Heb. iv. 16.

These words—1, Teach you to avoid unquietness and natural sadness, which assail the progress of the soul ; 2, they indicate the causes of sadness and the remedies ; 3, they show you an excellent way of taking refuge with God when these feelings disturb you, and how to conquer them, and obtain the consolations of Divine grace. Now note well the advice of your masters.

INTRODUCTION—PT. IV., CH. XI.—OF UNQUIETNESS.

1. Unquietness is not a simple temptation, but a spring from which and by which many other temptations are derived. I will then speak something of it. Sadness is nothing but a sorrow of mind, conceived for some inconvenience which we suffer against our will, whether it be outward, as poverty, sickness, contempt, or inward, as ignorance, want of devotion,

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repugnance, temptation. When the soul then finds that she has some disease, she is grieved at it, and that is sadness; and presently she desires to be freed from it, and to find means to disburden herself; and so far she is right, for we naturally desire that which is good, and fly from that which we believe to be evil. If the soul seeks means to be freed from this evil for the love of God, she will seek them with patience, meekness, humility, and tranquillity, expecting her deliverance more from the providence and goodness of God than from her own industry, labour, and diligence. But if she desires ease for love of herself, then will she heat and tire herself in seeking those means of her deliverance; as though this blessing depended more on herself than on God. I say not that she thinks so, but that she vexes herself as if she thought so. And if she meet not suddenly with that which she desires, then she falls into great unquietness and impatience, which not curing, but rather increasing the former disease, the soul enters into anguish, distress, and such faintness, and loss of all courage, that she grows desperate of her cure. You see then that sadness, which in the beginning was just, afterwards begets unquietness, and unquietness an increase of sadness, which is extremely dangerous.

2. Unquietness is the greatest evil that can come to the soul excepting sin. For as seditious and civil discords of commonwealth ruin it entirely, and disable it to resist a stranger, so our heart, being troubled and disquieted in itself, loses strength to maintain the virtues it had gained, and with it the means to resist the temptations of the enemy, who at that time uses all kinds of endeavours to fish, as they say, in troubled waters.

3. Unquietness proceeds from an inordinate desire to be delivered from the evil we suffer, or to obtain the good we desire. And yet nothing more increases the evil nor hinders the good than unquietness and vexation. Birds remain taken in the nets and snares, because finding themselves encaged, they flutter and strive to get loose, and by that means entangle themselves the more. When you shall, then, earnestly desire to be freed from any evil or to obtain any good, first set your mind at rest and peace, and settle your judgment and will, and then fairly and softly endeavour to accomplish your desire, taking in order the means which shall be convenient for it. And when I say fair and softly, I mean not negligently, but

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without vexation, trouble, and unquietness ; otherwise, instead of obtaining the effect of your desire, you will spoil all, and more entangle yourself.

4. *My soul is always in my hand, O Lord, and I have not forgotten Thy law*, says David (Ps. cxviii. 109). Examine more than once every day, at least morning and evening, whether your soul be in your hands, or whether some passion or unquietness has not robbed you of it. Consider whether you have your heart at command, or whether it be not escaped out of your hands to engage itself in some inordinate affection of love, hatred, envy, covetousness, fear, joy, sadness ; and if it is strayed, seek it presently, and bring it back gently to the presence of God, subjecting your affections and desires to the obedience and direction of His Divine pleasure. For as they that fear to lose anything which is precious to them keep it fast in their hand ; so, in imitation of this great King, we should always say, O my God, my soul is in danger, and therefore I carry it always in my hand ; in this manner I have not forgotten Thy holy law.

5. Permit not your desires, be they never so little, or of never so small importance, to disquiet you ; for after little ones, those that are greater and more important will find your heart more disposed to trouble or disorder. When you perceive unquietness to come, commend yourself to God, and resolve to do nothing at all of that which your desire demands, until that disquiet be entirely passed, unless it be something that cannot be deferred ; and then you must, by some gentle and quiet means, stop the current of your affection, tempering and moderating it as much as is possible ; and then do that which is required, not according to your desire, but according to reason.

6. If you can discover your unquietness to him that governs your soul, or at least to some trusty and devout friend, doubt not but presently you shall find redress ; for communicating of the griefs of our heart works the same effect in the soul that letting blood does in the body of him who is in a continual fever, and this is the remedy of remedies. So holy *King Louis* gave this counsel to his son : *If thou hast any trouble in thy heart, tell it presently to thy Confessor, or to some good friend, and thou shalt bear thy grief very easily by the comfort he will give thee.*

LESSON XLVIII. OF SADNESS.

CH. XII.—OF SADNESS.

1. *Sadness that is according to God*, saith *S. Paul*, *worketh repentance to salvation, but sadness of the world worketh death* (2 Cor. vii. 10). Sadness, then, may be good or evil, according to the sundry effects which it works in us. It is true that it produces more evil than good effects; for it has but two that are good, mercy and repentance, and six that are evil, anxiety, sloth, indignation, jealousy, envy, and impatience; which caused the wise man to say, *Sorrow kills many, and there is no profit in it* (Eccles. xxx. 25); because, for two good streams which flow from the spring of sadness, there are six very evil.

2. The enemy makes use of sadness to exercise his temptations against the just; for, as he endeavours to make the wicked rejoice in their sins, so he labours to make the good sorrowful in their good works; and as he can never procure evil to be committed but by making it seem pleasant, so can he not divert us from goodness but by making it appear unpleasant. He takes delight in sadness and melancholy, because he is so himself, and so shall be eternally, therefore he desires that every one should be like himself.

3. This mischievous sadness troubles the soul, puts it into disquiet, brings inordinate fears, gives a distaste of prayer, dulls the brain, deprives the soul of counsel, resolution, judgment, and courage, and ruins her strength: to be short, it is like a hard winter that mows away all living creatures; for it ravishes all sweetness from the soul, and renders her lame and impotent in all her powers. If you chance to be assaulted with this dangerous sadness, *Philothea*, practise the remedies following:—

4. *Is any one sad*, says *S. James*, *let him pray*. Prayer is a sovereign remedy, for it lifts up the soul to God, who is our only joy and consolation; but in praying use affections and words, either inward or outward, which tend to confidence and the love of God; as, *O God of mercy, most bountiful God, my sweet Saviour, O God of my heart, my joy, my hope, my dear Spouse, the Well-Beloved of my soul*, and such like.

5. Resist vigorously the inclinations of sadness, and although it seems to you that all you do at that time is performed coldly, heavily, and loosely, yet omit nothing of it; for the enemy who intends to make us weary of good works by sadness, seeing that we cease not to do them, and that,

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being done with repugnance, they are more meritorious, forbears to afflict us any more.

6. Sing spiritual songs, for the devil has often ceased his endeavours by this means. Witness the evil spirit that afflicted or possessed *Saul*, whose violence was repressed by such singing. It is good to busy ourselves in exterior employments, and vary them as much as we can, so to divert our mind from the sad object, to purify and heat the spirits; sadness being a passion of a dry and cold complexion.

7. Perform external actions of love, although without delight, embracing the crucifix, holding it close to your breast, kissing the feet and hands, lifting your hands and eyes to heaven, ejaculating aloud to God by such words of love and confidence as follow: *My Well-Beloved is mine, and I am His* (Cant. iii. 16). *My Well-Beloved is a posie of myrrh; He shall dwell between my breasts* (Cant. i. 13). *Mine eyes melt into tears to Thee, O my God, saying, When wilt Thou comfort me?* (Ps. cxviii. 82). *O Jesus, be Jesus to me! Live, sweet Jesus, and my soul will live. Who can separate me from the love of God?* (Rom. viii. 35) and such like.

8. Moderate disciplines are good against sadness, because this voluntary outward affliction obtains inward consolation, and the soul, feeling pain from without, diverts herself from those which are within. Frequent Holy Communion is also excellent; for that Heavenly Bread strengthens the heart and rejoices the spirit.

9. Discover all apprehensions, affections, and suggestions, which proceed from your sadness, humbly and faithfully to your guide and Confessor. Seek the company of spiritual persons, and frequent them as much as you can during the time of your sadness; and, last of all, resign yourself into the hands of God, preparing yourself to suffer this troublesome sadness patiently, as a just punishment of your vain mirth and pastimes, and doubt not at all but God, after He shall have tried you, will deliver you from this evil.

IMITATION—BK. III., CH. XXX.—OF ASKING THE DIVINE ASSISTANCE, AND OF CONFIDENCE OF RECOVERING GRACE.

1. Son, *I am the Lord, who giveth strength in the day of tribulation* (Nah. i. 7). Come to Me when it is not well

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with thee. This is that which most of all hindereth heavenly comfort, that thou art too slow in betaking thyself to prayer. For before thou earnestly prayest to Me, thou seekest in the meantime many comforts, and delightest thyself in outward things. And hence it comes that all things avail thee little, till thou consider well that *I am He who delivereth those that trust in me* (Ps. xii. 6); nor is there out of Me any powerful help, nor profitable counsel, nor lasting remedy. But now, having recovered thy spirit after the storm, grow thou strong again in the light of My mercies; for I am at hand, saith the Lord, to repair all, not only to the full, but even with abundance, and above measure.

2. *Is anything difficult to Me?* (Jer. xxxii. 27). Or shall I be like to one promising and not performing? Where is thy faith? Stand firmly and perseveringly; practise endurance and manly courage; comfort will come to thee in due season. Wait for Me, wait; I will come and cure thee. It is a temptation that troubleth thee, and a vain fear that affrighteth thee. What doth the solicitude about future contingencies bring thee but only *sorrow upon sorrow?* (Phil. ii. 27); *sufficient for the day is the evil thereof* (Matt. vi. 34). It is vain and useless to have either grief or joy for future things, which perhaps shall never come to pass.

3. But it is in human nature to be deluded with such imaginations; and it is the sign of a soul as yet weak to be so easily drawn away by the suggestions of the enemy. For he careth not whether it be with things true or false that he abuseth and deceiveth thee, whether he overthrow thee with the love of things present or the fear of things to come. *Let not therefore thy heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid* (John xiv. 1). Believe thou in Me, and trust in My mercy. When thou thinkest I am far from thee, I am often nearest to thee. When thou judgest that almost all is lost, then oftentimes it is that thou art in the way of the greatest gain of merit. All is not lost when anything falls out contrary to what thou wouldst have it. Thou must not judge according to thy present feeling, nor give thyself up in such manner to any trouble, whencesoever it comes, nor take it so as if all hope of deliverance were gone.

4. Think not thyself wholly forsaken, though for a time I have sent thee some tribulation, or withdrawn from thee thy

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wished-for consolation ; for this is the way to the kingdom of heaven. And without doubt it is more expedient for thee and for the rest of My servants that you be exercised in adversity, than that you should have all things according to your inclination. I know thy most hidden thoughts, and that it is very expedient for thy salvation that thou sometimes be left without any savour of sweetness, lest perchance thou be puffed up with good success, and take complacence in thyself, imagining thyself to be what thou art not. What I have given I have the power to take away, and to restore as it pleaseth Me.

5. When I have given it, it is still Mine ; when I withdraw it again, I take not anything that is thine ; for every best gift and every perfect gift is Mine. If I send thee any affliction or adversity, repine not, neither let thy heart be cast down. I can quickly raise thee up again, and turn all thy burden into joy. Nevertheless, I am just and greatly to be praised when I thus deal with thee.

6. If thou thinkest rightly and considerest things in truth, thou oughtest never to be so much dejected and troubled at adversity ; but thou shouldst rather rejoice and give thanks, yea, account this as a special subject of joy, that *I afflict thee with sorrows and do not spare thee* (Job vi. 10). *As the Father hath loved Me, I also love you* (John xv. 9), said I to My beloved disciples, whom certainly I did not send to temporal joys, but to great conflicts ; not to honours, but to contempt ; not to idleness, but to labours ; not to rest, *but to bring forth much fruit in patience* (Luke viii. 15). Remember thou these words, O My son.

LESSON XLIX. OF CONSOLATION.

LESSON XLIX.

Of Spiritual and Sensible Consolations, and how we must Behave Ourselves in them : Of Gratitude for the Grace of God : That Man hath no Good 'of himself, and that he cannot Glory in anything.

TEXTS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

For I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, to be content therewith. I know both how to be brought low, and I know how to abound (everywhere, and in all things I am instructed) : both to be full, and to be hungry ; both to abound, and to suffer need. I can do all things in him who strengtheneth me.—Phil. iv. 11.

In all things give thanks : for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you all.—1 Thess. v. 18.

I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God, I am what I am ; and his grace in me hath not been void, but I have laboured more abundantly than all they : yet not I, but the grace of God with me.—1 Cor. xv. 9.

What hast thou that thou hast not received ? And if thou hast received, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?—1 Cor. iv. 7.

These words teach — 1, That amid the vicissitudes of this life your aim and purpose should be not to cling more to what is pleasant than to what is unpleasant, but with submission to the Divine will to make use of both ; 2, that you should at all times give thanks to God ; 3, that you should never fail to discern what is His and what is yours. Each master has hereon an instruction for you.

INTRODUCTION—PT. IV., CH. XIII.—OF SPIRITUAL AND SENSIBLE CONSOLATIONS, AND HOW WE MUST BEHAVE OURSELVES IN THEM.

God continues the existence of this great world in a perpetual vicissitude, by which day is changed into night, night into day, spring into summer, summer into autumn, autumn into winter, and winter into spring again. And one day is never

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perfectly like another ; some are cloudy, some rainy, some dry, some windy ; a variety which gives exceeding beauty to the world. It is the same with man, who, according to the saying of the ancients, is an abridgment of the world, or another little world. For he is never in the same estate ; his life glides upon the earth like the waters, floating and waving in a perpetual diversity of motion, which sometimes exalt him with hope, sometimes humble him with fear, sometimes carry him to the right hand with consolations, sometimes to the left with afflictions, and not one of his days, no, not one of his hours, is in all points like another.

2. This is a necessary admonition, that we must endeavour to have a continual and inviolable equality of heart in so great an inequality of occurrences. And although all things turn and change variously about us, yet must we stand constantly immovable, always looking and aspiring towards our God. Let the ship take what course soever, let it sail towards the east, west, north, or south, what wind soever carries it, never will the needle of the compass look any other way than towards its fair Pole star. Let all turn upside down, not only round about us, but even within us, that is, let our soul be sorrowful or joyful, let it be in sweetness or bitterness, in peace or trouble, in light or darkness, in temptation or repose, in pleasure or displeasure, barren or fruitful, let the sun burn it or the dew refresh it, yet always must the needle of our heart, our mind, our superior will, which is our compass, look incessantly and tend continually towards the love of God, our Creator, Saviour, and only Sovereign Good. *Whether we live or die, says the Apostle, we belong to God (Rom. xiv. 8); and, Who shall be able to separate us from the love of God? (Rom. viii. 35).* No, nothing shall ever separate us from this love, neither tribulation, nor anguish, nor death, nor life, nor present pains, nor the fear of future accidents, nor the subtlety of evil spirits, nor the height of consolations, nor the depth of afflictions, nor fruitfulness, nor barrenness of heart ought ever to separate us from this holy charity founded in Christ Jesus.

3. This absolute resolution never to forsake God or abandon His sweet love serves as a counterpoise to our souls, to keep them in a holy indifference amidst the inequality of divers motions which the condition of this life brings them. For as little bees, surprised by the wind in the fields, embrace

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small stones, that they may be able to balance themselves in the air, and not be so easily abandoned to the mercy of the storm, so our soul, having by resolution vigorously embraced the precious love of God, continues constant in the midst of the inconstancy and mutability of consolations and afflictions, as well spiritual as temporal, interior as exterior. But, besides this general doctrine, we have need of some particular documents.

4. I say, then, that devotion consists not in the gentleness, softness, comfort, or sensible tenderness of the heart, which provokes us to tears and sighs, and gives us a kind of delight and savoury satisfaction in some spiritual exercises. No, dear *Philothea*, devotion and that are not the same thing, for many souls have this tenderness and consolation who, nevertheless, are very vicious, and consequently have not any true love of God, much less any true devotion. *Saul*, persecuting to death poor *David*, who fled from him into the wilderness of Engaddi, entered all alone into a cave where *David* and his people lay hidden. *David*, who on this occasion might have killed *Saul* a thousand times, spared his life, and would not so much as put him in fear, but having suffered him to go forth at his pleasure, called after him to declare his innocency, and to let him know that he had been at his mercy. Now hereupon what did *Saul* leave undone to show that his heart was mollified towards *David*? He called him his child, wept out aloud, praised him, confessed his meekness, prayed to God for him, foretold his future greatness, and commended his posterity to him. What greater sweetness and tenderness of heart could he make show of? And yet for all that he had not changed his heart, neither did he cease to persecute *David* as cruelly as before. So there are some persons who, considering the goodness of God and the Passion of our Saviour, feel great tenderness of heart, which forces them to sigh, to weep, pray, and give thanks with such sensibility as that one would say their hearts were possessed with deep devotion; but when this comes to the proof we find that, as the sudden showers of a hot summer, falling in great drops upon the earth and not piercing it, serve for nothing but to produce mushrooms, even so these tears and this tenderness, falling upon a vicious heart, and piercing it not, become altogether unprofitable. For notwithstanding all this, these poor souls part not from a farthing of their evil-gotten goods,

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renounce not one of their perverse affections, nor will they suffer the least inconvenience in the world for the service of our Saviour, for whose sake they wept. So that the good motions which they have had are nothing but spiritual mushrooms, which are not only no true devotion, but oftentimes great subtleties of the devil, who, entertaining souls with these poor consolations, makes them rest contented and satisfied with them, lest they should search further for true and solid devotion, which consists in a will constant, resolute, active, and ready to put in execution whatsoever they know to be acceptable to God.

5. A child will weep tenderly when he sees his mother pricked with a lancet to be let blood; but if his mother at the same time demand his apple or sugar-plums which he has in his hand, he will by no means let them go. Such are the most part of our tender devotions. Seeing the stroke of the lance which pierced the Heart of our Saviour crucified, we weep bitterly. Alas! *Philothea*, it is well done to lament this painful death and Passion of our Father and Redeemer, but why then do we not give Him in good earnest the apple which we have in our hands and which He demands so earnestly, that is, our heart, the only apple of love which our dear Saviour requires of us? Why do we not resign so many petty affections, delectations, and pleasures, which He would pull out of our hands and cannot, because they are our sugar-plums, of which we are more fond than desirous of heavenly grace? Ah! *Philothea*, these are the friendships of little children, tender but weak, fantastical and fruitless. Devotion then consists not in such tender and sensible affections, which sometimes proceed from a pliant nature, capable of any impression that shall be given it, and sometimes from the enemy, who to amuse us stirs up our imagination to an apprehension fit for such effects.

6. Yet these soft and tender affections are sometimes very good and profitable, for they provoke the appetite of the soul, strengthen the spirit, and add to the rigour of devotion a holy mirth and cheerfulness, which renders our actions good and acceptable even in the exterior. This satisfaction taken in heavenly things is that which made *David* cry out, *O Lord, how sweet are Thy words to my taste; they are sweeter than honey to my mouth* (Ps. cxviii. 103). And certainly the least consolation of devotion which we receive is worth all

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the most excellent recreations of the world. *The breasts and the milk* (Cant. i. 1), that is, the favours of the Heavenly Spouse, are sweeter to the soul than the most precious wine of earthly pleasures. He that once has tasted them esteems all other consolations but gall and wormwood. As they who hold sweet-root in their mouth receive such a sweetness from it that they feel neither hunger nor thirst, so they to whom God has given this heavenly manna of internal consolations can neither desire nor receive the contentments of the world, at least to take pleasure and entertain their affections in them. They are little foretastes of the immortal delights which God gives to souls that seek Him; they are the sugar-plums which He gives to His little children to gain them; they are cordial waters which He gives to strengthen them; and sometimes they are also pledges of eternal rewards.

7. They say that *Alexander* the Great, sailing in the main sea, first discovered *Arabia Felix* by the smell of the sweet odours which the wind brought him, and thereupon took great courage, he and his companions; so oftentimes we receive these pleasures and sweetness in the sea of this mortal life, which doubtless make us guess at the delights of the happy country of heaven, to which we all tend and aspire.

8. But you will say, Since there are sensible consolations which are good and come from God, and nevertheless there are others unprofitable, dangerous, yea, pernicious, which proceed either from nature or from the enemy, how shall I discern the one from the other and know those evil or unprofitable from those that are good? It is a general doctrine, *Philothea*, for all the passions and affections of our souls, that we must know them by their fruits; our hearts are trees, the affections and passions are the branches, works or actions are the fruits. The heart is good that has good affections, and the affections and passions are good which bring forth in us good effects and holy actions. If this softness, this tenderness, and these consolations make us more humble, patient, tractable, charitable and compassionate towards our neighbour, more fervent in mortifying our concupiscence and evil inclinations, more constant in our exercises, more meek and pliable to those whom we ought to obey, more sincere in our lives, then without doubt they are from God; but if these sweetnesses have no other contentment than for ourselves, if

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they make us curious, peevish, stubborn, fierce, presumptuous, severe towards our neighbours, and esteeming ourselves already little saints, disdaining to be any more subject to direction, doubtless they are false and pernicious consolations. A good tree brings forth none but good fruits.

9. When we shall have these tendernesses and consolations, we must humble ourselves profoundly before God, and let us take heed of saying, by reason of these comforts, *O how good am I!* No, *Philothea*, these are good things that make us nothing at all the better; for, as I have said, devotion consists not in them, but let us say, *O how good is God to such as hope in Him, to the soul that seeks Him* (Lament. iii. 25).

1. He that hath sugar in his mouth cannot say that his mouth is sweet, but he can well say that the sugar is sweet; so though the spiritual sweetness be very good, and though God who gives it to us is most good, yet it follows not that he who receiveth it is good. 2. Let us acknowledge that we are still little children who have need of milk; that these sugar-plums are given us because our spirit is yet tender and delicate, and has need of baits and allurements to be enticed to the love of God. 3. But after this, speaking generally and ordinarily, let us receive these graces and favours, humbly esteeming them exceeding precious, not so much because they are so in themselves, as because it is the hand of God which infuses them into our hearts, as a loving mother would do, who, to pet her child, puts sugar-plums into his mouth with her own hand, one by one; for if the child had wit, he would care more for the sweetness of his mother's fondling and caresses than for the sweetness of the sugar-plums themselves. So it is much, *Philothea*, to have these sweetnesses; but it is sweetness above all sweetness to consider that God with His loving and tender hand, like a mother, puts them into our mouth, into our heart, into our soul, and into our mind. 4. Having thus received them humbly, let us employ them carefully, according to the intention of the Giver. Wherefore, think we, does God bestow this sweetness upon us? To make us sweet towards every one, and loving towards Himself. The mother gives sugar-plums to her child to make him kiss her; let us then kiss our Blessed Saviour, who gives us so much sweetness. Now to kiss our Saviour is to obey Him, to keep His commandments, to do His will, to follow His desires, in a word, to embrace Him

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tenderly with obedience and loyalty. When, therefore, we shall receive any spiritual consolation, we must that day render ourselves more diligent in good works and humility.

10. Besides all this, we must from time to time renounce such sweetness, tenderness, and consolations, separating our heart from them, and protesting that although we accept them humbly, and esteem them because God sends them, and because they provoke us to His love, yet it is not them that we seek, but God and His holy love, not the comforts, but the Comforter, not the sweetness, but the sweet Saviour, not the tenderness, but Him who is the sweetness of heaven and earth; and in this affection we ought to dispose ourselves to persevere constantly in the holy love of God, although in all our life we should never taste of any consolation, and to say, as well upon *Mount Calvary* as upon *Mount Thabor*, *O Lord, it is good for me to be with Thee*, be Thou upon the Cross, or be Thou in glory. 6. To conclude, I admonish you that, if there shall happen to you any great quantity of such consolations, tenderness, tears, and sweetness, or any extraordinary thing in them, you confer sincerely with your spiritual conductor, and learn how to moderate and behave yourself in them; for it is written, *Hast thou found honey? eat but as much of it as is sufficient* (Prov. xxv. 16).

IMITATION—BK. II., CH. X.—OF GRATITUDE FOR THE GRACE OF GOD.

1. Why seekest thou repose since thou art born to labour? Dispose thyself to patience rather than to consolations; and to carrying the cross rather than to gladness. For who is there amongst those of the world that would not willingly receive comfort and spiritual joy, if he could obtain it at all times? Spiritual consolations, indeed, exceed all the delights of the world and pleasures of the flesh. For all worldly delights are either vain or impure; but spiritual delights alone are delightful and honourable, as they spring from virtue, and are infused by God into pure minds. But these Divine consolations no man can always enjoy when he will, because the time of temptation is not long absent.

2. But what very much opposes these heavenly visits is, a false liberty of mind and a great confidence in oneself. God doth well in giving the grace of consolation, but man doth ill

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in not returning it all to God with thanksgiving. And this is the reason why the gifts of grace cannot flow in us, because we are ungrateful to the Giver, nor do we return all to the fountain-head. For grace will be always given to him that duly returns thanks ; and what is wont to be given to the humble will be taken away from the proud.

3. I would not have any such consolation as robbeth me of compunction, nor do I wish to have such contemplation as leadeth to pride. For all that is high is not holy, nor is every pleasant thing good, nor every desire pure, nor is everything that is dear to us pleasing to God. I willingly accept of that grace which always maketh me more humble and more fearful, and more ready to renounce myself. He that hath been taught by the gift of grace, and instructed by the chastisement of its withdrawal, will not dare to attribute anything of good to himself, but will rather acknowledge himself to be poor and naked. Give to God what is His, and ascribe to thyself what is thine ; that is, give thanks to God for His grace ; but, as to thyself, be sensible that nothing is to be attributed to thee but sin, and the punishment due to sin.

4. Put thyself always in the lowest place, and the highest shall be given thee ; for the highest standeth not without the lowest. The Saints that are the highest in the sight of God are the least in their own eyes ; and the more glorious they are, the more humble are they in themselves. Full of truth and heavenly glory, they are not covetous of vainglory. Being grounded and established in God, they can by no means be proud. And they who attribute to God whatsoever good they have received, seek not glory from one another, but that glory which is from God alone ; and they desire above all things that God may be praised in themselves, and in all the Saints, and to this they are always tending.

5. Be grateful, then, for the least, and thou shalt be worthy to receive greater things. Let the least be to thee as something very great, and the most contemptible as a special favour. If thou considerest the dignity of the Giver, no gift will seem little or too mean for thee. For that is not little which is given by the Most High God. Yea, though He give punishment and stripes, it ought to be acceptable ; for whatever He suffereth to befall us, He always doth it for our salva-

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tion. He that desireth to retain the grace of God, let him be thankful for grace when it is given, and patient when it is withdrawn. Let him pray that it may return; let him be cautious and humble, lest he lose it.

BK. III., CH. XL.—THAT MAN HATH NO GOOD OF HIMSELF,
AND THAT HE CANNOT GLORY IN ANYTHING.

1. *Lord, what is man, that Thou art mindful of him; or the son of man, that Thou visitest him?* (Ps. viii. 5). What hath man deserved that Thou shouldst give him Thy grace? Lord, what cause have I to complain if Thou forsake me? or what can I justly allege if Thou grantest not that for which I ask? This most assuredly I may truly think and say, Lord, I am nothing, I can do nothing, I have nothing of myself that is good; but I am in all things defective, and ever tend to nothing. And unless I am assisted and interiorly instructed by thee, I become wholly tepid and relaxed.

2. *But Thou, O Lord, art always the same* (Ps. ci. 13), and endurest unto eternity; ever good, just, and holy; doing all things well, justly, and holily, and disposing them in wisdom. But I, who am more inclined to go back than to go forward, continue not always in one state; for seven different times are changed over me. Yet it quickly becometh better when it pleaseth Thee, and Thou stretchest out Thy helping hand; for Thou alone, without man's aid, canst so assist and strengthen me that my countenance shall be no more diversely changed, but my heart be converted, and find its rest in Thee alone.

3. Wherefore, did I but know well how to cast from me all human comfort, either for the sake of devotion, or through the necessity by which I am compelled to seek Thee, because there is no man that can comfort me, then might I deservedly hope in Thy favour, and rejoice in the gift of new consolation.

4. Thanks be to Thee, from whom all proceedeth, as often as it goeth well with me. I, indeed, am but vanity, and nothing in Thy sight; an inconstant and weak man. Whence, therefore, can I glory, or for what do I desire to be thought highly of? Forsooth, of my very nothingness;

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and this is most vain. Truly vainglory is an evil plague, the greatest vanity; because it draweth away from true glory and robbeth us of heavenly grace. For whilst a man taketh complacency in himself he displeaseth Thee; while he panteth after human applause he is deprived of true virtue.

5. But true glory and holy exultation is to glory in Thee, and not in oneself; to rejoice in Thy Name, not in one's own strength; to find pleasure in no creature, save only for Thy sake. Let Thy Name be praised, not mine; let Thy holy Name be blessed, but let nothing be attributed to me of the praises of men. Thou art my glory, Thou art the joy of my heart. In Thee will I glory and rejoice all the day; *but for myself, I will glory in nothing but in my infirmities* (2 Cor. xii. 5).

6. Let the Jews *seek glory one from another* (John v. 44); I will seek that which is from God alone. All human glory, all temporal honour, all worldly grandeur, compared to Thy eternal glory, are but vanity and folly. O my truth and my mercy! my God! O Blessed Trinity! to Thee alone be all praise, honour, power, and glory, for endless ages of ages.

LESSON L. OF SPIRITUAL DRYNESS.

LESSON L.

Of Spiritual Dryness and Barrenness : Of the Want of all Consolation.

TEXTS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

Ourselves also, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption of the sons of God, the redemption of our body. For we are saved by hope. But hope that is seen is not hope. For what a man seeth, why doth he hope for? But if we hope for that which we see not: we wait for it with patience. Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmity. For we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit himself asketh for us with unspeakable groanings. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what the Spirit desireth: because he asketh for the saints according to God. And we know that to them that love God all things work together unto good, to such as according to his purpose are called to be saints.—Rom. viii. 23.

And all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.—2 Tim. iii. 12.

A woman, when she is in labour, hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but when she hath brought forth the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. So also you now indeed have sorrow, but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice; and your joy no man shall take from you.—John xvi. 21.

These words warn you that interior anxieties must in this life be of necessity suffered by the soul, feeling those oppositions and contradictions of senses and thoughts which lust and wrestle against the spirit. And, therefore, let the soul determine to bear this persecution, and these birth-pains of the spirit, till the hand of God sends down release and consolation. This mystery of spiritual distress is explained by both your masters as follows.

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INTRODUCTION—PT. IV., CH. XIV.—OF SPIRITUAL DRYNESS AND BARRENNESS.

1. You shall then do as I have directed you, dear *Philothea*, when you shall have such consolations. But this fair and pleasant weather will not last always; it will happen sometimes that you shall be so destitute and deprived of all sense of devotion that you will think your soul a wild, fruitless, barren field, in which there is neither path nor way to find God, nor any dew of grace to refresh it, because of these droughts which seem to reduce it altogether to fallow waste. Alas! the poor soul in this state deserves compassion, and especially when this desolation is vehement, for then, in imitation of *David*, she feeds herself night and day with tears, while the enemy, to cast her into despair by a thousand suggestions, mocks her, saying, Ah! poor soul, where is thy God? by what means canst thou find Him? who shall ever restore to thee the joy of His holy grace?

2. What will you do at that time, *Philothea*? Observe from whence this evil proceeds; for we ourselves are often the cause of our own drought and barrenness. 1. As a mother denies sugar to her child that is subject to the worms, so God takes consolations from us when we take some vain pleasure in them, and are subject to the worms of presumption. *O my God, it is good for me that Thou hast humbled me* (Ps. cxviii. 71); *yes, for before I was humbled I did offend Thee* (ib. 67). 2. When we neglect to gather the sweetness and delights of the love of God in due time, then in punishment of our slothfulness He removes them from us. The *Israelite* who gathered not manna early in the morning could find none after sunrise, for then it was all melted. 3. We are sometimes laid in a bed of sensual contentment and transitory comforts, as was the spouse of the Canticles; the Bridegroom of our souls comes and knocks at the door of our heart; He inspires us to return to our spiritual exercises, but we dally with Him, because it troubles us to forsake these fooleries, and to separate ourselves from our false delights; for this cause He goes from us, and leaves us in our sloth; but afterwards, when we would seek Him out, we must suffer much to find Him, and deservedly, since we have been so unfaithful and disloyal to His love as to refuse it for worldly vanities. Ah! you still have the flour of *Egypt*,

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you shall have none of the manna of heaven ! Bees detest all kind of artificial odours, and the sweetnesses of the Holy Ghost are incompatible with the sophisticated delights of the world.

3. The dissimulation and cunning used in the confessions and in the spiritual communications we make to our Director causes this drought and barrenness ; for since you lie to the Holy Ghost, no marvel if He deny you His consolations. You will not be simple and open as a little child, you shall not have the sugar-plums of little children.

4. You have glutted yourself with worldly contentments, no wonder then if spiritual delights be unsavoury to you. Doves already satisfied, says the ancient proverb, think cherries bitter. *He hath filled the hungry with good things,* says our Lady, *and hath sent the rich away empty* (Luke i. 53). They that are rich in worldly treasures, are not capable of spiritual ones.

5. Have you carefully preserved the fruits of consolations already received ? then shall you receive new ones ; for to him that has more shall be given, and he that has not what was given to him, but by negligence has lost it, even that he hath not shall be taken from him ; that is, he shall be deprived of the favours and graces which were prepared for him. It is true the rain revives plants that are green, but from those which are no longer so, it takes away the life which they have not ; for it wholly rotteth them.

6. For many such causes do we lose comfort in devotion, and fall into barrenness and dryness of spirit. Let us then examine our conscience whether we find in us any such fault. But note, *Philothea*, this examination is not to be made with unquietness and too much curiosity ; but after we have faithfully called ourselves to account, if we find the cause of the evil in ourselves, let us thank God ; for the disease is half cured when the cause of it is discovered. If, on the other side, you find nothing in particular which may seem to have caused this barrenness, trouble not yourself about any more curious inquisition, but with all simplicity, without examining any more particularities, do this which I will tell you.

7. First, humble yourself profoundly in the presence of God, in acknowledgment that you are nothing, misery only excepted. Alas ! what am I when I am left to myself ? No other thing, O Lord, but a dry barren ground, which, by being everywhere burnt up and cracked, witnesses how it thirsts

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for rain from heaven, and in the meantime the wind parches it, and scatters it into dust. 2. Call upon God, and demand of Him His spiritual joy : *Render me, O Lord, the joy of Thy salvation* (Ps. l. 14) ; *My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me* (Matt. xxvi. 39). Get thee away, O thou unfruitful north wind that witherest my soul, and come, O prosperous wind of consolations, and blow upon my garden, and its good affections will breathe forth the odour of sweetness. 3. Go to your Confessor, open your heart to him, make him see all the recesses of your soul, take his advice sincerely and humbly ; for God, who infinitely loves obedience, often renders very profitable the counsel we take from others, especially from the directors of our souls, even though it seem unlikely to help, as He made the waters of *Jordan* healthful to *Naaman*, the use of which *Eliseus*, without any appearance of human reason, had ordained him.

8. But after all this, nothing is so profitable, nothing so fruitful in such drought and barrenness, as to moderate our desire for deliverance, and not suffer it to be too ardent and passionate. I say not but that we ought humbly and quietly to wish for this deliverance ; yet we should not be too earnest, but submit ourselves to the pure mercy of God's Providence ; to the end that, so long as it pleases Him, He may make use of us amidst these thorns and amongst these desires. Let us say, then, to God at these times, *O Father, if it be possible, take this cup from me*. But let us withal add with great courage, *Yet not my will be done, but Thine* (Matt. xxvi. 39). And here let us stop, with as much repose as may be ; for God seeing us in this holy indifference, will comfort us with many graces and favours, as when He saw *Abraham* resolved to deprive himself of his son *Isaac*, He was pleased with his indifference and his pure resignation, comforting him with a most pleasant vision, and with most welcome blessings. We ought then, in all kinds of afflictions, as well corporal as spiritual, in all distractions or subtractions of sensible devotion happening to us, to say from our heart with profound submission, *Our Lord gave me consolations, and our Lord has taken them from me, His Holy Name be blessed!* For if we persist in this humility, He will restore us His choice blessings, as He did to *Job*, who constantly used the like words in all his desolations.

9. Finally, my *Philothea*, in all this drought and sterility

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let us not lose courage, but, expecting patiently the return of consolations, let us go on our way, and forsake not any exercise of devotion, but, if it be possible, multiply good works, and, not being able to present to our Spouse moist sweetmeats,* let us offer Him dry ones; for all is one to Him, provided that the heart which offers them be perfectly resolved to love Him. When the spring is fair, bees make more honey and fewer nymphs; for the good weather favouring them, they are so busy in their harvest upon the flowers, that they forget the increasing of their young ones; but when the spring is cold and stormy, they make more young ones and less honey; for not being able to go forth to gather honey, they employ themselves to multiply and increase their race. So many times it happens, *Philothea*, that the soul, finding herself in the fair spring of spiritual comforts, busies herself so much in gathering and sucking them, that, in the abundance of these delights she produces fewer good works; and, on the contrary, in spiritual storms and desolations, the more destitute she is of the pleasant contentments of devotion, the more she multiplies solid works, and abounds in the inward production of true virtues, as of patience, humility, self-contempt, resignation, and abnegation of self-love.

10. It is, then, a great abuse of many, especially of women, to believe that the service we do to God without savour, without tenderness of heart and feeling, is less agreeable to His Divine Majesty, since, on the contrary, our actions are like roses, which, when fresh, have more beauty, yet, when dry, have more strength and fragrance. For just so, though our works done with tenderness of heart are more acceptable to us—to us, I say, that consider only our own delight—yet, when they are performed in time of dryness and barrenness, they have more sweetness and value in the sight of God. Yes, dear *Philothea*, in time of desolation our will carries us to the service of God by main force, and, consequently, it must needs be more vigorous and constant than in time of comfort.

11. It is no great matter to serve a prince in the pleasures of peace and amongst the delights of the court, but to serve him in the difficulties of war, amongst troubles and persecu-

* Confitures liquides.

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tions, is a true mark of constancy and loyalty. *B. Angela of Foligno* says that the prayers which are most acceptable to God are those which are made by force and constraint, that is, to which we apply ourselves not for any delight we find in them, or any inclination of our own, but merely to please God, whereto our will drives us by violence, forcing and breaking through the dryness and resistance which oppose us. I say the same of all sorts of good works, for the more contradiction we find to them either exterior or interior, the more are they prized and esteemed in the sight of God. The less there is of our particular interest in the pursuit of virtues, the more brightly the purity of God's love shines in us. A child easily kisses his mother when she gives him sugar ; but it is a sign of greater love if he kiss her after she has given him wormwood or aloes.

CH. XV.—CONFIRMATION AND EXPLANATION OF WHAT HAS BEEN SAID BY A NOTABLE EXAMPLE.

I. To make this instruction more evident, I will recite an excellent piece of the history of *S. Bernard*, in such manner as I have found it in a learned and judicious writer. He says, then, thus :—It is an ordinary thing almost to all them that begin to serve God, and are not yet experienced in the subtraction of grace and in spiritual changes, that the fervour of sensible devotion, and that acceptable light which makes them hasten into the way of God, happening to fail, they presently lose courage, and fall into faintness and sadness of heart. Persons of understanding give this reason for it, that human nature cannot long continue fasting and without some delectation, either heavenly or earthly. Now, as souls lifted up above themselves by the taste of higher pleasures easily renounce visible objects, so when by God's disposition that spiritual joy is taken from them, finding themselves on the other side deprived of bodily comforts, and being not yet accustomed to expect with patience the return of the true sun, it seems to them that they are neither in heaven nor on earth, but that they are to be buried in a perpetual night, so that, like little children newly weaned, having lost the breast, they languish and groan, and become froward and troublesome, especially to themselves.

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2. This, then, happened, in a journey related in the history, to one of the company called *Geoffrey of Peronne*, but newly dedicated to the service of God. He being suddenly become dry and destitute of consolation, and possessed with inward darkness, began to remember his worldly friends, his parents, and the riches he had forsaken, by which means he was assaulted with so strong a temptation, that not being able to hide it in his discourse, one of his greatest confidants perceived it, and having dexterously found a fit opportunity, spake thus unto him in private :—What means this, *Geoffrey*? whence comes it that thou art so extraordinary pensive and melancholy? Ah, brother! answered *Geoffrey* with a deep sigh, I shall never more be merry while I live. The other, moved with compassion at these words, with a brotherly zeal went and told all this to their common father, *S. Bernard*, who, perceiving the danger, went into the next church to pray to God for him, and *Geoffrey*, in the meanwhile overwhelmed with sadness, resting his head upon a stone, fell asleep; but after a little time both of them arose, the one from prayer with the favour obtained, the other from sleep with so pleasant and smiling a countenance that his dear friend, marvelling at so great and sudden a change, could not refrain from giving him a friendly reproach upon the answer he had but a little before given him. Then *Geoffrey* replied :—I told thee before that I should never more be joyful, now I assure thee that I shall never more be sorrowful.

3. This was the issue of that devout person's temptation. But observe in this story, dear *Philothea*—1. That God ordinarily gives some foretastes of heavenly joy to such as enter into His service, to withdraw them from earthly pleasures and encourage them in the pursuit of the Divine love, as a mother makes use of honey to entice and allure her little child to the breast. 2. That notwithstanding this, God sometimes, according to the disposition of His wisdom, takes from us the milk and honey of consolations, to the end that, being weaned in this manner, we may learn to eat the drier and harder bread of a vigorous devotion, exercised by the trial of affliction and temptations. 3. That sometimes very vehement temptations arise in this drought and barrenness, and then we must constantly fight against them, for they come not from God. But withal we must patiently suffer this desolation, since God is pleased to exercise us with it. 4. That we must never lose

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courage among these inward griefs, nor say with good *Geoffry*, I shall never more be joyful ; for in the night we must expect the day, and again in the fairest spiritual weather, we must not say, *Now shall I never more be sad.* No, for as the wise man says, in time of prosperity we must be mindful of adversity ; we must hope in our afflictions and fear in our prosperities, and as well in the one as in the other we must always be humble. 5. That it is a sovereign remedy to discover our evil to some spiritual friend who may be able to comfort us.

4. In fine, for conclusion of this so necessary admonition, I observe that, as in all other things, so in these, God and the devil have contrary designs. For God would by them bring us to purity of heart, to a general renunciation of our own interest in what concerns His service, and to a perfect denial of ourselves, while the devil endeavours by his pains to make us lose courage, and to put us into the way of sensual pleasures, and at last to render us troublesome to ourselves and others, thereby to discredit and defame holy devotion. But if you observe diligently these lessons which I have given you, you shall much augment your perfection in the exercise you shall perform amongst these interior afflictions, of which I will not end the discourse till I have said one word more. 6. Sometimes these loathings, this drought and barrenness proceed from an indisposition of body, as when through an excess of watching, working, fasting we find ourselves oppressed with weariness, drowsiness, heaviness, and such like infirmities, which, although they depend upon the body, yet cease not to incommode the spirit by reason of the strict correspondence between them. Now in such occasions we must always be mindful to perform many acts of virtue with our spirit or superior will ; for although our whole soul seem to be asleep and stupefied with drowsiness and weariness, yet the actions of our spirit cease not to be very acceptable to God, and we may say at that time with the sacred Spouse, *I sleep, but my heart watcheth* (Cant. v. 2) ; and, as I said before, though there be less delight in working in this manner, yet there is more virtue and merit. The remedy in such occurrences is to refresh the body by some kind of lawful delight and recreation. So *S. Francis* ordained that his Religious should use such moderation in their labours that they should not depress the fervour of the spirit.

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5. And this makes me remember how this glorious Father was once assaulted and tormented with so profound a melancholy of spirit that he could not but declare it in his behaviour ; for when he desired to converse with his Religious, he could not ; if he withdrew himself from them, it was worse ; abstinence and mortification of the flesh oppressed him, and prayer eased him not at all. He continued two years in this manner, so that he seemed utterly forsaken of God ; but at length, after he had humbly suffered this rough tempest, our Saviour in a moment restored him to a happy tranquillity. This shows that the greatest servants of God are subject to these disturbances, and therefore the least ought not to be dismayed if sometimes they happen to them.

IMITATION—BK. II., CH. IX.—OF THE WANT OF ALL CONSOLATION.

1. It is not hard to despise all human consolation when we have Divine. But it is much, and very much, to be able to forego all comfort, both human and Divine, and to be willing to bear this interior banishment for God's honour, and to seek oneself in nothing, nor to think of one's own merit. What great thing is it, if thou be cheerful and devout when grace comes ? This hour is desirable to all. He rides pleasantly enough who is carried by the grace of God. And what wonder if he feel no weight who is borne up by the Almighty and led on by the Sovereign Guide ?

2. We love to have something to comfort us, and it is with difficulty that a man can put off himself. The holy Martyr Lawrence, with his priest, overcame the world, because he despised whatever seemed delightful in this world ; and, for the love of Christ, he suffered the High Priest of God, Sixtus, whom he exceedingly loved, to be taken away from him. He overcame, therefore, the love of man by the love of the Creator ; and instead of the consolation he had in man, he made choice rather of God's good pleasure. So do thou also learn to part with an intimate and beloved friend for the love of God. And take it not to heart when thou art forsaken by a friend, knowing that at last we must all be separated one from another.

3. A man must have a great and a long conflict within

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himself before he can learn fully to overcome himself, and to direct his whole affection towards God. When a man stands upon himself, he easily inclines after human consolations; but a true lover of Christ, and a diligent pursuer of virtue, does not fall back upon comforts, nor seek such sensible sweetness, but rather prefers to bear hard exercises, and severe labours for Christ.

4. Therefore, when God gives spiritual consolation, receive it with thanksgiving; but know that it is God's gift, and not thy merit. Be not lifted up, be not overjoyed, nor vainly presume, but rather be the more humble for this gift, more cautious, too, and fearful in all thy actions; for that hour will pass away, and temptation follow. When consolation shall be taken away from thee, do not presently despair, but with humility and patience await the heavenly visitation, since God is able to restore to thee more abundant consolation. This is no new nor strange thing to those who have known the way of God; for among the great Saints and ancient Prophets there hath often been this kind of vicissitude.

5. Hence there was one who, when grace was with him, exclaimed, *I said in my abundance, I shall not be moved for ever* (Ps. xxix. 7). But when grace was withdrawn, he tells us what he experienced in himself, saying, *Thou hast turned away Thy face from me, and I became troubled* (Ps. xxx. 7). Yet even then he despaireth not, but more earnestly prayeth to the Lord, and saith, *Unto thee, O Lord, will I cry; and to my God will I make supplication*. At length he receiveth the fruit of his prayer, and witnesseth that he was heard, saying, *The Lord hath heard, and hath had mercy on me; the Lord is become my helper*. But in what way? *Thou hast turned, he saith, my mourning into joy to me, and Thou hast encompassed me with gladness*. If it hath been thus with great Saints, we that are weak and poor must not be discouraged if we are sometimes fervent, sometimes cold, because the Spirit cometh and goeth according to His own good pleasure. Wherefore, holy Job saith, *Thou visitest him early in the morning, and on a sudden Thou triest him* (Job vii. 38).

6. Wherein, then, can I hope, or in what must I put my trust, but in God's great mercy alone, and in the hope of heavenly grace. For whether I have with me good men, or devout brethren, or faithful friends, or holy books, or beautiful treatises, or sweet canticles and hymns, all these help but

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little, give me but little relish, when I am forsaken by grace and left in my own poverty. At such a time there is no better remedy than patience, and denying of myself according to the will of God.

7. I never found any one so religious and devout as not sometimes to experience a withdrawal of grace, or feel a diminution of fervour. No Saint was ever so sublimely rapt and illuminated as not to be tempted sooner or later. For he is not worthy of the sublime contemplation of God who has not, for God's sake, been exercised with some tribulation. For when that temptation goes before, it is usually a sign that consolation will follow. For heavenly comfort is promised to such as have been proved by temptation. *To him that shall overcome, saith the Lord, I will give to eat of the tree of life* (Apoc. ii. 7).

8. Now Divine consolation is given that a man may be able the better to support adversities, and temptation followeth that he may not be puffed up by the good. The devil sleepeth not, neither is the flesh yet dead; therefore thou must not cease to prepare thyself for the battle; for on the right hand and on the left are enemies that never rest.

LESSON LI. OF A YEARLY RETREAT.

LESSON LI.

Of the Method of Renewing every Year our Good Purposes: Considerations on the Favour which God does us by Calling us to His Service: Examination of our Soul concerning her Progress in Devotion.

TEXTS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

For which cause I admonish thee, that thou stir up the grace of God which is in thee by the imposition of my hands. For God hath not given us the spirit of fear: but of power, and of love, and of sobriety.—2 Tim. i. 6.

To put off, according to former conversation, the old man, who is corrupted according to the desire of error. And be renewed in the spirit of your mind: and put on the new man, who, according to God, is created in justice, and holiness of truth.—Ephes. iv. 22.

Try your ownelves if you be in the faith: prove ye yourselves. Know you not your ownelves, that Christ Jesus is in you, unless perhaps you be reprobates?—2 Cor. xiii. 5.

From these words you will understand that, besides your wonted exercises of piety, you have need of setting apart a certain time for self-inspection and examination: to judge of your good purposes, progress, or slackening in fervour: to collect new forces in order to acquire what is wanting, and lop off what is in excess. *S. Francis of Sales* will now tell you how this is to be done.

INTRODUCTION—PT. V., CH. I.—THAT WE OUGHT EVERY YEAR TO RENEW OUR GOOD PURPOSES BY THE EXERCISES FOLLOWING.

1. The first point of these exercises consists in knowing well the importance of them. Our human nature falls easily from her good affections, because of the frailty and evil in-

LESSON LI. OF A YEARLY RETREAT.

clinations of our flesh, which burden the soul and drag her downwards, unless she often raise up herself by main force of resolution, as birds fall suddenly to the ground, if they multiply not the strokes and spreadings of their wings to keep themselves in flight. For this cause, dear *Philothea*, you have need very often to renew and repeat the good purposes you have made to serve God, for fear lest by not doing so you relapse into your first estate, or rather into a far worse ; for spiritual falls have this property, that they cast us always lower than the estate was from which we ascended up to devotion.

2. There is no clock, be it never so good, but must be wound up twice a day, morning and evening, and besides that, at least once a year it must be taken in pieces to take away the rust it has gathered, to mend what is bent or broken, and to repair what is worn ; so he that has a true care of his heart ought to wind it up to God evening and morning by the aforesaid exercise ; and, moreover, many times take a review of his estate, redress and rectify it, and at least once a year take it in pieces, and examine diligently every part of it, that is, all its affections and passions, that all defects may be repaired ; and as the clockmaker, with some delicate oil, anoints the wheels, the springs, and all the moving parts of his clock, that the motions may be more nimble and the clock less subject to rust, so the devout person who has thus examined his heart, to renew it well must anoint it with the sacraments of confession and the Holy Eucharist. This exercise will repair your forces decayed by time, warm your heart, make your good resolutions return green and your virtues blossom. The ancient Christians practised this diligently on the anniversary day of our Saviour's Baptism, on which, as *S. Gregory Nazianzen* witnesses, they renewed those professions and protestations which they had made in this sacrament. Let us do the like, my dear *Philothea*, disposing ourselves most willingly to it, and employing ourselves very seriously therein. Having then chosen a fit time, according to the advice of your ghostly father, retiring yourself into a little more spiritual and real solitude than ordinary, make one, or two, or three meditations on the following points, according to the method I have given you in the Second Part.

LESSON LI. RETREAT CONSIDERATIONS.

CH. II.—CONSIDERATIONS ON THE FAVOUR WHICH GOD DOES US BY CALLING US TO HIS SERVICE, ACCORDING TO THE PROTESTATION.

1. Consider the points of your Protestation. The first is to have for ever forsaken, cast away, detested, and renounced all mortal sin ; the second to have dedicated and consecrated your soul, your heart, and your body with all your faculties, to the love and service of God ; the third, that if you chance to fall into any evil action, you will immediately rise again by God's grace. Are not these good, just, noble, and generous resolutions ? Consider well in your own soul how holy and reasonable this Protestation is, and how much to be desired.

2. Consider to whom you have made this Protestation, for it is to God. If our solemn word given to men strictly obliges us, how much more does that we have given to God ? *Ah Lord ! said David, it is to Thee my heart hath spoken, my heart hath pronounced this good word ; I will not forget it (Ps. xliv. 2).*

3. Consider in whose presence ; for it was in the sight of the whole Court of Heaven. Ah ! the Blessed Virgin, *S. Joseph*, your good Angel, *S. Louis*, all this blessed company beheld you, and sighed at your words with sighs of joy and approbation, and with eyes of unspeakable love saw your heart prostrate at the feet of our Saviour, consecrating itself to His service. They made particular triumph for it in the heavenly *Jerusalem*, and they will now make commemoration of it, if with a true heart you renew your resolutions.

4. Consider by what means you made this Protestation. Ah ! how good and gracious was God to you at that time ! Tell me truly were you not invited by the sweet enticements of the Holy Ghost ? The cords with which God drew your little barque to this secure haven, were they not of love and charity ? How He went on alluring you with His Divine sugar, the sacraments, reading, and prayer ! Ah, dear *Philothea*, you were asleep, and God watched over you, over your heart He thought thoughts of peace, He meditated for you meditations of love.

5. Consider at what time God drew you to these great resolutions ; it was in the flower of your age. Ah ! what happiness to learn betimes that which we cannot know but too

LESSON LI. RETREAT CONSIDERATIONS.

late. *S. Augustine*, having been called at the age of thirty years, cried out: *O ancient Beauty, how is it that I know Thee so late? Alas! I saw Thee before, but considered Thee not!* And you may well say, O ancient Sweetness, why did I not taste of Thee sooner? And yet, alas! you did not deserve it then. Therefore, acknowledging the great grace of God in calling you to Him in your youth, say with *David*, *Thou hast enlightened me, O God, and touched me from my youth, and I will for ever declare Thy mercy* (Ps. lxx. 17). But if this were in old age, O *Philothea*, what a grace, after you had misspent so many former years, that God has called you before death, and stopped the course of your misery, when had it continued you had been eternally miserable!

6. Consider the effects of this vocation, and I believe you will find a good change, comparing that which you are with that which you have been. Do you not esteem it a happiness to know how to speak to God by prayer? to have an affection to love Him? to have appeased and pacified many passions which tormented you? to have avoided many sins and perplexities of conscience? and, in a word, to have communicated so much more often than you would have done, uniting yourself to this sovereign Fountain of eternal graces? Ah! what inestimable favours are these! we must weigh them, *Philothea*, with the weights of the Sanctuary. It is God's Right Hand that has done all this. *The Right Hand of God, says David, has done powerfully; His Right Hand has raised me. I will not die, but live, and declare with heart, word, and deed the wonders of His goodness* (Ps. cxvii. 16).

7. After all these considerations, which, as you see, do furnish you with plenty of good affections, you must simply conclude with thanksgiving, and an affectionate prayer for your good progress. And so retire with great humility and confidence in God, deferring to pronounce your resolutions till after the second point of this exercise.

CH. III.—THE EXAMINATION OF OUR SOUL CONCERNING HER ADVANCEMENT IN DEVOTION.

1. The second point of this exercise is somewhat long, and to practise it it is not requisite to perform it all at once but at divers times, so as to take that which concerns your

LESSON LI. RETREAT EXAMINATIONS.

demeanour towards God at one time ; that which appertains to yourself at another ; that which touches your neighbour at a third ; and the examining of your passions at the fourth. Neither is it requisite or advisable to do it all kneeling, but only the beginning and the ending, which include the affections. The other points of the examination you may perform profitably walking, or more profitably in bed, if you can be there without drowsiness and thoroughly awake ; but to do this you must have read them well before. Yet it is requisite to perform all this second point in three days and two nights at the most, taking every day and night some hour, that is to say, some time most convenient for you, for if this exercise should be done at times far distant one from another, it would lose its force and make but weak impressions.

2. After every point of the examination, observe in what you find yourself to fail, and in what you are to blame, and what principal disorders you have discovered, that so you may declare them, and take counsel, resolution, and strength of spirit ; and although on those days in which you shall perform this exercise it is not necessary to retire yourself absolutely from company, yet you must be somewhat more private than ordinary, especially towards the evening, that you may go early to bed, and take the rest of body and repose of mind necessary to meditation ; and in the daytime you must use frequent aspirations to God, to our Lady, to the angels, to all the heavenly Jerusalem : and all this must be done with a heart longing after God and the perfection of your soul.

3. To begin this examination well : 1. Place yourself in the presence of God ; 2. Invoke the Holy Ghost, imploring light and clearness that you may know yourself well, with *S. Augustine*, who cried out before God in humble spirit, *O Lord, let me know Thee, and let me know myself*, and with *S. Francis*, who asked God, *Who art Thou, and who am I ?* Protest that you are not solicitous of your advancement to the end to rejoice at it in yourself, but rejoice at it in God ; not to glorify yourself, but to glorify God, and give Him thanks for it. Protest likewise that if you find that you have gone but little forward, or rather backward, you will not for all that be dejected, or wax colder through faintness of heart, but will rather take more courage, become more humble, and take more care to amend your faults by the assistance of God's grace. 3. This done, consider gently and quietly how

LESSON LI. RETREAT EXAMINATIONS.

you have behaved yourself even till that present hour towards God, towards your neighbour, and towards yourself.

CH. IV.—AN EXAMINATION OF THE ESTATE OF OUR SOULS TOWARDS GOD.

1. In what state is your heart as concerning mortal sin? Have you a firm resolution never to commit any, whatsoever shall happen? Has this resolution continued since your last protestation till this time? In this resolution consists the foundation of a spiritual life.

2. How is your heart disposed in respect of God's commandments? Do you find them good, pleasant, and delightful? Ah! my child, he that has his taste right and his stomach good loves wholesome meats and rejects others.

3. How is your heart in case of venial sins? We cannot keep ourselves from committing now and then one; but is there none to which you have a special inclination; or, what is worse, is there none to which you bear love and affection?

4. How is your heart affected towards spiritual exercises? Do you love them and esteem them? Are you not out of humour with them? To which of them do you find yourself least or most inclined? To hear the word of God, to read it, to discourse of it, to meditate, to aspire to God, to go to confession to receive spiritual instructions, to prepare yourself for Communion, to communicate, to restrain your affections, in all this what is there repugnant to your heart? And if you find anything to which your heart has less inclination, examine from whence that dislike arises, and what causes it.

5. How is your heart towards God Himself? Does it take pleasure in the remembrance of God? Does it find sweetness therein? Ah! *David* said, *I remembered God, and was delighted* (Ps. lxxvi. 4). Do you find a promptness and willingness in your heart to love God, and a particular contentment in relishing this love? Does your heart recreate itself in meditating on the immensity, bounty, and sweetness of God? If the remembrance of God happen to you amidst affairs and vanities of the world, does it find place in your heart? Does it seize upon it? Do you find your heart turn towards God, and, as it were, go to meet Him? Certainly there are such souls in the world.

LESSON LI. RETREAT EXAMINATIONS.

6. A wife, when her husband comes home from a long journey, so soon as she knows of his return or hears his voice, although she be engaged in business, and detained from him by some necessity, yet her heart is not withheld from him, but abandons all other thoughts to think upon her husband returned. It is the same with souls that love God well; let them be never so busy, when the remembrance of God comes near them, they neglect all things else for joy that this dear remembrance is returned. And this is an extremely good sign.

7. How is your heart affected towards Jesus Christ, God, and Man? Do you take pleasure in Him? Bees delight in their honey, wasps in ill savours; so good souls take a contentment in Jesus Christ, and bear an extreme tenderness of love towards Him; but the wicked delight in vanities.

8. How is your heart affected to our Blessed Lady, your good Angel, and the Saints? Do you truly love them? Have you an especial confidence in their favour and intercession? Do their images, lives, and praises please you?

9. Concerning your tongue, how do you speak of God? Does it please you to speak well of Him according to your condition and ability? Do you like to sing hymns?

10. Concerning works, think whether you have a true hearty desire of the exterior glory of God, and to do somewhat for His honour; for such as love God love with Him the decoration of His House.

11. Consider whether you have forsaken any affection, or renounced anything for God's sake; for it is a great sign of love to deprive ourselves of anything in consideration of Him whom we love. What have you then heretofore forsaken for the love of God?

LESSON LII.

Examination of Our Estate touching Ourselves, Our Neighbour : Examination of the Affections of Our Soul : Conclusion of this Examination.

No texts of Scripture are given for these two last lessons, because they consist only of exercises framed, in accordance with principles already laid down, by the practical prudence of the holy Doctor, S. Francis of Sales. And it is enough to give his exercises.

INTRODUCTION—PT. V., CH. V.—AN EXAMINATION OF OUR ESTATE TOUCHING OURSELVES.

1. How do you love yourself? Do you not love yourself too much for the world's sake? If so, you will desire to dwell always here, and will be very solicitous to establish yourself on earth; but if you love yourself for Heaven's sake, you will desire, at least you will be contented, to depart hence whensoever it shall please our Saviour.

2. Do you keep good order in the love of yourself? For there is nothing ruins us but the inordinate love of ourselves. Now, well ordered love requires that we love the soul better than the body, that we take more care to store up virtue than any other thing, that we make more account of heavenly glory than of base and transitory honour. A well ordered heart will oftener say to itself, *What will the angels say if I think upon such a thing*, than *What will men say?*

3. What love do you bear to your heart? Are you willing to serve it when it is sick? Alas! you owe it this care to help it, and procure for it succour from others when passions torment it, and to lay aside all other cares for this.

4. What do you esteem yourself in the sight of God? Nothing, doubtless. It is no great humility in a fly to think herself nothing in regard of a mountain, nor for a drop of water to esteem itself nothing in comparison of the sea, nor for a spark of fire to hold itself nothing in respect of the sun. But humility consists in not esteeming ourselves

LESSON LII. EXAMINATION OF OUR SPIRITUAL STATE.

better than others, and in desiring not to be esteemed by others. In what estate are you in this respect?

5. Touching your tongue—do you not boast either one way or another? Do you not flatter yourself in speaking of yourself?

6. As for works—do you use no recreation destructive to your health? I mean, vain and unprofitable pleasures, late hours without cause, and such like.

CH. VI.—AN EXAMINATION OF THE ESTATE OF OUR SOULS TOWARDS OUR NEIGHBOUR.

1. The love between husband and wife ought to be gentle and calm, firm and constant, and grounded principally on the ordinance of God who commends and requires it. The same is to be understood of love amongst children, kindred, and also amongst friends, every one in his degree.

2. But to speak in general, what is the state of your heart towards your neighbour? Do you love him cordially and for God's sake? To discern this well you must represent to yourself certain peevish and crabbed persons; for it is with such people that we exercise the love of God towards our neighbour, and much more with such as have injured us either in word or deed. Examine well whether your heart be right towards them, or whether you find any repugnance against this love.

3. Are you apt to speak ill of your neighbour, and especially of such as love you not? Do you any prejudice to your neighbour, directly or indirectly? With a little reflection you will easily discern your defects.

CH. VII.—AN EXAMINATION OF THE AFFECTIONS OF OUR SOUL.

1. I have thus drawn out these points into length, because in the examination of them consists the knowledge of our spiritual advancement. For as to the examination of sins, I leave that for the confessions of those who never think of advancing.

2. Yet we must not labour in any one of these articles otherwise than very gently, examining only in what state our heart has been concerning them since our resolution, and what notable defects we have committed in them.

LESSON LII. AFFECTIONS AFTER THIS EXAMINATION.

3. But to abridge all, we must reduce our examen to the survey of our passions, and if it be troublesome to consider every particular so exactly as is prescribed, we may examine in what state we have been, and how we have behaved ourselves, in this manner—in our love towards God, our neighbour, and ourselves—in our hatred towards sin in ourselves, and towards sin in others; for we must desire the extirpation both of the one and of the other—in desires touching riches, pleasures, honours—in fear of danger of falling into sin, and in fear of loss of worldly goods; for we fear the one too little and the other too much—in hope, fixed too much upon the world and temporal things, or too little upon God and eternal things—in sadness, if it be too excessive for transitory things, and in joy, if it be too great for trivial things. In fine, what affections predominate in your heart? What passions most of all possess it? In what has it chiefly gone astray? For by the passions of the soul we may judge of her estate, examining them one after another; for as he that plays on the lute by touching all the string finds which are out of tune, and accords them either by winding them up or letting them down, so we examine the love, hatred, desire, fear, hope, sadness, and joy of our soul; if we find them out of tune for that air which we would play, which is the glory of God, we may tune them by means of His grace and the counsel of our ghostly father.

CH. VIII.—AFFECTIONS TO BE EXERCISED AFTER THIS EXAMINATION.

1. After you have gently considered each point of this examination, and seen in what state you are, you shall proceed to affections in this manner.

1. Give God thanks for the amendment you have found in your life since your resolution, and acknowledge that it was His mercy alone that has wrought it in you and for you.

2. Humble yourself profoundly before His Majesty, acknowledging that if you have not much profited it has been your own fault, because you have not faithfully, courageously, and constantly complied with the inspirations, lights, and motions which He has given you in prayer and by other means.

3. Promise Him that you will for ever praise Him for the

LESSON LII. AFFECTIONS AFTER THIS EXAMINATION.

favours conferred upon you in converting you from your evil inclinations to this amendment.

4. Ask pardon of Him for the unfaithfulness and disloyalty which you have returned for these graces.

5. Offer Him your heart, to the end He may make Himself its sole Master.

6. Beseech Him to render you entirely faithful to Him.

7. Invoke the Saints, our Blessed Lady, your good Angel, your Patron, S. Joseph, and others.

LESSON LIII. EXCELLENCE OF OUR SOUL.

LESSON LIII.

Renovation of the Soul by Means of Considerations on the Excellence of our Soul : Of Virtue : The Examples of the Saints : The Love of Christ for us : The Eternal Love of God : Conclusion.

INTRODUCTION—PT. V., CH. IX.—CONSIDERATIONS PROPER TO RENEW OUR GOOD PURPOSES.

After you have made this examination, and diligently conferred with some good director concerning your defects and the remedies for them, take these considerations following, making one of them every day by way of meditation, employing therein the time of your prayer, and do this always in the same method for the preparation and for the affections which you used in the meditations of the First Part, first of all placing yourself in the presence of God, and then imploring His grace to establish you in His holy love and service.

CH. X.—THE FIRST CONSIDERATION : OF THE EXCELLENCE OF OUR SOUL.

1. Consider the worth and excellence of your soul, endowed with an understanding which knows not only all this visible world, but also that there are angels and a heaven, that there is a most High God, most good and ineffable, that there is an eternity, knows, moreover, how to live well in this visible world in order to join the angels in Paradise, and enjoy God eternally.

2. Your soul has also a will, all noble, which can love God, and cannot hate Him in Himself. Consider your heart, how generous it is ; and that as no corrupt thing can entice bees, but their delight is only amongst flowers, so your heart hath no repose but in God alone ; no creature can satisfy it. Recall boldly the most dear and beloved affections which heretofore possessed your heart, and judge in truth whether they were not full of unquiet molestations, of irksome thoughts, and importunate cares, amongst which your poor heart was miserable.

LESSON LIII. EXCELLENCE OF VIRTUES.

3. Alas ! our heart runs greedily after creatures, thinking to satisfy its desires on them, but as soon as it has met with them it finds itself deceived, and that nothing can content it, God being unwilling that our heart should find any resting place till, like the dove sent by Noe from the ark, it returns to Him from whom it came forth. Ah ! how beautiful is the nature of our heart, and why then do we detain it against its will in the service of creatures ?

4. O my fair soul ! should you say, thou canst understand and love God, why wilt thou content thyself with less ? Thou mayest pretend to eternity, wherefore dost thou busy thyself in momentary things ? It was one of the griefs of the Prodigal, that when he might have fared deliciously at his father's table he fed nastily among swine. O my soul ! thou art capable of God, woe to thee, if thou satisfy thyself with anything less than God.

5. Rouse up your soul vigorously with this consideration ; put her in mind that she is immortal and worthy of eternity ; fill her with courage upon this subject.

CH. XI.—THE SECOND CONSIDERATION: OF THE EXCELLENCE OF VIRTUES.

1. Consider that only virtue and devotion can render your soul contented in this world. See how fair they are ! Make a comparison between virtues and their contrary vices. What sweetness is there in patience, compared to revenge, in mildness, compared to anger and frowardness, in humility, compared to pride and ambition, in liberality, compared to covetousness, in charity, compared to envy, in sobriety, compared to intemperance ! Virtues have this excellence, that they delight the soul with an incomparable sweetness and pleasure after we have practised them, whereas vices leave her infinitely wearied and tired. Why endeavour we not then to obtain these pleasures ?

2. In case of vices, he that has but few is not contented, and he that has many is discontented ; but for virtues, he that hath but few has already a content which daily increases.

3. O devout life, how fair, lovely, sweet, and pleasant art thou ! Thou sweetenest tribulations, and augmentest consolations. Without thee, even good is evil, pleasures are full of restless troubles and deceitfulness. Ah ! he that under-

LESSON LIII. THE EXAMPLES OF THE SAINTS.

stands thee well will say with the *Samaritan, Lord, give me this water*, a very frequent aspiration of the holy Mother, *S. Teresa*, and *S. Catherine of Genoa*, although upon different occasions.

CH. XII.—THE THIRD CONSIDERATION : OF THE EXAMPLES OF THE SAINTS.

1. Consider the examples of the Saints of all ranks. What is it that they have not done to love God, and to be entirely His? Look on the Martyrs, invincible in their resolutions, what torments have they not suffered in keeping them! But above all, see those fair and dazzling Virgins, whiter than lilies in purity, redder than roses in charity, some at twelve, others at thirteen, fifteen, and twenty years of age, have endured a thousand sorts of martyrdoms rather than renounce their resolutions, not only in the profession of faith, but also in their protestation of devotion; some dying rather than they would forsake their virginity; others rather than they would quit their attendance on the poor, comforting the afflicted, and burying the dead. O what constancy has that frail sex shown in like occasions!

2. Consider so many holy Confessors—with what courage have they contemned the world, how invincible have they been in their resolutions, nothing could make them relinquish them, they embraced them without reservation and kept them without exception. O what admirable things does *S. Augustine* write of his mother, *S. Monica*! With what constancy did she pursue her enterprise of serving God, in her marriage and in her widowhood! What things *S. Jerome* writes of his dear daughter, *S. Paula*, amongst so many crosses, so many various accidents! What is there that we may not do after such excellent patterns? What we are, that were they. They did all for the same God, for the same virtues; why should we not do as much in our condition, and according to our vocation for our good resolution and holy protestation?

CH. XIII.—THE FOURTH CONSIDERATION : OF THE LOVE THAT JESUS CHRIST BEARS US.

1. Consider the love with which Jesus Christ our Lord suffered so much in this world, and especially in the Garden of

LESSON LIII. THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

Mount *Olivet* and upon Mount *Calvary*. This love concerned you, and by all His pains and torments He obtained of God the Father good resolutions and protestations for your heart, and by the same means further obtained all things necessary for your soul to maintain, nourish, strengthen, and fulfil these resolutions. O Resolution! how precious art thou, being daughter of such a mother as is the Passion of my Saviour. Oh, how carefully ought my soul to cherish thee, since thou hast been so dear to my sweet Jesus! O Saviour of my soul! Thou hast died to gain me these resolutions. Ah! give me grace to die rather than to lose them. Observe, *Philothea*, it is certain that the Heart of our dear Jesus saw your heart from the tree of the Cross, and loved it, and by this love obtained for it all the blessings that ever you shall have, and amongst others these resolutions. Yes, my dear *Philothea*, we may all say with *Jeremias* the Prophet, *O my Lord, before I was Thou hast beheld me, and called me by my name*, since that in truth His Divine goodness in His love and mercy prepared all the general and particular means of our salvation, and consequently, our resolutions. Yes, without doubt, as a woman prepares the cradle, linen, swathing bands, and even a nurse for the child which she hopes to bring forth, although it be not yet in the world, so our Saviour, of whose goodness you are born, intending to bring you forth to salvation and to make you His child, prepared upon the tree of the Cross all that was necessary for you—your spiritual cradle, your linen and swathing bands, your nurse, and all that was convenient for your blessedness. These are all the means, all the allurements, all the graces by which He conducts your soul and would bring it to its perfection.

2. Ah! my God, how deeply ought we to imprint this in our memory. Is it possible I have been loved, and so tenderly loved by my Saviour, that He should think of me in particular, and of all these little occurrences by which He has drawn me to Him? And how then ought we to value, esteem, and employ all this to our advantage. How consoling! The loving heart of my God thought upon *Philothea*, loved her, and procured her a thousand means of salvation, even as much as though there had been no other soul in the world for Him to think of; just as the sun shining upon one side of the earth, enlightens it no less than if it shone in no other place but only there, in the very same manner did our

LESSON LIII. THE ETERNAL LOVE TO GOD.

Lord think and take care of all His dear children, providing for each one of us as though He had not thought upon the rest. *He hath loved me*, said *S. Paul*, and *hath given Himself for me!* as if he had said, for me only, just as though He had done nothing for the rest. O *Philothea*, this ought to be engraven in your soul, to cherish and nourish your resolutions, which have been so precious to the Heart of our Saviour.

CH. XIV.—THE FIFTH CONSIDERATION : OF THE ETERNAL LOVE OF GOD TOWARDS US.

1. Consider the eternal love which God has borne you ; for before our Lord Jesus Christ as Man suffered for you on the Cross, His Divine Majesty designed you in His sovereign goodness, and loved you infinitely. But when began He to love you ? Even when He began to be God. And when began He to be God ? Never, for He has always been God, without beginning and without ending : and so He has loved you from all eternity ; and therefore has He prepared for you the graces and favours which He has conferred upon you. He says by His prophet, speaking to you as much as to any other : *I have loved thee with a perpetual love ; therefore have I drawn thee unto Me, taking pity on thee* (Jer. xxxi. 3). He then thought, amongst other things, of causing you to make these good resolutions to serve Him.

2. Oh, what resolutions are these, which God has thought of, meditated, and designed from all eternity ! How dear and precious ought they to be to us ! What ought we to suffer rather than to forsake one tittle of them ! Sure, the world ought rather to perish : for all the world together is not worth one soul, and a soul is worth nothing without her resolutions.

CH. XV.—GENERAL AFFECTIONS ON THE PRECEDING CONSIDERATIONS, AND A CONCLUSION OF THIS EXERCISE.

1. O dear Resolution, you are the beautiful tree of life which my God has planted with His own hand in the midst of my heart, and my Saviour would water with His Blood to make it fructify, I will rather suffer a thousand deaths than that any wind shall uproot you. No ! nor vanity, nor delights, nor riches, nor tribulations shall ever force me from my design.

LESSON LIII. CONCLUSION OF THIS EXERCISE.

2. Ah! Lord, it is Thou who hast planted and eternally preserved in Thy fatherly bosom this fair tree for my garden. How many souls are there which have not been favoured in this manner, and how then shall I ever humble myself enough under Thy mercy!

3. O fair and holy Resolution, if I keep you, you will preserve me, if you live in my soul, my soul shall live in you. Live then for ever, O Resolution, eternal in the mercy of God, live and remain eternally in me, for I will never forsake you!

4. After these affections, you must consider apart the means necessary to maintain these dear resolutions, and protest that you will use them faithfully, as frequent prayer, the sacraments, good works, amendment of the faults discovered by your examination, avoiding occasions of evil, and following the counsels which shall be given you to this end.

5. This done, as if by way of recovering breath and courage, protest a thousand times that you will continue in your resolutions, and as if you had your heart, your soul, and your will in your hands, dedicate them, consecrate them, sacrifice them to God, protesting that you will never take them back, but leave them in the hand of His Divine Majesty to follow in all things His holy ordinance.

6. Pray to God to renew you entirely, and to bless and confirm the renewing of your protestations; invoke the Blessed Virgin, your guardian Angel, *S. Louis*, and other Saints.

7. In this emotion of heart, go to the feet of your confessor, accuse yourself of the principal faults you shall observe to have been committed since your last general confession, and receive absolution in the same manner you did the first time, and pronounce your Protestation before him, and sign it, and in the end go to unite your renewed heart to its Lord and Saviour in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist.

CH. XVI.—CONSIDERATIONS AFTER THIS EXERCISE.

1. The day you shall have made this renovation, and the other following, you ought very often to repeat by heart and by mouth those ardent speeches of *S. Paul*, *S. Augustine*, *S. Catherine of Genoa*, and others: *No, I am no more mine; whether I live or die, I am my Saviour's! I have nothing that*

CONCLUSION OF THIS WORK.

is myself or mine ; my myself is Jesus, and my mine is to be wholly His ! O world, thou art always thyself, and I have been always myself, but from henceforth I will be no more myself ! No, we will be no more ourselves ; for we will have a changed heart, and the world that has so often deceived us, shall be deceived in us ; for not observing our change but by little and little, it will think us always to be *Esau*, and we will prove to be *Jacob*.

2. All these exercises must rest in our hearts, and when we have finished our meditations, we must go fairly and softly to our affairs and conversations, for fear lest the liquor of our resolutions be suddenly spilt ; for it must sink and disperse itself into all the parts of our soul, yet without effort either of mind or body.

THE CONCLUSION OF THIS WORK.

All that is solid in Christian perfection, all that is necessary to undertake it courageously and to practise it with love, discretion, tranquillity of mind, and patience, can be found in this collection.

Here you are taught how you may cheer your soul with the firm hope of happily spending your whole life in the disposition and the state of a true Christian, the sum and substance of which consists in perfect charity—charity, whose beginnings constitute the purgative way, whose progress is the illuminative way, whose consummation is the unitive way.

Speaking of the Divine law, *Moses* says, *This commandment, that I command thee this day is not above thee, nor far off from thee : nor is it in heaven that thou shouldst say : Which of us can go up to heaven to bring it unto us, and we may hear and fulfil it in work ? Nor is it beyond the sea, that thou mayest excuse thyself, and say : Which of us can cross the sea, and bring it unto us, that we may hear, and do that which is commanded ? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it* (Deut. xxx. 11). And of this Epitome of Holy Readings I would say the very same. In these fifty-three Lessons it sets forth the whole of Christian perfection, explained by two most admirable interpreters of the life of Christ, with teachings so solid

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that they guard you from the danger of going astray and getting lost in the mazes of perplexing speculations, from the danger of becoming entangled in new methods, subtleties, and readings out of the reach of common sense, from the danger of being exposed to disquiet, and deceptive novel opinions, and directions that are different and sometimes even contradictory. In this Epitome you have, I say, all that you require in order to know God, to serve Him with a tranquil mind, to love Him as perfectly as is possible in this present life, and to overcome with profit all the difficulties and obstacles you may meet on your way. Since this present life consists of warfare and labour, and since only love can lighten its weariness, our chief aim should be to learn how to love amid toil and strife. And it is this which in an easy, solid, yet sublime method is taught to you in this book by your two holy teachers and the Holy of Holies. Follow freely the rules given you in the First Lesson. By continual and repeated reading, joined above all to practice, fix firmly in your spirit these solid maxims, and throughout your whole life recur to them. *More than these, my son, require not* (Eccles. xii. 12). And these words of the Wise Man I take for a conclusion ; and I again assert that, if, according to the advice given at starting, you check curiosity in the matter of variety of spiritual reading, you will daily perceive more and more clearly, and with the greatest consolation, that it is useless to seek in many what can be found in one.

But if this our work has in any way helped you to acquire devotion suitable to your state of life, and to adore God in spirit and in truth (for such only are reckoned and admitted among the true adorers), our object is attained. Pray you to God Most High, that while intent on the salvation of others, we may not be heedless of our own.

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