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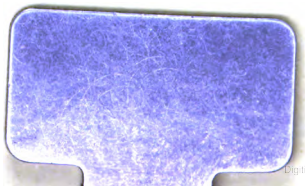
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THE
SPIRIT OF S. TERESA.

Translated and arranged

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE LIFE OF S. TERESA."



"O charitatis victima!
Tu corda nostra concrema."

Hymn for Vespers of S. Teresa.

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PREFACE.

THE "Exclamations of the Soul to God" were written by S. Teresa, according to the Bollandists, in the year 1579. They are the outpourings of her soul before God after Holy Communion.

The "Directions on Prayer and on the Life of Prayer" have been extracted chiefly from *L'Esprit de Ste. Thérèse*, published in 1775 by M. Emery, afterwards Superior of S. Sulpice, who selected such passages from the various writings of the Saint as, although directly addressed to religious, convey a practical lesson to all who aim at leading a life of close union with God.

The Novena preparatory to the Feasts of

S. Teresa is written by an unknown hand. Its dedication to *Madame Louise de France, Novice Carmélite*, fixes as its date the year 1770, when the daughter of Louis XV. left his brilliant and dissolute court for the solitude of Carmel, and received her father's conversion as her reward.

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PART I.

EXCLAMATIONS OF THE SOUL TO GOD.

THE

SPIRIT OF S. TERESA.

CHAPTER I.

**Complaints of the soul at its separation from God
during this life.**

O MY life, O my life, how canst thou endure to be separated from thy true Life? In what canst thou busy thyself in this deep solitude? What canst thou do, when all thy works are so full of defects and imperfections? O my soul, who can console thee, exposed as thou art upon this tempestuous and stormy sea? I weep when I consider what I am, and I weep still more that I have lived so long without weeping. O Lord, how sweet are Thy ways! but who can walk therein without fear? I tremble lest my life should pass away without doing any thing for Thee; and when I try to serve Thee, nothing

that I do contents me, because I can do nothing to repay Thee the least part of the debt I owe Thee. I feel that I would consume myself in Thy service; but when I look upon my own misery, I see that I can do nothing good but what Thou Thyself enablest me to do.

O my God and my Mercy, what shall I do not to *undo* the mighty works of Thy grace in my soul? All Thy works are holy, just, and of an inestimable value, and wrought with marvellous wisdom, because Thou, O Lord, art wisdom itself. If my understanding would search into their wonders, my will complains; for it would have nothing to disturb the repose of its love. O my God, my spirit would fain know Thee, and it is overwhelmed by Thine ineffable greatness; my heart burns to enjoy Thee, and cannot, because it is enthralled in the dark prison of this mortal life. Thus the activity of my understanding is an obstacle to my love, though it was a help to it at first, by the consideration of Thy greatness, by which I learned to measure my inconceivable littleness. But why do I speak thus, my God? To whom do I complain? Who hears me but Thee, my Father and my Creator? And what need have I to speak, to make known to Thee my trouble, when I see clearly that Thou art in my heart? Thus do my thoughts wander.

But, alas, O God of my soul, who shall assure me that I am not separated from Thee? O life, how bitter art thou, which even to the last moment can give me so little security as to the most important thing in the world! Who can desire thee, when the only advantage that can be gained or hoped from thee, which is to please God in all things, is so uncertain, and surrounded by so many perils?

CHAPTER II.

How the soul which loves God is divided between the desire of enjoying Him and the obligation of assisting her neighbour.

I OFTEN think, my loving Master, that if any thing could console us in any degree for living without Thee, it is a life of solitude, because there the soul rests in Him Who is her true repose. But too often, alas, she cannot enjoy Thee in perfect liberty, and so her sufferings are redoubled. And yet this suffering is joy to that which she feels when she is torn from that solitary communing with her Creator to converse with creatures.

But whence comes it, O God, that a soul which aspires only to please Thee becomes weary of repose? O mighty love of God, how

unlike thou art to earthly love, which would have no companions, lest they should rob it of a portion of its beloved! But the love of God is enkindled more and more, the greater the number of hearts that love Him; and its one sorrow is to see that all men love Him not.

Therefore, O my Sovereign Good, in the midst of the overwhelming sweetness and interior consolations which the soul enjoys with Thee, she is sorrowful when she thinks of the great multitude of those who reject these heavenly joys, and of the number of unhappy souls who will lose them for ever. She seeks, then, by every means, to increase the number of Thy friends, and willingly sacrifices her repose to the hope of enkindling in others a desire for the happiness which she enjoys.

But, oh, my heavenly Father, would it not be better to put aside these desires for a time of less abundant consolation, and to give these blessed moments wholly to the enjoyment of Thee? O Jesus, great indeed is the love which Thou bearest to the children of men, since the most signal service which we can render Thee is to leave Thee for the love of them, and for their spiritual good. What do I say? It is even thus that we possess Thee more fully. We feel, it is true, less sensible sweetness; but we make it our joy to please Thee, and we see

that all the joys of earth, even those which seem to come from Thee, have no solidity unless they be accompanied by the love of our neighbour. He who loves not him, loves not Thee, O most loving Master, because it was by shedding Thy Divine Blood, even to its last drop, that Thou hast shown us the love which Thou bearest to the sons of Adam.

CHAPTER III.

Thoughts of the Saint on the consideration of her sins, and of the mercy of God.

O MY God, my soul is overwhelmed with sorrow when I consider the glory which Thou hast prepared for those who accomplish Thy will even unto the end,—the labours and sufferings by which Thy Son has purchased it for them; when I think of our unworthiness, and how the excess of Thy love, Who hast taught us to love by dying for us, deserves a far other return than our ingratitude. How is it possible, O Lord, that all this should pass from our minds, and that men should so far forget Thee as to venture to offend Thee? O my loving Saviour, is it possible that we should thus forget Thee, and that, notwithstanding our ingratitude, Thy

Sovereign Goodness should still remember us? What! when our sins have pierced Thee to the heart by a mortal stroke, dost Thou, forgetting all, stretch forth Thy hand to raise us from our fall, and to heal our souls of their incurable frenzy, that they may turn to Thee and implore Thee to make them whole! Blessed be so loving a Master! Blessed be His abounding mercy! Eternal praise to His tender compassion! O my soul, bless this great God for ever! Oh, what a heavy punishment must the very weight of His benefits bring down on the ungrateful! Vouchsafe, O my God, Thyself to apply a remedy to this great evil. O children of men, how long will you be hard of heart! how long shall your hardness strive against the charity of this most sweet Jesus! Do we think that our malice shall always prevail against Him? No, no; the life of man passeth away like the flower of the field, and the Virgin's Son shall come to pronounce the terrible sentence. O omnipotent God; since Thou art to judge us, whether we will it or will it not, why do we not consider how deeply it concerns us to please Thee in this life, that so Thou mayst be propitious to us at that last awful hour? But are there any who rejoice not that they shall be judged by so just a Judge? Blessed are the souls, O Lord, who

at that terrible hour shall rejoice with Thee ! O my Master and my God, what is the anguish of a soul which, having been raised by Thee from its fall, awakes to see how miserably it has lost itself for a few moments of fleeting pleasure; a soul which, knowing, O God of my heart, O Sovereign Goodness, that Thou never failest those who love Thee, and ever answerest those who call upon Thee, is firmly resolved, by the help of Thy grace, to serve Thee faithfully even until death ! How is it that we do not die as often as we remember that we have lost the precious gifts of our baptismal innocence ? Alas ! the best life we can live is to die of shame and sorrow. How can a soul which loves Thee intensely, O my Divine Master, endure an anguish like this ? But what am I saying ? Pardon, O Lord, my senseless words. Have I forgotten the miracles of Thy love, the infinite extent of Thy mercy ? Have I forgotten that Thou camest into the world for sinners, that Thou hast redeemed us at so tremendous a price, and hast paid for our false pleasures by the torment of Thy painful scourging ? Thou hast cured my blindness by the veil which was placed in mockery over Thy Divine eyes, and my vanity by the cruel crown of thorns which pierced Thy head. O Lord, Lord ! all these things serve but to increase the sorrow of those

who love Thee. The only thought that consoles me is, that the more widely my wickedness shall be known, the more gloriously will Thy Divine mercy be exalted throughout all eternity. And I know not, O my God, whether this sorrow will not last all my life long, even until the day when I shall behold Thee in glory, and be delivered from all the miseries of this exile.

CHAPTER IV.

Prayer that God would enable the Saint to recover the time which she had not spent in loving and serving Him.

My God, my soul seems to have some foretaste of heavenly repose, when I think of what will be my joy if, by Thy mercy, I come one day to possess Thee. But I would serve Thee first, because it was by serving me that Thou didst purchase for me this happiness for which I hope. What shall I do, then, O Lord? O God, Whom I love, what can I do for Thee? Oh, how late have my desires been enkindled for Thee! and how early, O my God, didst Thou begin to seek me, and to endeavour to gain possession of my heart, calling me to consecrate myself wholly to Thy service! O

Lord, wilt Thou, then, abandon this miserable creature? Wilt Thou reject this poor beggar, who desires now to give herself wholly to Thee? Is there a limit, then, O Lord, to the multitude of Thy mercies, or to the munificence of Thy bounty? O my God, how gloriously canst Thou show forth to-day the riches of Thine infinite goodness in Thy servant! Make known to me Thine omnipotence by restoring to my soul, through an intense act of love, all the years which I have lost by spending them without loving Thee. Am I uttering extravagances? for men are wont to say that "time lost never returns." No, blessed be the God of my soul! I acknowledge, O Lord, Thy sovereign power; and if Thou art almighty (as in truth Thou art), what is impossible to Him Who can do all things? It is enough, O Lord, it is enough that Thou willest it. Miserable as I am, I believe firmly that Thou canst do what Thou wilt; and the greater the marvels that I hear of Thee, the more firmly do I believe that Thou canst work greater still in me, and with the more assured faith do I believe that Thou wilt do what I ask. Who can wonder at the marvels wrought by Him Who can do all things? Thou knowest, O my God, that in the midst of all my miseries I have never ceased to acknowledge Thy sovereign

power and infinite mercy. In this, at least, O Lord, I have not offended Thee. Vouchsafe to remember it in my favour. Do Thou Thyself, O my God, restore to me all the time that I have lost; restore it by the effusion of Thy grace in my soul, now and for ever, that I may appear before Thee in the nuptial garment. "If Thou wilt, Thou canst."

CHAPTER V.

Of the complaint of Martha, and how a soul which loves God may complain to Him of her misery.

O LORD my God, is it possible that I should dare to ask Thee for new graces, when I have served Thee so ill, and have so carelessly squandered what I have already received from Thee? How canst Thou trust one who has so often betrayed Thee? What shall I do, then, O Divine Consoler of desolate souls, O Heavenly Physician of all who come to Thee for healing? Shall I keep silence concerning the wants of my soul, and wait till it shall please Thee to relieve them? No, assuredly; for knowing well, O sweet and loving Saviour, how manifold are our wants, and what consolation we should find in laying them before

Thee, Thou hast commanded us to ask of Thee, and hast promised to give us what we ask.

I often meditate on the complaint of holy Martha. I do not think that she was complaining only of her sister; but that what grieved her most was the thought that Thou didst not regard her labour, nor care to have her near Thee. Perhaps she thought that Thou didst not love her as well as her sister; and this must have given her far greater pain than the labour of serving Thee, Whom she so dearly loved; for love changes labour into repose. That this was the feeling of her heart appears plainly in this—that she says not a single word to her sister, but addresses her whole complaint to Thee, and even ventures, in the exceeding boldness of her love, to reproach Thee with a want of solicitude for her: “Carest Thou not?” And Thy reply, O Lord, shows whence her complaint proceeds; for Thou dost declare to her that love alone gives value to all things, and that “the one thing needful” is such a love for Thee as will triumph over every obstacle which can be placed in its way.

But, O my God, how shall we ever love Thee as Thou deservest to be loved, unless to our love of Thee Thou art pleased to unite Thy love for us? Shall I complain, then, with this great Saint? Oh, no, I have no cause of

complaint; for Thou, my God, hast never ceased to give me tokens of Thy love far above all that I could ask or desire. If I have any thing to reproach Thee with, it must be the excess of patience wherewith Thy goodness has borne with me unto this day. What, then, shall so miserable a creature ask of Thee? I will venture, Lord, to address to Thee the prayer of S. Augustine: "Give me something to give to Thee, that so I may discharge a portion of the immense debt I owe Thee. Remember that I am Thy creature, and make me to know my Creator, in order that I may love Him."

CHAPTER VI.

How painful is this life to a soul which longs ardently for God.

O SOVEREIGN Master of all creatures, my God and my Joy, how long must I wait to enjoy Thy blessed Presence? What remedy dost Thou afford to one who can find none upon earth, and who can taste no repose out of Thee? O long life! cruel life! life which is no life! Oh, how lonely is my soul in this solitude! how irremediable is this evil! How long, O Lord, how long? What shall I do,

my only Good? Shall I desire not to desire Thee?

O my God and my Creator, Thou dost pierce us with the arrows of Thy love, and leavest the dart in the wound; Thou woundest, and the wounds are incurable; Thou killest, to infuse more vigorous life. Thou dost what Thou wilt, O loving Master, because Thou art almighty. How can a worm of the earth, such as I am, endure such contrary extremes of joy and suffering? Be it so, O Lord, since such is Thy will, for my only desire is to love Thee. But, O my Creator, how intense is the suffering! Pardon these complaints, forced from me by anguish which Thou canst alone relieve. My soul is imprisoned in so dark a dungeon, that she cannot but pant for liberty; and yet, to obtain it, she would not swerve one hair's breadth from Thy adorable Will. O my God, my Glory, I beseech Thee, cease to increase the tortures of my soul by wounding it more and more with Thy love, or put an end to them at once by taking it to Thyself. O death, death, I know not who could help fearing thee, if he have spent any portion of his life without loving God! And since this has been my misery, what do I ask, and what do I desire? To go to receive the just punishment of my sins? Suffer it not to be so, my Saviour, since

my ransom has cost Thee so dear. O my soul, leave God to accomplish His own will. This is all thou hast to do. Serve thy Lord, and hope that His mercy will relieve thy sufferings, when thy penance shall in some sort have deserved for thee the pardon of thy sins. Desire not to enjoy until thou hast suffered. But, O my true Master and my King, I shall not be able to do what I say, unless Thy omnipotent hand sustain me and Thy loving mercy assist me ; with these I can do all things.

CHAPTER VII.

The exceeding goodness of God, Whose delight is to be with the children of men.

O MY only Hope, my Father, my Creator, my true Lord, my Brother, when I meditate upon Thy words, "My delight is to be with the children of men," my soul is filled with exceeding joy. O Lord of heaven and earth, what sinner but would take courage from these words? Is it possible, O my God, that Thou canst find no other creatures in whom to take delight, that Thou art driven to solace Thyself with so abject and miserable a little earthworm as I am? O Heavenly Father, when Jesus

Christ Thy Son was baptised, a voice was heard from heaven saying that "in Him Thou wast well pleased." Dost Thou liken us, then, O my God, to this Thy Divine Son? O boundless mercy! O favour infinitely above our deserts! And we mortals can forget it! O my God, Who knowest all things, remember our misery, and vouchsafe to cast an eye of pity on our weakness.

And thou, my soul, contemplate the joy and the love wherewith the Eternal Father knows His Son, and the Eternal Son knows His Father; and the ardent love whereby the Holy Spirit unites Himself to Them both: and consider that in this love and this knowledge there can be neither change nor diminution, because these Three are One. These Three Supreme Persons reciprocally know and love each other, and delight in each other after an ineffable and incomprehensible manner. What need, then, O my God, hast Thou of my love? Why dost Thou desire it? What can it profit Thee? Oh, blessed be Thou, God of my heart, for ever and ever; let all creatures praise Thee, and let their praises be eternal as Thyself.

Rejoice, O my soul, that thy God is loved as He deserves to be loved; rejoice and be glad that His goodness and excellence are known as they ought to be known. Give Him a thou-

sand thanks that He has given us upon earth His Beloved Son, by Whom He is thus perfectly known, that so He may be known and loved on earth as He is known and loved in heaven. O my soul, under the shelter of His protection, fear not to draw near to thy God; and since He delights to be with thee, beseech Him that nothing in this world may hinder thee on thy part from delighting in Him, in the contemplation of His greatness, and of His infinite claims to our praises and our love. Beseech Him to help thee to glorify His holy Name, that thou mayst be able to say with truth : " My soul doth magnify the Lord."

CHAPTER VIII.

Prayer for sinners who are so blind that they do not desire to see.

O LORD my God, Thy words are words of life, in which men would find (did they but seek it there) the happiness for which they long. But what marvel, O my God, that in the folly and weakness to which our evil works have reduced us, we lose the recollection of Thy sacred words? O great God, God of my heart, Creator of all things, what is the whole creation

which Thou hast drawn out of nothing, in comparison with what is ever in Thy power to create? Thou art almighty, and Thy works are incomprehensible. Suffer not Thy words, then, O Lord, ever to depart from my mind. Thou hast said: "Come to Me, all ye that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you." What more do we desire, O my Divine Master? what do we ask? what do we seek? and wherefore do the slaves of the world perish, but because they seek their refreshment and their repose out of Thee? My God, my God, what a mystery is this, what a fearful and pitiable blindness thus to seek rest where it will never be found! O my Creator, have compassion on Thy creatures! Consider that we do not understand ourselves, that we know not what we want, and wander far away from the rest which we desire. Give us light, O my God; for we need it far more than the man who was born blind. He desired ardently to behold the light, which was hidden from him; but we are blind, and will to remain so. What error is so hopeless as this? Here, O Lord, is an occasion to show forth Thy power, and to manifest the infinite abundance of Thy mercy.

O God of my heart, only true God, it is a great thing I ask of Thee, even to love those who love Thee not, to open to those who do not

knock, and to heal those who not only take pleasure in their sickness, but labour to increase it. Thou hast said, O most sweet Saviour Jesus, that Thou camest upon earth "to save sinners." Behold them here, O Lord, sinners indeed. And Thou, O Heavenly Father, regard not, I beseech Thee, our blindness, but behold the rivers of blood shed by Thy Son for our redemption. Let Thy mercy shine forth amid the darkness of our misery. Remember, O Lord, that we are the work of Thy Hands, and save us in Thy goodness and Thy clemency.

CHAPTER IX.

Prayer that God would deliver by His grace those who feel not their own misery, and seek not to be delivered from it.

O SAVIOUR of my soul, Who art all love and compassion, Thou hast said: "Come to Me, all you that are athirst, and I will give you to drink." Burning, indeed, is the thirst of those unhappy souls who are consumed by the desire of earthly things; great need have they of that heavenly water, lest they perish in those flames. I know, O my loving Master, that Thou wilt not refuse it to them, for Thou hast promised

it, and Thou canst not break Thy word. But if they have grown up in the midst of those flames, so as to have become unconscious of their fury, if in their madness they perceive not their exceeding peril, what remedy can be applied to them? Yet it was to heal such great evils that Thou camest into the world. Begin Thy work, then, O Lord,—begin with them; for the tenderness and depth of Thy compassion is most gloriously revealed in healing the deepest and most inveterate wounds of our souls.

Consider, O Lord, how Thine enemies daily increase in boldness. Have pity on those who have no pity on themselves; and since they will not come to Thee, I beseech Thee, O Lord, to come to them. I beseech Thee in their name, for assuredly those dead men will arise and come forth from their tombs, when once they begin to see their own misery, and to know Thee and taste the sweetness of Thy mercy. O Life, Who alone givest life, refuse not to me that living water which Thou hast promised to all who desire it. I desire it, my Jesus, I ask it, I come to Thee to receive it. Do not hide Thyself from me, O Lord, for Thou knowest how greatly I need it, and that there is no other remedy for a soul which Thou hast wounded with Thy love.

O my Saviour, what great cause have we to fear, so long as we remain in this life, where we are between two contrary fires! The one shrivels and destroys the soul, the other purifies it, and prepares it for the eternal enjoyment of Thee. O living fountains, which flow from the loving wounds of my God, how abundantly shall you flow even to the end of the world, to refresh and strengthen our souls; and how securely will he pass through the perils of this miserable life, who drinks of your life-giving waters!

CHAPTER X.

How small is the number of the true servants of God—Prayer for those hardened souls who refuse to arise from the death of sin.

O GOD of my soul, how ready are we to offend Thee, how still more ready art Thou to pardon our offences! Whence, O Lord, does our insane presumption proceed? Is it that in the greatness of Thy mercy we lose sight of the greatness of Thy justice? "The sorrows of death have encompassed me," said Thy prophet of old, speaking in Thy person. O Heaven! O Heaven! O Heaven! what a terrible thing is sin, which encompassed God with sorrows,

which put God to death. O God of my soul, these sorrows still encompass Thee! Whither canst Thou go to escape them? Men pierce and wound Thee mortally on every side.

O Christians, it is time to rouse yourselves in defence of your King, and to gather round Him now that He is forsaken by all men. He has but a very few faithful subjects left; the multitude follows the standard of Lucifer. And, what is more detestable still, traitors, who call themselves His friends, betray Him secretly, so that there is hardly any one in whom He can confide. O only true Friend, what an evil return does he make to Thee who thus betrays Thee! O faithful Christians, come, weep with your God; for the tears of compassion which He shed over Lazarus were not for him alone, but for all sinners to the end of time who should obstinately refuse to leave their tombs at the call of His Divine Voice.

O my Sovereign Good, how visibly present to Thee at this hour are the sins which I have committed against Thee! Make them to cease from this moment, O Lord, make them to cease, and with them the sins of the world. Raise these dead souls; let Thy call be so mighty as to awaken them to the life which they have no power to ask, and at Thy voice

let them come forth from the sepulchre of their false pleasures. O my Divine Master, Lazarus asked Thee not to raise him. Thou didst work that mighty miracle at the prayer of a sinful woman; there is one now at Thy feet far more sinful than she; show forth, then, once more the magnitude of Thy mercy; miserable as I am, I ask it for those who will not ask it for themselves. Thou knowest, O my Sovereign Lord, the anguish I endure when I see them in such deep forgetfulness of the torments which they must endure through all eternity, if they will not return to Thee.

O you, who are accustomed to follow in all things the caprices of your own will, and to live in the pleasures, feasting, and enjoyments of the world, have pity on yourselves. Remember that a day will come when you will be subjected for ever, ay, for ever, to all the fury of the powers of hell. Remember that the same Judge Who now beseeches you, will then pronounce your sentence, and that you are not assured of another moment of life. Wherefore, then, do you refuse to live eternally? Oh, the hardness of human hearts! Let Thy boundless mercy soften them, O my God.

CHAPTER XI.

Fearful state of a soul which, at the moment of death, hears the sentence of her eternal condemnation.

O MY God, my God, have mercy on me ! How shall I express what I feel at the thought of a soul which, after having been loved, esteemed, served, indulged, and cared for here, finds at the last moment that she is hopelessly lost, and that for all eternity ? What a fearful moment, when all the truths of faith, which can no longer be overlooked and disregarded, stand out in terrible reality before her ! She is torn away for ever from the pleasures which, it seems to her, she had but just begun to taste ; and so it is in truth, for all that passes away with life is but a fleeting breath. She finds herself in the midst of that hideous and cruel company amid which she must dwell for ever. She takes her place in that noisome lake, filled with serpents, which torture her with their poisoned stings. She enters that dismal darkness, enlightened only by a lurid flame, which serves but to make visible the horrible sights around her !

Oh, how weak are these words in comparison with the reality ! Who, then, O Lord, had covered the eyes of that poor soul with so

thick a veil that she saw not the abyss before her until she was engulfed in it for ever? Who, O Lord, had closed her ears, that she heard not what she had been so often told of the intensity and eternal duration of these torments? O life without end,—O endless punishment,—how is it that thou hast no terrors for those tender and delicate slaves of their own bodies who fear to pass a single night upon a hard bed?

O Lord my God, I weep over the time when I did not understand these truths. And, since Thou knowest the pain I suffer at the sight of the number of unhappy souls who refuse to listen to them, I beseech Thee now to enlighten one soul, O Lord,—at least one,—who may be the means of enlightening many others. Heavenly Father, I ask it not in my own name, for I am not worthy to be heard, but for the merits of Thy Son. Look upon His Wounds, and as He pardoned those who inflicted them, so do Thou, great God, for His sake, pardon us.

CHAPTER XII.

How cowardly men are in the service of God, how fearless in offending Him.

O MY God, my true Strength, how is it that we, who are so cowardly in all things beside, are so fearless in offending Thee? It is against Thee that the children of Adam put forth all their strength. Oh, excess of folly and blindness! for if they had the full possession of their reason, they would never dare, even with the combined strength of the whole human race, to take up arms against their Creator, and to wage an incessant warfare against Him Who could in one moment plunge them into the abyss. But, in their blindness, they act like madmen, they seek and find death where their crazed imagination thought to find life. What can be done, O God, for these poor distracted souls, what remedy can cure their madness? It is said that frenzy gives strength to the weak; and truly it is so with those who depart from Thee. They yield basely and passively to the tyrant who rules over them, and turn all their fury against Thee, Who hast laden them with blessings. Oh, incomprehensible wisdom of my God! Thou hast need of all the love Thou bearest Thy creatures to endure

this madness of ours, to wait so patiently for our recovery, and labour Thyself for our restoration in so many ways, and by the use of so many Divine remedies. I am struck with terror when I see men at the same time so cowardly and so bold. When the slightest exertion is to be made to avoid an occasion of sin, or to escape some danger which threatens the eternal loss of their souls, they are so fearful and faint-hearted, that they persuade themselves that they cannot do it if they would; and, at the same time, O my God, they lack not courage and audacity to attack a majesty so awful as Thine.

How is this, O Lord? Who gives them this strength? Is it the leader whom they follow? But is he not Thy slave, bound in eternal fire? How can he raise his standard against Thee? How can this vanquished wretch give courage to others to resist Thee? How can they madly choose to follow him who has been cast helpless and destitute out of his heavenly inheritance? What can he bestow whose only portion is eternal ruin?

Why is this, then, my God? Why is it, my Creator? Why are we so strong against Thee, and so weak against the devil? If even, O my King, Thou didst bestow no favour on us in this life, if in this world we could obtain

something from the prince of darkness, would it not be folly to attach ourselves to him? Thou, Lord, hast in reserve for us an eternity of happiness without alloy, while he has but delusive pleasures to offer us, and promises which lure us to perdition. How will he deal with us, who has been a rebel and a traitor to Thee? What strange blindness, what hopeless madness, is this, O my King and my God! We serve this, Thy mortal enemy, with Thine own gifts, and we repay Thee for the excess of Thy love to us by loving him who hates Thee, and who will hate Thee throughout all eternity! Hast Thou not done enough, O my loving Redeemer, in the blood which Thou hast shed for us, the stripes, the unspeakable anguish and excruciating torments which Thy love endured for us to attach us for ever to thy service? And when we ought to avenge the honour of Thy eternal Father, so unworthily insulted in Thy person (for thou, Lord, desirest no vengeance, but hast freely pardoned all), ungrateful and insensible as we are, we take for our friends and companions those who have treated Thee with such barbarity. But since we choose to march under the banner of their infernal captain, we shall undoubtedly share their fate, and dwell with them eternally in his company. Great God, such is the miserable lot which awaits us,

unless Thy mercy restores us to ourselves and forgives us the past.

O mortals, come to yourselves at last! Look upon your King; you will find Him full of clemency. Put an end, at last, to your ungrateful rebellion, and turn all your rage and all your strength against that implacable enemy who wages war against you. Come to your senses at last, and, with loud cries and many tears, ask light from Him Who giveth light to the world. For the love of God, see whither your impious warfare tends. You are using all your strength to put to death once more Him Who, to give you life, died upon the cross. Consider that it is He Who defends you from your enemies. And if all this is not enough, let this truth at least affright you, that you cannot resist His power, and that sooner or later you will have to expiate your audacious contempt of Him in eternal fire. Is it because you behold that supreme Majesty chained and bound for the love of us that you thus audaciously offend Him? What more did His murderers do than load Him with blows and cover Him with wounds, after having bound Him to the pillar? O my God, what hast Thou suffered for those who are so little moved by those sufferings! A day will come when Thy justice will burst forth and show that it is equal to Thy mercy.

Christians, set these truths before you, and make them the subject of your deepest meditation. Never shall we be truly able to understand the munificence of our Lord's gifts to us. Unless, then, His justice were equal to His goodness, what would become of those who have deserved to be tried and condemned by it?

CHAPTER XIII.

Of the happiness of the Saints in heaven, and of the impatience of men who choose rather to enjoy for a moment the false pleasures of this life than to wait for the true and eternal joys of heaven.

O HOLY souls, how blessed is your lot, who already enjoy, without a fear of ever losing it, true and perfect felicity in heaven, and who sing the praises of my God in an eternal transport of bliss! Well may you sing without interruption your canticles of joy! How envious am I of your freedom from the anguish which pierces my heart at the sight of the great offences committed in this miserable life against my God, the marvellous ingratitude with which His benefits are repaid, and the blind and lamentable insensibility to the ruin of the multitude of souls which Satan drags down daily into hell!

O blessed souls, heavenly souls, come to the aid of our misery! Intercede for us with that God Who is infinitely rich in mercy, that He may shed into our hearts one drop of your felicity, and cast upon our minds one ray of the light which illuminates you! And do Thou, O my God, vouchsafe to give us an idea of that eternal weight of glory which Thou dost prepare for those who fight courageously for Thee during the short dream of this miserable life! O loving souls, souls enkindled with the love of your God, obtain for us some conception of your bliss in the certainty that your happiness is eternal, and of the ever-new delight with which you contemplate the certainty that it will never end.

How great is our misery, O my God! It seems that we are not ignorant of these truths, and even that we believe them; but we are so little accustomed to think of them, they are so strange to us, that in fact we do not know them, or desire to know them.

O selfish men, enslaved by your tastes and your pleasures, is it possible that, rather than wait a little time to possess the fulness of joy—rather than wait a year, a day, an hour, perhaps a moment—you carry your folly so far as to sacrifice an eternity of happiness to some miserable pleasure of sense!

O my God, how little confidence we have in Thee, thus to refuse Thee a little time! and how differently hast Thou dealt with us! O loving Father, what inestimable riches hast Thou intrusted to us—even Thy beloved Son, with His thirty-three years of unspeakable suffering, and the infinite merits of His cruel and agonising death! And those priceless blessings Thou didst lay up for us long centuries before our birth, undeterred by the foresight of our future ingratitude! Thou hast been beforehand with us in all things; so that, having such a treasure in our hands, it depends upon us alone to make use of it to obtain eternal riches in heaven.

And you, O blessed souls, who have made so profitable a use of the talents intrusted to you, and have purchased therewith an inheritance of eternal joys, teach us to profit by your example. Come to our aid; and since you are so near the Fountain of life, draw water from it for us who are perishing with thirst in this land of exile.

CHAPTER XIV.

How sweet will be the countenance of our Lord Jesus Christ at the last judgment to the good, and how terrible to the wicked.

O MY God and my true Lord, he who knows Thee not, loves Thee not. What a momentous truth is this ! How greatly, O Lord, are they to be pitied who will not know Thee ! The hour of death is a fearful hour ; and how terrible, O my Creator, will be the day of Thy just judgment ! Jesus, my Saviour and my only Good, I often think of the sweetness of Thy countenance to those who love Thee, and whom Thou dost vouchsafe to love. It seems to me that one glance of those loving eyes is a sufficient reward for long years of faithful service.

Oh, how difficult it is to make this understood by those who know not by experience the sweetness of the Lord ! O Christians, Christians, remember that you have been made the brethren of this great God ! Consider Who He is, and despise Him not ; for as His countenance is consoling to those who love Him, so will it be terrible and full of wrath to His enemies and persecutors. Oh, how far are we from understanding that sin is nothing less

than a warfare which we carry on against God, a conflict of all our senses and of all the powers of our soul, which vie with each other in plotting treasons against their Creator and their God !

Thou knowest, my loving Master, that the mere thought of beholding Thy Divine countenance in anger at the dreadful judgment-day has often caused me greater terror than all the tortures and all the horrors of hell, and that I then besought Thee, as I beseech Thee now, to be pleased in Thy mercy to preserve me from so dreadful an affliction. What evil could befall me in any way approaching to this ! Let all other miseries combine to fall upon me, O my God, but deliver me from this eternal anguish. Let me never abandon Thee, O my Saviour, and let me never cease to enjoy the vision of Thy Divine beauty. Thy Father has given Thee to us ; suffer me not, O my dearest Master, to lose so precious a treasure. I confess, eternal Father, that I have ill-guarded it ; but this fault is not irremediable, so long as we are in this place of exile.

O my brethren, my brethren, who are like me, the children of God, let us weep bitterly over our past offences. You know He has said that if we repent of them, He will remember them no more. O boundless mercy ! what more

do we desire? are we not ashamed even to ask so much?

But it is our part to receive that which is offered to us by the wondrous clemency of our Lord and our God. Since, then, He desires nothing from us but our love, who could refuse it to Him Who has not refused to shed His blood and to give His life for us!

Consider that He asks nothing of us but for our own benefit. But, alas, O Lord, what hardness, what madness, what blindness do we show! We feel sensibly the loss of some trifling object. The loss of a needle troubles us. The falconer is grieved to lose his hawk only for the delight which he takes in seeing it soar into the air; and we are insensible to the loss of this Royal Eagle, to the loss of the Majesty of God Himself, and of the eternal kingdom and the endless happiness which He has prepared for us. How is this, O Lord? How can this be? I confess that I understand it not. Deliver us, O Lord, from this amazing folly; heal us of this exceeding blindness.

CHAPTER XV.

The consolation of the soul under the weariness of her long exile.

ALAS, alas, O my God, how long is the time of this banishment; and how I pine with the desire to behold Thee! My loving Master, what can the soul do which is held captive in this prison? O Jesus, how long is the life of man, although we say that it is short! It is short, indeed, to gain an endless life; but it is very long to a soul consumed with desire to behold her God. What solace, O Lord, dost Thou give to this martyrdom?

There is none, but to endure it for the love of Thee. O my God, sweet repose of those who love Thee, withdraw not Thyself from a heart which seeks Thee; for Thou alone dost increase and sweeten the torments which Thy love inflicts upon the soul.

I am consumed, O Lord, with the desire to please Thee, and out of Thee I can find no consolation in this world. Wilt Thou be displeased with my desire to come to Thee? behold me, then, at Thy feet, O Lord. If it be necessary that I should live to do Thee some service, I willingly accept, like Thy great lover Martin, all the labours and sufferings

which await me upon earth; but, alas, alas, my loving Master, who am I, and who was he? He had works, and I have but words; these are all that I can offer Thee. Let my desires, O my God, be accounted for something before Thee, and regard not my want of merit. Grant, O Lord, that we may all deserve to love Thee. Since we must live, let us live for Thee. Let us cease at last to follow our own desires and our own interests; for what better can we seek or gain but to please Thee? O my God, O my Joy, what shall I do to please Thee? Miserable and defective are all my services, even if I were able to render Thee many. Wherefore, then, should I be chained longer in this sad prison-house? I understand, O Lord; it is that I may accomplish Thy will. What greater blessing can I desire? Wait, then, wait, then, O my soul, for thou knowest neither the day nor the hour; watch diligently, for all shall pass away quickly, though to thy eager desire what is certain seems doubtful, and what is short seems long. Consider that the longer the time of thy conflict for God, the more wilt thou manifest thy love towards Him, and the greater will be thy enjoyment of thy loving Lord in an eternity of joy and felicity.

CHAPTER XVI.

That God alone can give relief to the soul which
He has wounded with His love.

O MY God and my only Master, it is a great consolation to the soul which feels the anguish of solitude in her absence from Thee, to reflect that Thou art present every where. But this thought fails to comfort her when the transports of her love become more vehement, and the pain of Thine absence is more cruelly felt. Her mind is disturbed, her reason is overcast, and this consoling truth is veiled from her. Her mind is filled with one thought,—that she is far from Thee; and she finds no balm for the wound inflicted by Thine absence. For the heart which loves intensely can receive neither counsel nor consolation except from Him Who has wounded it with His love, and Who only can apply a remedy to the wound He has inflicted. When Thou wilt, O Lord, Thou canst quickly heal that wound; but, until Thou heal it, for that soul there is neither healing nor consolation but in suffering for Thee. O true Lover of our souls, with what goodness, what sweetness, what unspeakable tokens of tenderness, what joy infused into the very inmost heart, with what abundant consolation,

dost Thou heal the wounds inflicted by the arrows of Thy love! But, O my God, my consolation in all my sufferings, what need have I to say that Thou alone canst heal them?

What folly, what madness would it be, to imagine that any human remedy could heal those who have been wounded by the fire of Thy Divine love! Who in this world can fathom the depth of those wounds, ascertain their cause, or prescribe relief to tortures so cruel and yet so sweet! Too precious is this suffering to be relieved by the poor art of men.

Well may the Spouse say in the Canticle: "My Beloved is mine, and I am His." My Beloved is mine, she says; for it is not possible that love like this should begin with any thing so mean as my love. But, if my love be so mean, whence comes it, O my Divine Spouse, that it stops at no created thing, and can ascend even to its Creator? And why, O my God, why does my Beloved call me His? O true Lover of my soul, it is Thy work; it is Thou Who dost begin this contest of love. Thou dost hide Thyself, and, behold, all the senses and all the powers of the soul are filled with anxiety, and experience the desolation of being forsaken by Thee. Wounded by Thee, O Sovereign Beauty, and left afar off from Thee, they seek Thee, like the spouse of the Canticle,

in the streets and public places, and implore the daughters of Jerusalem to give them tidings of their God. When this conflict has once begun, what shall they do? Against whom shall they go forth to battle, but against Him Who has already possession of the fortress wherein they dwell, *i.e.* of the superior part of the soul? O my Beloved, if Thou hast banished them thence, it is but to give them the merit of reconquering their Conqueror,—that, weary of Thy absence, they may hasten to lay down their arms, that they may become stronger by the loss of their strength, and fight more successfully for their defeat; in short, that, by acknowledging themselves conquered, they may triumph over their Conqueror. O my soul, what a fearful conflict hadst thou to sustain when thou wast in this strait; and how faithful is the picture I have drawn of it! My Beloved is, then, mine, and I am His. Who will undertake to part or to quench these two ardent fires? Assuredly he would labour in vain, for those two burning hearts are now but one.

CHAPTER XVII.

That we know not what to ask of God—Ardent desires to leave this world, in order to enjoy perfect liberty, which consists in freedom from the possibility of sinning.

O MY God! O Wisdom, boundless, infinite, beyond the conception of Angels or of men! O Love, past comprehension! Who lovest me infinitely more than I can love myself, to Thee do I abandon myself. And wherefore, my loving Master, should I desire more than it is Thy will to give me? Why should I weary myself in asking for the desires of my own heart? Thou seest clearly whither tend all the thoughts of my mind and all the desires of my heart; but I know it not myself. I know not what is good for me; so I may find that to be a loss which I believed to be a gain. Were I, for example, to ask of Thee to deliver me from some suffering which Thou hadst appointed for my mortification, what, O my God, should I be asking of Thee? If I were to ask Thee to send me this suffering, perhaps it would be beyond the power of my weak patience to endure; or, if I were to come out victorious from the trial, perhaps—being so imperfect in humility—I might imagine that I had done

something, whereas it is Thou alone, O God, who dost all things. Were I to pray for suffering, it would, perhaps, be in something which would not touch my honour and reputation, which I judge to be necessary for Thy service,—and this, as it seems to me, from no motive of self-love. And yet that which appears to me to be a diminution of reputation might be just that which in Thy Divine purpose was intended to increase it, so as to give me greater power to serve Thee, the only end which I have in view.

I could add many other things to prove to myself that I do not understand myself. But as I know that they are known to Thee, why should I say more? or why have I said even this? O my God, it is that on the days in which I feel my misery most deeply, when my reason is covered with a thick cloud, I may seek and endeavour to find myself in these words which I have written. I often feel myself so miserable, so weak, so cowardly, that I wonder what has become of Thy servant, of her who believed that, in the power of the graces she had already received from Thee, she could face all the storms of this world. No, my God, I will never henceforth trust to any thing I might desire for myself. My will shall be that Thy Will should ordain for me whatsoever shall please Thee, because my only good

consists in pleasing Thee; and if Thou, my God, wert to grant me all that I desire, I see plainly that I should destroy myself.

How blind is the wisdom of men! how deceitful is their foresight! O my God, Whose knowledge is infallible, vouchsafe to order things for me according to Thy Will, and not according to my own. Punish me not, O Lord, by granting me what I ask or desire, when it is not in conformity with the purposes of Thy love. May that Divine love burn eternally in my heart!—this is my only desire. May self die within me from this moment, and may Another, greater than myself, and Who loves me better than I love myself, live and reign in my soul! May He live and give me life; may He reign, and may I be His captive! my soul desires no other liberty. How could he be free who is not subject to the Almighty? Can any captivity be heavier or more miserable than that of a soul which has escaped from the hands of its Creator? Happy are they, O Lord, who are so strongly bound to Thee by the chains of Thy mercies and Thy benefits, that they have no power to break them. “Love is strong as death, it is hard and inflexible as hell.” Oh, happy is he who receives his death-stroke from Thy hand, and is cast by Thee into that hell of Divine love,

whence he hopes not, or rather fears not, ever to depart!

Alas, O Lord, as long as this fleeting life endures, the life of eternity is always in peril! O life, the hindrance to my happiness, why am I not permitted to put an end to thee! I endure thee because my God endures thee; I take care of thee because thou art His; do not, then, betray me, do not be ungrateful to me. O Lord, how long does my banishment endure? Doubtless the longest pilgrimage is short to gain Thine eternity; but how long is a single day, a single hour, to the soul that knows not but that she may offend Thee, and fears that she shall offend Thee? O free-will, what a miserable slave art thou to thy liberty, unless thou art fixed by the love and by the fear of Him Who created thee! Oh, when will that happy day come when thou shalt be plunged into the infinite ocean of the Sovereign Truth; when thou shalt no longer have or desire to have liberty to sin, because thou shalt be free from all imperfection, and blissfully united to thy God, to live for all eternity the very life of thy Creator and thy Master! He is happy because He knows Himself, loves Himself, and enjoys Himself, without the possibility of doing otherwise. He has not, and He cannot have, liberty to forget Himself, or to cease to love

Himself, for in Him such liberty would be an imperfection. O my soul, thou wilt never enter into thy rest until thou shalt be perfectly united with thy Sovereign Good, until thou shalt know what He knows, love what He loves, and enjoy what He enjoys. Then shall there be no more change or inconstancy in thy will, for the grace of God will have so marvelously transformed thee, it will have made thee in so perfect a degree to partake in the Divine nature, that thou wilt no longer be able to forget that Sovereign Good, nor to desire to be able to forget Him, nor to cease to enjoy Him in the eternal fruition of His love.

Blessed are they who are written in the Book of that immortal life. But, my soul, if thou art of this number, "why art thou so sorrowful, and why dost thou trouble me? Hope in God;" for in this exile I will still confess my sins to Him, and will declare His mercies. This canticle of praise I will sing to my Saviour and my God, and will mingle my sighs therewith. A day will come, I hope, when I shall sing His glory alone, for then my soul shall feel no longer the bitterness of compunction; all her sighs and fears shall be over for ever. But until then, "in silence and in hope shall be my strength." I choose rather to live and to die in the hope of eternal life, and in labour-

ing to attain it, than to possess all that this world contains, with all its fleeting pleasures. "Forsake me not, O Lord, for in Thee do I hope. Let not my hope be confounded." Make me always to serve Thee, and do with me what Thou wilt.

PART II.

**DIRECTIONS ON PRAYER AND ON THE
LIFE OF PRAYER.**

CHAPTER I.

Motives of S. Teresa for the establishment of her reform.

JUST when I was beginning the foundation of the monastery of S. Joseph at Avila, I heard of the troubles in France, of the ravages caused there by the heretics, and how they were daily gaining strength. All this touched me keenly. I wept in the presence of God, and implored Him to provide some remedy for so great an evil. It seemed to me as though I would willingly have given a thousand lives to save even one of the vast number of souls who were destroying themselves in that kingdom. But since I was only a woman—and so wicked a woman too—as well as very incapable of rendering to God such service as I desired, I thought—as I still think—that since He has so many enemies and so few friends, I ought to use every exertion to make those friends as good as possible.

Thus I resolved to do all which depended on me, to practise the evangelical counsels with the greatest perfection, and to try to induce the religious with whom I lived to do the same. For the fulfilment of this design, I

trusted in the great goodness of God, Who never fails to help those who have renounced all for the love of Him. I hoped that these good daughters being such as my desires pictured them, my faults would be covered by their virtues; and I thought that we could please God by giving ourselves up to prayer for preachers and ecclesiastics and for learned men who write in defence of the Church. O my Redeemer! how can I enter on this subject without my heart being torn to pieces? Who now are Christians? Must Thy greatest enemies, then, be found amongst those whom Thou dost choose as Thy friends, upon whom Thou dost shower down Thy choicest favours, in the midst of whom Thou dwellest, and to whom Thou dost communicate Thyself through the Sacraments? Truly, my God, they who now quit the world, quit nothing; for what can we expect from men, since they show so little fidelity to Thee? Do we deserve that they should treat us better than they treat Thee? have we done them more good than Thou hast done, that so we may hope that they will love us better than they love Thee? What can we, then, expect from the world, who, by the mercy of God, have been snatched from the midst of its contagious and fatal atmosphere?

CHAPTER II.

The true nature of union with God.

I HAVE met with some who seem to imagine that the essential point in prayer is the exercise of the understanding ; and if they can keep their mind fixed on God, though by using great violence to themselves, they immediately consider themselves to be very spiritual persons, and if they experience involuntary distractions, or are obliged to turn their minds to any thing else, even to things good and meritorious, they immediately become greatly afflicted, and fancy they are doing nothing.

But the true proficiency of the soul consists, not in much thinking, but in much loving. And if you ask me how this love may be acquired, I answer, by resolving to do the Divine Will, and to suffer for God, and by so doing and so suffering when occasions for action and suffering arise.

Oh, how does Divine charity press the heart of those who truly love the Lord and know the desires of His Heart ! How little rest do they take, if they can be of any use in advancing the welfare of a soul, and increasing her love of God ; or if they can give her any comfort, or free her from any danger !

How little do such souls look to their own interest or their own ease! And when they can do no good by their works, they endeavour to do something by their prayers, importuning our Lord in behalf of those numerous souls whom they grieve to see in danger of eternal destruction; and thus bewailing their lot, they sacrifice their own repose, and pay no regard to their own happiness, considering how they may best accomplish the will of God. And thus it is with obedience: it would be a strange thing if, when God clearly tells us to do something for Him, we should choose rather to stand gazing upon Him, because we could thus please ourselves most! This would be a strange way of advancing in the love of God; to bind His hands, and compel Him to lead us onward in a way of our own choosing! O Lord, how far are Thy ways above our thoughts! And what dost Thou require of a soul which is already determined to love Thee, and give herself entirely into Thy hands, but that she should be obedient, that she should inquire in all things what tends most to Thy glory, and ardently desire to execute it? She has no need to seek out new paths, or to choose between them, for her will is now Thy will. Thou, O Lord, takest upon Thyself the care of leading her in the path wherein she shall make the great-

est progress. And though the superior may not take the trouble of guiding her in the way most advantageous to her, but may employ her only in those duties which he thinks will tend most to the good of the community, yet Thou, O my God, dost conduct her, disposing her and all her employments in such a manner that—without understanding how—she finds herself making great spiritual progress, obeying with such fidelity every command of her superiors, as is matter of astonishment even to herself. Such a soul was a religious with whom I spoke a few days ago, who, by obedience, had for fifteen years been so engaged in his duties and offices, that during all this period he did not remember to have had one hour for himself. All that he could do was to steal some spare time in the day to devote to prayer, and to attend carefully to the purifying of his conscience. This was the most obedient soul I ever knew, and he even imprints this virtue on all with whom he converses. Our Lord has liberally rewarded him; for, without his knowing how, he enjoys that precious liberty of soul which the perfect possess, and in which consists all the happiness that can be hoped for in this life; for, desiring nothing, he possesses all things. Such souls neither fear nor covet any thing on earth; afflictions do not dis-

turb them, neither does pleasure elate them ; nothing, in short, can rob them of their peace, because nothing can deprive them of God, on Whom alone it depends : the fear of losing Him is the only thing which could disturb them. Every thing else in this world is in their eyes as if it were not, because it neither gives nor takes away their joy. O blessed obedience ! blessed even in the distractions which it imposes, since the soul is thereby raised to so high a degree of perfection !

Courage, then, my daughters ; let there be no sadness, when obedience calls you to exterior employments—as, for example, into the kitchen, amidst the pots and dishes ; remember that our Lord goes along with you to help you both in your exterior and interior duties. I remember a religious once told me that he had determined within himself always to do whatever his superiors should command him, no matter what trouble it might give him. One evening, being quite spent with labour, and not able to stand on his legs, he wished to rest himself. No sooner had he sat down, than his superior came and found him, and bade him take a spade and go dig in the garden. The good man said nothing, though so completely exhausted ; he took his spade, and as he was going into the garden by a certain passage—

which I saw a great many years after this was related to me, when I founded a house in that very town—our Lord appeared to him with his cross on his shoulders, and so faint and weary as to make him understand that what he then suffered was nothing in comparison with what his Saviour had endured.

I believe that it is because the devil knows well that there is no path which leads us sooner to the highest perfection than that of obedience, that he raises so many difficulties under the semblance of good, to disgust us with it. Let this truth be well understood, and men will clearly see that the highest perfection does not consist in interior joys, nor in sublime raptures, nor in visions, nor in having the gift of prophecy, but in bringing our will into such conformity with the Will of God, that whatever we know He desires, that also shall we desire with our whole affection, receiving what is bitter as joyfully as what is sweet and pleasant, if only it be according to the Will of His Divine Majesty.

I particularly wish it to be understood that the reason why obedience, in my opinion, is so speedy and so sure a means of arriving at this happy state is, that in order so to master our own will as to be able to devote it wholly and sincerely to God, it must be subject to

reason, and obedience is the shortest and most efficacious means of bringing it into this subjection. To attempt to effect this by arguments is never to come to a conclusion, and is a dangerous method withal, for nature and self-love will always have so many good reasons on the other side, that we should never come to a conclusion ; for that which our reason sees to be best, often appears to us foolish, because we have no mind to do it.

CHAPTER III.

The love of God—Its signs and its benefits.

O OUR good Master, give us some weapon of defence, that we may escape the snares of our enemy in our dangerous warfare! Those, my daughters, which His Majesty has given us to use are love and fear; for love will make us quicken our pace, and fear will make us cautious where we set our feet, that we may not fall on the road where there are so many stumbling-blocks amidst which we must travel as long as we live: thus armed, I can safely assure you that you shall not be deceived.

You may ask me by what means you shall discover whether you possess these virtues of

hope and fear. You have reason for asking this question, for a certain and clear proof thereof cannot be given; because, were we sure that we possessed the love of God, we should be also sure of being in a state of grace. But observe, sisters, there are some proofs which it seems even the very blind can see; they are not secret, and though we should not wish to hear them, they cry aloud, and will be heard; for there are few who have them in perfection, and therefore they are the more manifest in those who have. The love and fear of God are like two strong castles, whence war is made against the world and the devil. Those who truly love God, love all good, seek all good, encourage all good, commend all good, always unite themselves with the good, and acknowledge and defend the good. They love nothing but truth, and such things as are worthy to be loved. Do you think it possible for those who sincerely love God to love vanities, or riches, or worldly things, or pleasures, or honours? They have no quarrels, they bear no envy; their only object is to please their Beloved alone; they are dying of the desire for His love, and thus they spend their lives in studying how they may please Him best. It is impossible that the love of God, if it be indeed His true love, should be con-

cealed, as we see in the examples of S. Paul and S. Mary Magdalen. The one appeared from the third, the other from the first, day visibly wounded by the love of God; for there are different degrees of love, and it is more or less visible according to its strength. If it is slight, it manifests itself but little; if great, it manifests itself more fully; but wherever there is a love of God, be it great or little, it will reveal itself—if great, by great effects; if little, by trifling ones.

It will not, then, be difficult for you to recognise that love if it be true,—and I do not understand how it can remain hidden; for if we are told that it is impossible to hide the love we bear to creatures, and that the more we endeavour to do so, the more surely it reveals itself, how should it be possible to conceal so ardent a love as that which we bear to God—a love which is so just, a love which is ever increasing, because it is ever discovering a thousand new reasons for loving, without finding one against it; and, lastly, a love whose foundation and reward is the love of God, Who, that we might never doubt His love, has manifested it to us by so many labours and sorrows, even by the sacrifice of His own life?

Alas, my Saviour, how easily do they who have experienced these two kinds of love dis-

cern the difference between them ! I implore Thy Divine Majesty to manifest it to us whilst we are still in this life. For what a consolation will it be at the hour of our death to know that we are going to be judged by Him Whom we have loved above all things ! We shall carry to Him fearlessly the schedule on which is inscribed the debt we owe Him, and we shall not look upon heaven as a foreign land, but as our own true country ; since He is there Whom we have loved so much, and Who also has loved us so much—that love having this advantage over all earthly love, that, provided we love Him, we cannot doubt that He loves us.

Consider how great a happiness it is to possess this love, and what a misfortune not to possess it ; since, if we have it not, we fall into the cruel hands of the tempter, the enemy of all good, and the friend of every kind of evil. To what, then, will that poor soul be reduced when, having passed through the pains and horrors of death, it shall find itself encircled by those cruel and pitiless hands, and, instead of enjoying some repose after so many sufferings, will be precipitated at once into the abyss of hell, where a horrible multitude of serpents surround it on all sides ! What a terrible and frightful abode ! what a deplorable and miserable resting-place ! If those persons who love

their ease, and who run the greatest risk of falling into this misery, can scarcely bear, even for a single night, the discomforts of a bad lodging, what do you think they will have to endure in passing a whole eternity in that frightful dwelling? Let us not desire to live at our ease; we are well off as we are: the inconveniences of this present life may be compared to a night passed in some wretched inn. Let us praise God for our sufferings; and whilst we are in this world, let our life be ever one of penance.

Oh, how sweet will be his death who shall have done penance for all his sins, so that, escaping purgatory, he may, from the moment he quits this life, enter on the glory of the blessed; and thus freed from every kind of fear, he shall enjoy perfect peace! Would it not be great cowardice not to aspire to this happiness, since its attainment is not impossible? At least let us ask of God, that if our soul, when it quits the body, must be in a state of suffering, it may be in a place where we shall endure it willingly, where we may live in hope of its consummation, and where we shall not fear that our Divine Spouse has ceased to love us, or has deprived us of His grace.

I have been very diffuse on this subject, yet not so much so as I could have desired; for

what is more delightful than to speak of such a love? What, then, is its possession? O Lord, give it me, if it so please Thee. Grant me grace not to quit this life until I no longer desire any thing, nor am capable of loving any thing, save Thee alone. Grant also, if it please Thee, that I may use this word 'love' with regard to Thee alone, since there is no solidity save in Thee; and every thing which is not founded on Thee must speedily fall to the ground. We often hear it said by persons in the world, "Such a one has never repaid my kindness," or "Another one does not love me." Truly I can scarcely help laughing when I hear it; for what does that person owe you? and on what do you found your claim that she should love you? It should only make you see more clearly what the world is, since the very love you bear her will become to you a cause of torment and disquietude. When God has once truly touched your heart, you will bitterly regret having allowed it to be taken up by these lower affections, which, in comparison with His love, are nothing but children's play.

CHAPTER IV.

The way of perfection is sweeter than men suppose.

O LORD my God, how plainly does Thy omnipotence appear! We may not question what Thou willest, since Thou makest all things possible, however impossible they may seem to nature, that so we may understand that nothing more is required but only to love Thee sincerely, and to forsake every thing in good earnest for Thy sake, that Thou, O my Lord, mayst make every thing easy for us. It would seem that Thou wouldst fain persuade us that there is some difficulty in observing Thy law; but I see none, O Lord, nor do I understand how the road which leads to Thee can be called strait. I find it a royal road, and not a narrow path—a road along which he who walks courageously, walks securely. As it is far removed from the occasions of sin, we meet with no stumbling-stones or other hindrances thereon. But I call that a narrow path and very dangerous which has a steep precipice on either side, down which a single false step may cast the careless traveller, and dash him to a thousand pieces. He that loves Thee, O eternal God, and gives himself without reserve to

Thee, walks securely along this broad and royal road; and if, perchance, he stumbles, Thou, O Lord, dost stretch forth Thy Hand to him; and if he should sometimes fall, yet such a fall—nay, even many falls—will not destroy him, if only he love Thee, and not the things of this world, and still hold fast his humility.

I cannot understand why men are so afraid of entering upon the way of perfection. May our Lord grant us in His goodness to understand what a poor security is to be found in the midst of so many manifest dangers as are to be met with in following the maxims and opinions of the world, and that true security consists in endeavouring to advance still further and further in the way of God! Let us fix our eyes upon Him, and fear not that this Sun of Justice will set or leave us wandering by night. We shall not be lost, if we do not first abandon Him. Men fear not to go among lions, every one of which is ready to tear them in pieces,—I mean what the world calls honours, pleasures, and delights; whereas here the devil makes us afraid of little mice. A thousand times have I been astonished at this, and ten thousand times have I desired to proclaim aloud with tears my great blindness and wickedness, if so I might prevail upon others to open their eyes to these truths. May He open them Who

can do so in His goodness ! and may He never allow mine to become blind again ! Amen.

CHAPTER V.

Great benefit of courage in the service of God.

His Majesty loves courageous souls, if only their courage be accompanied by humility, and they be free from confidence in themselves. I have never seen one of such souls lag behind on the road; and, on the other hand, I have never seen any cowardly soul, however humble it might be, advance as much in many years as a generous soul in a very short space of time. I am amazed when I consider how much may be done by animating ourselves to do great things; for though the soul may not have sufficient strength to perform them immediately, yet she takes a flight which will enable her to soar very high, though, like a bird whose wings are yet weak, she grows weary at times, and is constrained to take some repose. I have often been helped by considering the words of S. Paul: "I can do all things in Him Who strengthens me." As for myself, I knew well I could do nothing. I have also gained great profit from the words of S.

Augustine: "Give what Thou commandest, and command what Thou wilt." I have often thought that S. Peter took no harm by throwing himself into the sea, though afterwards he was afraid. These first resolutions are of great importance, though it is necessary that we should proceed with discretion, and do nothing without the advice of a director. But we must take care that he be not one who will teach us to creep along in the way of perfection; and humility must ever be our guide, that we may understand that our strength comes from God alone.

We must first understand, however, what kind of humility this must be; for I think the devil does great injury to those who practise prayer, and prevents them from advancing, by giving them a false idea of the true nature of humility, and by making them think it a species of pride to have heroic desires, to wish for martyrdom, and to imitate the Saints. He tells us, or leads us to suppose, that the actions of the Saints are to be admired, but not to be imitated, by us sinners. This I say likewise; but I say, moreover, that we must consider what is only to be admired, and what may be imitated, by us. It would not be fit, for example, for a weak and sickly person to fast much, or to use severe penances, or to go into a desert where

he could find neither food nor any thing else needful for him. But we should be convinced that we may, by the Divine assistance, strive to have a great contempt for the world, and for its honours and riches. We may also imitate the Saints in loving solitude, keeping silence, and practising many other virtues which will not destroy these miserable bodies, which we preserve so carefully even at the risk of injuring our souls. The devil does much on his part to foster this excessive care of our body; for when he sees that we have some little fear about our health, he desires nothing more to persuade us that the slightest thing will be enough to kill us, or at least to destroy our health; and if we should have the gift of tears, he will try to make us fear we shall lose our sight thereby. I have passed through these temptations, and, therefore, I know what they are; and I know also that we cannot desire a better use of life or health than to lose them both in such a cause. Being so weak in health myself, I was unable to do any thing, till I resolved to make no account at all of my health, nor to care for my body: even now I can do but little; but as soon as our Lord was pleased to discover to me this trick of the devil, I told him, whenever he represented to me the danger of losing my health, that my

death would be of little consequence; if he represented to me the necessity of rest, I told him that it was not ease that I now wanted, but the cross; and so on. Though I am still very infirm, I see clearly that in many instances my infirmities were increased by the temptations of the devil, or by my own cowardice, and, as I am not so nice and delicate as formerly, I now enjoy much better health than in the days when I took so much care of it. It is, therefore, of great importance that those who begin to practise mental prayer be not disturbed or terrified by these over-anxious thoughts. Let them believe me on this point, for I have had some experience therein; and perhaps it may be of some use to mention these my faults, that so others may take warning by my example.

There is also another temptation against which, though it takes the semblance of a zeal for virtue, it is necessary to be on our guard, arising from the trouble which we feel on account of the sins and defects which we observe in others. The devil endeavours to persuade us that this grief arises only from our desire that they should not offend God, and that we are troubled because His honour is insulted. Then we immediately desire to remedy this evil, and thus become so restless that our

prayer is disturbed ; and the greatest misfortune is, that we think this to be virtue, perfection, and great zeal for God's glory. I speak not of that affliction which is caused by public sins, if such are committed in a community, nor of other calamities of the Church,—such as heresies, whereby we see that so many souls are lost; for this is a very holy affliction, and being holy, it does not disturb the soul. But the secure way for a soul which practises prayer is to detach itself from all things, and to think only of itself and of how it may please God. Let us, then, always endeavour to consider the virtues and good qualities which we perceive in others, and to conceal their defects by the consideration of our own great sins. The reflection that they are better than we, will lead us in time to the attainment of great perfection.

CHAPTER VI.

Various ways of deceiving ourselves.

I KNEW a person very intimately who communicated often, never spoke ill of any one, had great tenderness in prayer, lived at home in almost continual solitude, and was so sweet-tempered, that whatever was said to her, she

never gave way to anger: which I look upon as no small degree of virtue. She had never been married, and was no longer of an age to marry; and she had suffered much adversity without murmuring. Seeing her in this state, and being unable to remark any sin in her, and learning also that she watched over all her actions very narrowly, I looked upon her as a person much given to prayer, and a very perfect soul: but when I came to know her more intimately, I found that she was only calm when her own interest was not concerned, and that as soon as this was touched, she at once showed herself to be as sensitive as I had believed her to be detached; that notwithstanding the seeming patience with which she listened to what was said to her, so full was she of self-esteem, that she could not bear the least allusion which might detract from her dignity; and that she had so great a curiosity to know all that was going on, and took so much pleasure in her own ease and comfort, that I found it difficult to understand how she could remain for even one hour in solitude. She justified her actions in such a manner, that (to believe her) it would have been a grievous wrong to her to look upon any one of them as a sin. Thus, whilst nearly every one considered her as a Saint, she filled me with compassion, particularly when

I observed that all the persecutions which she told me she had suffered had arisen chiefly from her own fault; so I did not envy her her sanctity. This person, and two others whom I have known, who like her believed themselves to be Saints, have inspired me with greater fear than the greatest sinners I have ever known.

Implore God, my daughters, to enlighten us with His grace, that we may never be deceived in this manner, and thank Him earnestly for having bestowed on us so great a favour as to bring us into a house consecrated to His service, where, whatever efforts the devil may make to blind us, he cannot so easily succeed as if we were in the world; for though, amongst seculars, there are some who, in their anxiety to be perfect, believe that they are already fit for heaven, it is hard to know whether they are really such as they fancy themselves; but in monasteries this is more easily discerned, and I have never had any difficulty in discerning it, because there, instead of fulfilling our own will, we must do what is commanded us; and, on the contrary, those who live in the world, although they may have a true desire to please God, to see their own character clearly, and not to deceive themselves, cannot avoid this danger, because they act according to their own

will, or if they sometimes resist it is not with so great a mortification of their will as that of religious. We must except those persons who submit themselves to a director capable of guiding them, their true humility not allowing them to place much confidence in themselves. There are others, who, after our Lord has given them grace to understand the nothingness of all things here below, have, out of love to Him, renounced riches and pleasures in order to embrace a life of penance: but they value their own reputation so highly, and are, in consequence, so discreet and prudent, that they desire also to do nothing which may not be pleasing in the eyes of men. These two things, my daughters, do not agree: and the misfortune is, that these persons are so little aware of their error, that they always take the side of the world rather than that of God.

The greater number know not how to bear the slightest thing which is said to their disadvantage, although their conscience convicts them of its truth. This is not to embrace the cross, it is but to drag it; can we wonder that it seems to them so heavy? Whereas, one who loves it, finds it easy, not only to embrace, but even to carry it. I conjure you, my daughters, to consider deeply that in consequence of the vow which you have made, the

world should henceforth be as nothing to you. What! after having renounced your own will, which is of all things the most difficult, can you retain any affection for that delusive sort of happiness which is to be found in riches, honours, and pleasures? What do you fear? Do you not perceive that in order to prevent worldly people thinking or saying something to your disadvantage, you would be obliged to take incredible pains to please them?

There are other persons (and I shall finish with them), of whom, when we examine their actions, we have reason to believe that they have made great progress, and who, nevertheless, remain half-way on the road. They do not pause at what may be said of them, nor on this false point of honour; but they do not exercise themselves in mortification, nor do they renounce their own will. Though they seem ready to suffer every thing and pass for Saints, yet if some important occasion regarding the glory of God presents itself, they prefer their own to His. Nevertheless, they do not perceive it, and imagine, on the contrary, that they are thinking only of God, and not of the world, when they dread what may be the result, and fear that a good work may produce a great evil. It would appear as though the devil taught them to prophesy evils to

come a thousand years before they come to pass.

These persons would not, like S. Peter, throw themselves into the sea, neither would they imitate the numberless other Saints who have not feared to resign their repose and to risk their lives in the service of their neighbour. They are very willing to help souls to draw near to our Lord, provided such aid does not trouble their own peace, and that it involves them in no peril.

CHAPTER VII.

On the contempt of worldly honour.

WHEN our Lord begins to give some degree of virtue to a soul, it ought carefully to cherish it, lest it run the risk of losing it; this holds good in matters relating to our reputation and honour as well as in many others. For we, who think ourselves to be entirely disengaged from all things, are often not so in reality; hence we have great need to be careful in this respect,—for if any one still feels any concern for the point of honour, let him believe me that his soul is bound by a chain which no file can sever, but

the grace of God, united with prayer and our own endeavours ; and this chain seems to me so strong, that I am not surprised that it so greatly impedes our progress. I know some persons whose actions are so holy and sublime, that we cannot help regarding them with admiration, and exclaiming, " O my God, how is it that such a soul still cleaves to earth, which does such great things for Thee ?" I answer, some point of honour holds her down ; and, what is still worse, she is unable to perceive it ; and that because the devil makes her believe that she is obliged to take care of her honour. But let such souls listen to me ; for the love of our Lord, I beg of them to believe me, a poor little miserable ant, whom our Lord would have to speak in His name ; let them be assured that unless they free themselves from this caterpillar, though it may not destroy the tree entirely, because some other virtues perhaps remain (though worm-eaten), yet it will never become a beautiful tree, nor will it ever flourish itself—no, nor suffer any others to flourish that grow near it—because it will not bear the fruit of good example. I say again and again that any attachment, however slight, to the point of honour is like a false note in the playing of an organ, which spoils the whole harmony. This is an evil which does harm to the

soul in every way, but in the life of prayer it is a very pestilence.

For in that life of prayer we endeavour to unite ourselves to God by following the counsels of Jesus Christ, Who was loaded with injuries and false accusations, and yet, at the same time, we wish to be very careful of our honour and reputation. But we shall never arrive at our journey's end but by the same road along which our Lord travelled. Our Divine Saviour will not dwell in our soul unless we endeavour to correspond with His grace, by giving up in many things even that which is our right. But some, perhaps, will say, "I have no opportunity in matters of this kind to give up any thing for His sake." I believe that our Lord will not suffer any one who has such a desire to lose so great a good, but that His Majesty will so order things that he will have more opportunities than he as yet desires of gaining this virtue. Let us all, then, put our hands to the work; for I wish to inform you that some of those miserable nothings which I performed, mere straws, fit for nothing but to be cast into the fire, were all accepted by our Lord: may He be praised for ever!

Amongst my other imperfections, I had very little knowledge of the Breviary, or of any of

the offices of the choir ; and this arose from my being so careless and given to vanities: while, at the same time, I saw novices who were able to teach me. I did not ask them any questions, for fear they should discover my ignorance; but shortly afterwards, a good opportunity was presented to me—and this favour is usually granted by God. So when He had opened my eyes a little, I asked—when I was in the slightest doubt—the youngest in the house to inform me ; and, so far from thus lessening myself in their esteem, I rather rose in their opinion. Our Lord was pleased to give me a better memory from that time. I was also a bad singer, and I was troubled at it, not from fear of making any blunders in the presence of God—for that would have been a virtue—but because so many heard me ; and thus I was so disturbed, purely on account of my reputation, that I really acquitted myself much worse than I need have done. Afterwards, I thought it better to tell the sisters plainly, that I could not sing well, which was really the case. At first I had some difficulty in doing this, but afterwards it became a pleasure to me ; and thus it appears that when a soul begins not to care about her faults being known, she is able to do her duty much better. And when I renounced this unhappy desire of

honour, which I fancied I could acquire in singing, I began to sing much better than before; and thus, when we perform such poor little acts as these, His Majesty is pleased to give them worth and value, because they are done for His sake, though in reality they are nothings—and I am sure I am nothing.

He also enabled me to advance in humility, by seeing all the sisters advance except myself, for I was never good for any thing; when, however they left the choir, I would stay to fold up their mantles, for it seemed to me as if they were Angels, who were there singing the praises of our Lord. This I continued to do till they came to hear of it; and then I was not a little ashamed, for my virtue was not so far advanced as to be willing that they should know this practice of mine: not because I was humble, but only lest they might laugh at me, because I was still so completely good for nothing.

CHAPTER VIII.

Little attachments, great hindrances in the way of perfection.

If a rich person, having no children nor any one to whom he can leave his estate, loses some portion of his wealth, yet retains sufficient

for the support of himself and his household, and even something to spare,—should that person be as much disturbed and as uneasy as if he had not bread to eat, will our Lord ask him to forsake all things for His love? It may be said that he is troubled at his loss, because he would have left his money to the poor. But I am confident that God loves better that we should conform ourselves to what His Majesty ordains, and endeavour to keep our souls in quiet, than that we should exercise this charity to the poor.

Another has abundance to live on, and something to spare. An opportunity presents itself of acquiring additional wealth. If it be offered to him as a gift, by all means let him take it ; but to seek after it, and when this is obtained to strive for more and more, let the intention be ever so good (and good it must be, for, as I said, these persons are devout and really virtuous), yet let them be assured that they will never enter the mansions nearest to the King's. It is just the same with such persons if they chance to be despised, or their honour be in some way touched, however slightly ; there remains in their minds a certain uneasiness, which they cannot easily shake off or overcome.

You may think, sisters, that I wander from the subject, and that what I say does not relate

to you, because in this house we neither have, nor desire, nor seek for wealth, nor does any one do us injury. These comparisons, then, you may say, have nothing at all to do with us. Still, they may be of use on many occasions which may happen—which, to mention here, is neither necessary nor convenient. By these comparisons you will discover whether you are wholly disengaged from all affection to those things which you have forsaken; for certain little occasions often present themselves by which you may make a sufficient trial of yourselves, and know whether you have gained the mastery over your passions. And, believe me, perfection consists not in wearing or not wearing a religious habit, but in endeavouring to practise virtue, and in subjecting our own will in all things to the will of God. It consists also in regulating our lives conformably to whatever His Majesty shall appoint for us, and in desiring not our own will, but His. But as we have not as yet reached this point, let us humble ourselves, as I said; for humility, sisters, is the ointment of our souls, and if we possess it, our Lord, the Divine Physician, will come and heal us, though He may delay a while.

The penances which the persons of whom I have been speaking perform are as carefully

regulated as their lives, which they most anxiously preserve, in order, they say, thereby to serve our Lord. In their mortifications they use great discretion, that they may not injure their health. There is no fear of their killing themselves, for their good sense will take care of that. Such a love is not indeed desirable as deprives us of reason; but I wish we had such reason as not to be content with serving God in this manner, always standing still in the same place, so that we never arrive at the end of our journey. And yet we think that we are always advancing, and that with great labour and difficulty—for, believe me, this is a very wearisome way—it will be well if we do not lose ourselves altogether. My daughters, if we had to go from one country into another which we might conveniently reach in the course of a week, how would you like, on account of the inns, the winds, the snows, the rains, and bad roads, to be a year on the way? would it not be better to finish the journey at once?—for we shall assuredly meet with all these inconveniences, and with the enmity of the old serpent also. While we proceed with so much caution, every thing delays us, because we are afraid of every thing, and so we have no courage to venture forward; as if we could arrive at these mansions, and leave others to

endure the difficulties of the way! No, this is impossible! For the love of God, therefore, sisters, let us press forward, and leave our reasons and fears in His hands; let us rise above this natural weakness, and leave our superiors, whom it concerns, to take care of this miserable body, and let us think of nothing but of hastening on to see the face of our Lord and our God!

We have indeed but few delicacies; yet too much care for our health may delude us, and our health, after all, will be no better for all our care. This I know, and I know likewise that perfection does not consist in bodily austerities, which are its least important part. Our progress depends, as I have said, on our advancing with great humility. We should, therefore, always imagine that we ourselves have travelled but a little way, and believe that our sisters have hastened on far before us; and we ought not only to desire, but to endeavour to be accounted the most base and wicked of all creatures. If we do this, we shall prove our state to be good; otherwise we shall continue all our lives where we are, laden with a thousand afflictions and miseries; for not having left ourselves behind, our journey becomes very difficult and painful, because we travel under the heavy burden of this miserable clay.

That which, in my opinion, will exceedingly profit those who, through the mercy of God, desire to rise higher in His service, is to be very careful to obey promptly; and it would be very useful, even for persons in the world, to choose, as many do, some one whom they may obey, in order to avoid doing their own will in any thing; for this it is which generally deceives and injures us. And here they should not seek a person of the same disposition and ideas as themselves, who may flatter them instead of striving to detach them from the world, but one who knows its deceits, because they will thus be better enabled to discover those deceits; and also because, when we see things which at first appear impossible easily accomplished by others who have sanctified themselves thereby, we feel exceedingly encouraged. When we see their flight, we venture to fly, like young birds, which, though they cannot soar high at first, yet ascend little by little, in imitation of their elders. This is a great assistance, as I know by my own experience.

CHAPTER IX.

Persons farthest advanced in grace ought to live
in continual fear of falling.

It is indeed a very great misery to live in this world, where we must always be like those who have their enemies at the gate, who can neither eat nor sleep, but are obliged to have their arms continually in their hands,—always in anxiety and fear lest the enemy make a breach on one side or the other, and so become master of the castle. O my Lord, my God, how wouldst Thou have us to love a life so miserable? Could we refrain from wishing and praying to be taken, but for the hope of losing it for Thy sake, or spending it wholly in Thy service, because we know that thus we shall be accomplishing Thy good pleasure? But for this, my God, should we not say, with S. Thomas, “Let us die with him,” since to live without Thee, and in the fear of perhaps losing Thee for ever, is nothing else than to die many deaths? I tell you, therefore, my daughters, that the blessedness we must ask for is to be at last in security with the Blessed; for, amidst these fears, what pleasure can he have who finds no pleasure except in pleasing God? Consider that some of the Saints have had much

greater fears than these, and yet they have fallen into grievous sins ; nor are we sure that, if we fall, God will stretch out His hand (I mean, His especial assistance) to lift us up, and that we shall have grace to do penance as they did. I assure you, my daughters, that while I am writing these words, I am seized with such fear that I neither know how I can write, nor how I can live, when I reflect on this subject, as I very often do. Pray, my daughters, that His Majesty may ever live in me ; for, otherwise, what security can there be for such a life as mine, which has been so wicked ?

But His Majesty knows I can only depend on His mercy ; and, since by it alone I can become other than I am, I have no other remedy but to have recourse to it alone, and to trust in the merits of His Son, and of the Blessed Virgin, His Mother, whose habit you and I, though most unworthy of it, wear. Thank Him that you are the true daughters of this Lady ; and, therefore, having so good a Mother, you must not be ashamed of my being so bad. Imitate her, and imagine what the greatness of this Lady must be, and what a great honour it is to have her for our Patroness, so that my sins, wretched creature as I am, have not been able in the slightest degree to tarnish her holy Order. But I wish to warn you against one

thing: be not too secure because the order is so holy, or because you are the daughters of such a Mother; for David was a great Saint, yet you know what was the end of Solomon. Neither should you make much account of the enclosure and penance in which you live; nor let your continual converse with God, or your uninterrupted exercise of prayer, render you secure; nor your separation from the world; nor your abhorrence of worldly things. All this is very good, but not sufficient, as I have said, to free us from danger. Frequently, then, remember and meditate on this verse: "Blessed is the man who feareth the Lord."

CHAPTER X.

Grievous nature of deliberate venial sins.

WHO does not commit many venial sins inadvertently! But may God deliver us from a deliberate sin, however small it may be! for I do not understand how we can have the boldness to act in opposition to so great a Lord, even though it were but in a very small matter, much more when we know that there is nothing small which offends so awful a Majesty, and especially when we remember that He stands looking

at us. Hence such sins seem to me to be pre-meditated, just as if we said: "Lord, though this sin may displease Thee, yet I will commit it. I now see that Thou beholdest it, and that it displeases Thee. Of this I am well aware; but I prefer to follow my own fancy and passion rather than do Thy will." Now, in a case of this nature, is the fault small? To me it seems not small, but great; ay, and very great.

CHAPTER XI.

Confidence in the goodness and power of God, and contempt which we ought to feel for the devil.

OH, how good is God! oh, how good and how powerful is the Lord! He gives not only counsel, but remedies also. His words are works. How is our faith hereby strengthened, and our love increased! Thus I often call to mind how our Lord, when a tempest had risen at sea, commanded the winds and the waves, and there came a great calm; and I said then, Who is this Whom all the powers of my soul obey, and Who, in an instant, gives such dazzling light to chase away such thick darkness, and makes that heart become soft which seemed before to be as hard as a stone; and Who gives the water of

sweet tears where before there was so long and great a drought? Who inspires these desires? Who gives such courage? What have I been thinking of, that I should fear? What is this? I desire to serve this Lord, and I wish for nothing but to please Him. I renounce all pleasure and ease, and every other good, save only the doing of His will; and of this good I am sure, as I can safely affirm. Since, then, this Lord is so powerful, as I see He is and know He is, and since all the devils are His slaves (and of this I can have no doubt, since it is of faith), what harm can they do me, who am a servant of this Lord and King? Why may I not have strength enough to fight with all the powers of hell? These enemies only venture to attack those who give themselves up to them; or they make their attacks only when God permits them for the greater good of His servants, whom they tempt and torment. I would it might please His Majesty to make us fear Him Whom we ought to fear, and to make us understand that we receive greater harm from one venial sin than from all the powers of hell put together,—this is certainly true. But when, by our affection for honours, riches, and pleasures, we give the devils power over us, by loving and desiring that which we ought rather to abhor, then, indeed, they will

do us much harm; for we enable them to fight against us with our own arms, which we put into their hands, and with which we ought rather to defend ourselves. ' What a great evil is this ! But if we now resolve to detest all these things for the love of God, and to embrace His Cross, and to serve Him in good earnest, the devil flies from these resolutions as we should fly from the plague. He is the friend of lies, and a lie itself. He will have nothing to do with one who walks in truth. But when once he sees our understanding obscured, he skilfully labours to obscure it still more,—he helps us to blind ourselves; and, considering us to be children, he treats us as such, because he sees that we place all our satisfaction in the vain things of this world, which are only toys fit for children. With such souls he wrestles more or less as he sees a hope of success. May our Lord grant that this may never be my case; but may He rather, in His mercy, make me take that to be ease and rest which is, indeed, true ease and true rest; and that to be honour which is true honour; and that to be pleasure which is true pleasure;—and not to seek false ease, false rest, false honour, and false pleasure! and then I care not a straw for all the devils in hell, for they will be afraid of me. I do not understand those fears by which

we exclaim, "The devil! the devil!" when we ought rather to say, "O my God! my God!" and so make the devil tremble.

Do we not already know that the devil is unable to move unless our Lord permits him? What, then, is the cause of all our fears? I confess that I fear those who are so frightened at the devil more than I fear the devil himself.

CHAPTER XII.

On forgiveness of injuries, after the example of our Divine Lord.

O MY Lord, art not Thou our pattern and example? Assuredly Thou art. Now, wherein did Thine honour consist, O Divine Master? Didst Thou not lose it, by being humbled even to death? No, Lord; but Thou didst gain honour for us all. Oh, for the love of God, sisters, consider how hopelessly we shall lose our way if we follow this road of human honour, since it is wrong from the very outset; and God grant that no soul may perish for observing these miserable points of honour, without considering in what honour consists! We imagine that we have done a great deal if we forgive some little trifling affront or injury which de-

serves not to be so called; and, as if we had done some extraordinary action, we come and beg of God to forgive us, since we have forgiven others. Make us understand, O my God, that we know not ourselves, and that we come with empty hands; and do Thou, in Thy free mercy, pardon us.

But how highly must God value our love one to another, since our good Jesus might have proposed many other things to His Father, and have said: "Forgive us, O Lord, because we do great penances, or because we pray and fast much, and have left all things for Thee; and because we love Thee exceedingly; because we would lose our lives for Thee." Many other such things He might have mentioned; and yet He only said, "as we forgive them." Because, perhaps, He knew we were such great lovers of this miserable honour, and because it is a duty so difficult to perform, He spoke of it alone, and offered it to His Father on our behalf.

CHAPTER XIII.

Vain excuses of lukewarm religious.

I SOMETIMES hear religious say, in order to excuse their own tepidity, that God bestowed

extraordinary graces on the holy founders of their orders, because their virtues were to be, as it were, the foundation of these spiritual edifices,—and such is really the truth; but should not these persons remember that they too, by their virtuous example, are bound to serve as a foundation for those who shall come after them? If we who are still living do not fall into relaxation, and if those who succeed us also maintain the exact observance of the rule, the spiritual edifice will continue to subsist. But what advantage shall I reap from what was established with so much labour and courage by the Saints who preceded me, if, through my fault and want of virtue, I allow it to fall into ruin? Is it not evident that those who enter religion, instead of allowing their thoughts to travel so far back as to the founders of their order, should rather fix them on their superiors and the other religious who are before their eyes? In truth, it is an easy way to excuse our imperfections, to say that they arise from our not having lived in those early times. But, O my Saviour, how vain and unreasonable are all such excuses! Is it not evident that they do but serve to deceive us? I am ashamed, my God, to be so useless and so unfit for Thy service; but I see clearly that if Thou hast not favoured me with

the same graces which Thou didst bestow on those who were before me, I can but attribute it to my own sins and imperfections. I cannot reflect without sorrow on the difference between my life and theirs, nor can I speak of it without tears. I acknowledge that, so far from profiting by their labours, I have rendered them unfruitful by the bad use which I have made of them ; yet I can but blame myself,—not Thee, of Whom no one can complain. A religious who perceives that any relaxation, however slight, is creeping into her order, should serve, by her virtue, to sustain the holy edifice ; nor need she doubt of Thy assistance to enable her to do so.

CHAPTER XIV.

Prayer against the desire of human approbation.

O MY Lord, when I consider in how many ways Thou didst suffer, and yet without in any way deserving it, I know not what to say of myself, nor where my senses were when I did not desire sufferings, nor what I do when I excuse myself. Thou knowest, O my God, that if I have any good in me, it has been bestowed by Thy bounty alone. And by what art Thou restrained from giving me much rather than

little? If it be because I do not deserve it, I deserve as little the favours which Thou hast already bestowed on me. Is it possible that I should wish any one to think well of a creature so wicked as I am, when so many evil things have been spoken against Thee, the Supreme Good? Do not suffer it, O my God! Nor let me desire that Thou shouldst endure any thing to remain in Thy servant which is in the slightest degree displeasing to Thee. See, O Lord, my eyes are dim, and the smallest thing suffices to blind them. Give me light; and make me really desire that every one may abhor me, since I have so often forsaken Thee, though Thou hast loved me so faithfully. What folly is this, O my God! What do we imagine that we shall obtain by pleasing creatures? Why are we concerned at being falsely accused by all men, if we are innocent before Thee?

CHAPTER XV.

God will never fail us if we fail not ourselves.

O LORD, all our evils come from not fixing our eyes on Thee. If we considered only the way, we should soon arrive at our journey's end; but we fall a thousand times, and stumble and

stray from the Way, by not fixing our eyes (as I said) on the True Way. It seems never to have been trodden, so new does it appear to us. We seem, I say, not to be Christians, nor to have ever read the Passion in our life, since we cannot endure to be despised even in a trifling matter. We reply immediately, "We are not Saints." When we do any thing imperfect, may God deliver us, sisters, from saying, "We are not Angels," "We are not Saints." Consider, that though we be not Angels or Saints, it is a great happiness to think that if we strive after it, we may, by God's assistance, become Saints ; and fear not that He will fail you, if you fail not yourselves.

CHAPTER XVI.

Necessity of interior mortification.

IN the life of perfection all appears to be hard and laborious, and justly so, because it is a war against ourselves ; but when we begin it, God works so powerfully in the soul, and bestows on it so many favours, that all that we can do in this life seems but little. Now, since we nuns have done that which is most difficult, in sacrificing our liberty for the love of God,

subjecting ourselves to another's power, and enduring so much labour, fasting, silence, enclosure, and attendance in choir, so that, were we ever so desirous of relaxation, we could seldom enjoy it,—why, I ask, are we so slow in mortifying our interior, without which we cannot perfectly perform the rest, while with it all the rest becomes perfect and meritorious, and we are enabled to go through all our exterior duties with great ease and delight ?

We shall acquire this interior mortification if we accustom ourselves by degrees not to do our own will or follow our own appetite, even in very trifling things, until we have completely made the body subject to the spirit. I say again, that all, or almost all, consists in renouncing all care of ourselves and of our own pleasure ; for the least which he can offer, who begins to serve God in earnest, is his life, after he has already given up his will to Him. And why are you afraid to give Him this ? There is no true religious who is really given to prayer, and wishes to enjoy Divine consolations, but would desire to die for her Lord, and to suffer all manner of crosses for His sake. Do you not know, sisters, that the life of a good religious, of one who wishes to be numbered among the intimate friends of God, is a long martyrdom ? I call it long, because it may be

called so in comparison with that of those who are beheaded in an instant ; but our whole life is short, and some lives are extremely short. And is it not uncertain whether our life may be so short as to end an hour hence, or in the very moment when we have resolved to serve God with all our strength ? Such a thing is not impossible ; and, after all, we have no reason to make any account of that which has an end, and much less of life, in which we have no certainty of a single day. And who that remembers that every hour may be his last will refuse to spend it in labour ?

Believe me, then, the safest way is to keep these thoughts ever before us. Let us, therefore, learn to cross our own will in every thing ; for though we cannot do this all at once, yet, by diligence and prayer, you will by degrees and unconsciously attain to it. It may, indeed, seem very severe to say that we must not please ourselves in any thing, because the joy which accompanies this self-denial, and likewise the benefits which arise from it even in this life, are not also mentioned.

But as your rule enjoins you to practise all this, the chief difficulty is surmounted : excite, therefore, and help each other forward, and let each endeavour to outstrip the rest.

Observe carefully the movements of your

interior, especially if they concern desires of superiority. May the merits of Christ's Passion deliver us from saying or dwelling on such thoughts as these, "I am the senior in the order," or "I have laboured more than others," or "Another is better treated than I am" ! If these thoughts arise, they must be stifled immediately ; for if you dwell upon them, or talk about them, they will become a very plague. Cry, therefore, to God, and let all your prayers have this end, that you may obtain a remedy for so great a danger. You may ask why I insist so much on this ; you may think what I say too severe, since God bestows His favours even on such as are not thus disengaged. I believe that He does this because, in His infinite wisdom, He sees it expedient to lead them on thereby to forsake all things for His sake. I do not account a person's entering religion the forsaking of all things, because there may be attachments even in religion ; while, on the other hand, in every state of life a perfect soul may be humbled and detached, though with greater difficulty, because order and retirement are great helps to detachment. But, believe me, that if there be any hankering after honours or riches (and this may happen in monasteries as well as in the world), those who cherish such desires, though they may

have spent many years in prayer, or, to speak more correctly, in speculation (for perfect prayer takes away all these defects), will never make any progress, nor be able to derive any fruit from their prayer.

CHAPTER XVII.

Difference between true and false humility.

BE on your guard, daughters, against a certain false humility, which, to our great disquiet, is suggested by the devil, respecting the greatness of our sins; for hereby he is accustomed to disturb souls in many ways in order to dissuade them from Holy Communion, and from praying for particular intentions—for the devil persuades them they are unworthy; and when they approach to receive the most Blessed Sacrament, the time in which they might receive great favours from God is mostly spent in discussing whether or not they have been well prepared. The enemy prevails so far as to make a soul believe that, because she is such a great sinner, God has forsaken her, so that she almost doubts His mercy. Whatever she says, seems to her dangerous, and all her actions fruitless, however good they may in

reality be. She is quite discouraged, because she feels that she has no power to do any good ; for that which appears good to her in others, seems bad in herself.

Pay very great attention, daughters, to this point on which I am now about to speak ; for at one time it may be humility and virtue to consider ourselves very bad, and at another time it may be a very great temptation ; and because I have experienced this, I know it to be true. However great our humility may be, it does not disturb or disorder the soul, but brings peace, delight, and calmness. Should any one at the sight of her own wickedness clearly perceive that she deserves to be in hell, and so scarcely dare to ask for mercy, this grief—if it springs from true humility—has a certain sweetness and satisfaction attendant upon it, so that she would not wish to be without it. It does not disturb or straiten the soul, but rather enlarges it, and disposes it to serve God more fervently. But the other kind of grief troubles and disorders every thing, throws the soul into utter confusion, and is very painful. I believe the devil thus tries to make us think that we have humility, and at the same time—if he can—to make us distrust God. When you find yourselves in this state, avoid, as much as you can, thinking on your own misery,

and meditate on the mercy of God,—how much He loves you, and how much He has suffered for you.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Various kinds of false peace.

MAY God preserve us from those different kinds of peace which worldly persons enjoy, and which cause them to remain tranquil, even though they may have committed the greatest sins. Does not such a peace deserve rather to be called a warfare? This false peace is a sign of the union of such souls with the devil; he will not make war upon them during this life, lest he should drive them to have recourse to God to deliver them from his power. Let them enjoy their false happiness as long as it pleases them; I hope through the mercy of God that He may never find such amongst us.

Since whilst we are in this life we have to maintain a continual warfare against so many enemies, we cannot be too vigilant both over our interior and our exterior; for though God may give us great grace in prayer, yet as soon as we have it, we shall meet with a thousand little stumbling-blocks, causing us to omit certain things through negligence, not to perform others

with sufficient exactness, or we shall fall into some interior troubles, and be assailed by temptations. So far from thinking or wishing to be entirely exempt from these temptations and troubles, I look upon them as great favours from God, and very profitable to the soul, by promoting its progress in virtue ; but I cannot help fearing for those who feel no sorrow for their faults—if it be but a venial sin, it should always give us pain.

If you love me, pay great attention, I pray you, to this: Is it not true that a living person feels the slightest prick of a pin or a thorn? In like manner, if our souls are not dead, but animated by an ardent love of God, shall not we be very sensitive to the least thing which is not in accordance with our profession and our obligations?

Scrupulous persons should remark that I do not mean those faults into which we sometimes fall without thought, and even unconsciously, but those which we ordinarily commit,—make little account of, do not regret, and even do not strive to correct, because we look upon them as nothing, and thus sleep on in a false and dangerous tranquillity.

Strive, my daughters, not to have always the same faults to accuse yourselves of in confession ; and since our weakness is so great

that we know not how to avoid committing some, let us at least endeavour that they be not always the same, lest they strike deep roots into our souls, which will be very difficult to eradicate, and these roots again produce others, like to a plant which, when watered every day, grows so rapidly that, though at first it would have been easy to pluck it up with the hand, it becomes necessary afterwards to use a hoe or a spade to uproot it.

Let us ask God to aid us at those moments which, in the hour of death, and at His dreadful Judgment, we shall see to have been so important, especially to those who have, like us, the honour of having Him for our Spouse in this life who will then be our Judge.

Amongst worldly people we may meet with another kind of peace, less dangerous than that of which I have spoken,—it is the peace of those who are careful to avoid the commission of mortal sin,—which in itself is no small thing considering the manner in which people live at the present day; but I am persuaded that they must fall into it from time to time, because they make so little account of committing a great number of venial sins, which are on the very verge of mortal sin. These persons do not fear to say—and I have often heard them—“What! do venial sins seem so important

to you? Surely holy water will efface them, and the Church, like a good mother, gives us also other remedies for them." What, my daughters, can be more deplorable than to hear Christians dare to speak in this manner! I conjure you, by your love for God, never to commit any sin, venial though it be, under pretext of these remedies. We may always suspect the dispositions of those persons who desire consolations which weaken virtue, tend to tepidity, and give rise to doubts whether sins committed in this state are venial or mortal. May God in His good pleasure deliver us from this kind of peace!

CHAPTER XIX.

On a constrained and narrow spirit of devotion.

I EXHORT you to fly all constraint and narrowness in the service of God, because the soul which gives way to it is not thereby disposed to any kind of good, and often falls into scruples which render her useless to herself and others. Even if she does not become scrupulous, she will, however good herself, be unable to aid others to advance in piety, inasmuch as this constraint is so opposed to our nature, that it intimidates and

frightens us. Thus, though these persons are persuaded that your road is a better one than theirs, yet the fear of falling into the state of constraint in which they see you causes them to lose all desire to enter upon it. Endeavour, then, as far as you can without offending God, to behave in such a manner towards those with whom you have to live, that they may be pleased with your conversation, that they may desire to imitate your conduct, and that virtue may appear so sweet and amiable in your intercourse with them that, instead of frightening them, it may inspire them with reverence and love.

This advice is very important to religious ; the holier they are, so much the more watchful should they be to exercise gentleness and sweetness towards their sisters. Therefore, my daughters, when the conversation of your sisters is not such as you would wish it to be, and even though it may occasion you much annoyance, be careful never to show it, or to keep away from them. By this means they will love you, and you will be useful to them. Let us, then, be very careful to please all those with whom we have to converse, but especially our sisters.

Strive thoroughly to understand this important truth, that God does not regard these little things so much as you imagine, and that

therefore you should not cramp your mind, which will hinder you from doing much good. Have only, as I have said, a pure intention and a determined will not to offend God, without allowing your soul to be weighed down by scruples, since, instead of thereby becoming saints, you would fall into many imperfections, into which the devil would insensibly draw you, and which would hinder you from being of as much use to yourselves or to others as you would have been if you had followed a different course.

CHAPTER XX.

Sufferings of those who are divided between God and the world, and how much it concerns them not to abandon the practice of mental prayer.

I WISH I could obtain leave from my confessors to declare how often I failed in my obligations to God when I was not supported by the strong pillar of mental prayer ! I passed nearly twenty years on this tempestuous sea, continually falling and rising again—though I rose very imperfectly, since I fell again so quickly ; and in this kind of life, so far below perfection, I made almost no account of venial sins. Mortal sins I feared, indeed, but not as I ought to have feared them, since I did not

avoid the occasions of committing them. I can declare that this is one of the most painful lives which can be imagined, for I neither enjoyed the sweetness of serving God nor the pleasures of the world. When I was entertaining myself with worldly amusements, the remembrance of what I owed to God gave me pain; and when I was conversing with Him in prayer, worldly affections disturbed me; and so painful was the conflict, that I know not how I could possibly have endured it for one month, much more for so many years. Herein I clearly see the great mercy of God towards me, that, while still so much engrossed with the world, He yet gave me courage to practise mental prayer. I say courage, because I see not one thing in the world which requires greater boldness than to be carrying on treason against a King—to be sensible that He knows it well—and yet never to depart from His presence. For though it be true that we are always in the presence of God, yet methinks they who converse with Him in mental prayer are in a special manner in His presence, because then they see that His eyes are on them; whereas others may remain long in His presence without remembering that He looks upon them.

Now, the reason why I have written this is, first, as I have said before, that the mercy of God

and my ingratitude towards Him may be clearly discerned; and, secondly, that it may be understood how great a blessing God bestows on a soul to which He gives a good will to practise mental prayer, even though it have not attained great perfection in this exercise. For she who shall persevere therein, whatever sins she may commit, whatever temptations may be presented to her, or whatever falls she may sustain by the artifices of the devil, will assuredly be brought safely by our Lord in the end to the haven of salvation, as I trust He has now brought me.

CHAPTER XXI.

Means to preserve recollection in prayer.

WHEN we are in prayer, let us endeavour always to be in company. And what better companion can we have than the very Master Who taught us the prayer we are about to say? Therefore, my daughters, represent that same Lord to yourselves as present with you, and observe with what love and humility He stands teaching you. And, believe me, you cannot remain long without such a Friend. If you accustom yourselves thus to dwell near Him, and He

sees that you do it with all the affection of your heart, and that you endeavour continually to please Him, you will not be able, so to speak, to drive Him from you. He will never be wanting to you. He will help you in all your troubles; you will find Him with you in all places. Do you think it a small favour to have such a Friend at your side? O sisters, those amongst you who cannot discourse much with the understanding, nor keep your thoughts fixed, without being distracted, accustom yourselves to this practice: I know by my own experience you may do it, for I have lived many years under this cross of not being able to fix the imagination during prayer, and I know it is a great affliction. Yet I know also that our Lord does not so forsake us, but that, if we humbly approach Him and beg Him to remain with us, He will bear us company. And if we cannot obtain this favour in one year, let us be content to wait many years, nor grudge spending much time for so great a gain. I say that we may in time accustom ourselves when at our ordinary work to dwell by the side of this true Master. I do not now require you, however, to meditate continually on Him, or to labour to form a picture of Him, or to exercise your understandings in sublime and curious speculations. I require of you only

to look at Him. And what hinders you from turning the eyes of your soul for one instant, if you can do no more, upon this adorable Spouse? You can bear to look upon most frightful objects; can you not look upon that which is more beautiful than imagination can conceive? If He do not appear beautiful in your eyes, I give you leave not to look at Him; and yet, daughters, your Spouse never takes His eyes off you. He has endured a thousand abominations committed against Him, and yet they were not enough to make Him forbear looking upon you. Is it much, then, for you to take off your eyes from these exterior objects, and sometimes to cast a look at Him? Behold, as the Spouse saith, He stands waiting for nothing else but that we may look upon Him. As you wish for Him, you will find Him. He loves so much to be looked upon by us, that no diligence will be wanting on His part to attract us. People say, that if a wife wish to live happily with her husband, she must do as he does: if he be sad, she must appear sad too; if he be merry, she must appear so likewise, though she may not be so in reality. See, sisters, from what a subjection you are freed! Thus, in truth, without any fiction, does our Lord act with us; for He makes Himself the subject, and would have you to be the

mistress, and He bears Himself according to your wish. If you be cheerful, contemplate Him as risen, for it will rejoice your soul merely to imagine how He went forth from the sepulchre, with what brightness, with what beauty, with what majesty! how victorious, how joyful, like one who has gloriously returned from battle, where He has gained a mighty kingdom, which He wishes to bestow wholly upon you! Now, is it much that you should once turn your eyes to look upon Him Who lavishes so much upon you? If you be sad or afflicted, consider Him on the way to Gethsemane; for what sorrow is so great as that which He then endured in His soul, since He, though patience itself, speaks of this sorrow, and complains of it? Consider Him, again, bound to the pillar, full of pains, all His flesh torn to pieces through His great love for you, persecuted by some, spit upon by others, denied and forsaken by His friends, and without any one to plead for Him!

You may consider Him, likewise, laden with His cross, His enemies giving Him not time to take breath. He will look upon you with those eyes, so beautiful and so compassionate, filled with tears, and He will forget His own sorrow to comfort you, provided only that you go and solace yourselves with Him, and turn your eyes to look upon Him.

O Lord of the world, my true Spouse! art Thou driven, my Lord and my God, to admit such wretched company as mine? You should say, sisters, if your hearts have been so softened from seeing your Saviour in the state I have described, that you not only desire to look on Him, but are delighted to speak with Him, not in a set form of prayer, but with supplications issuing from the grief of your hearts. Is it possible, you will say, O my God, that Thou canst take comfort in such company as mine? for it seems by Thy looks that Thou art pleased to have me with Thee. How, O Lord, is it possible that the Angels should leave Thee alone? that even Thy Father should not comfort Thee? If it be true, O Lord, that Thou art pleased to suffer all this for me, what is it that I suffer now? What do I complain of? I am now so much ashamed of my complaints, since I have seen Thee in such a state, that I wish to suffer, O Lord, all the afflictions which may happen to me, and to find in them a source of great consolation, that so I may imitate Thee in something. Let us go together, O Lord! Whithersoever Thou goest, I will go; by whatsoever path Thou travellest, I will travel also. Bear your part, daughters, in this cross; be not troubled lest the Jews trample upon you; if only you bear

your Lord company, heed not what they say of you, be deaf to their accusations, and, though you stumble and fall with your Spouse, shrink not from the cross, nor forsake it. Consider attentively the weariness under which He struggles on, and by how many degrees His Passion exceeds your sufferings, however great you may fancy them to be, and however sensibly you may feel them; and thus you will be comforted: for you will see that they are but children's play when compared with His.

You will perhaps say, sisters, How can this be done now? Had you seen Him with your corporal eyes at the time when His Majesty lived on earth, then you would very willingly have done it, and have kept your eyes ever upon Him. Believe it not; for she who will not now use a little violence to herself in order to keep herself in recollection, that she may behold her Lord within herself,—which she may do without danger, and by merely using very little diligence,—would far less have placed herself at the foot of the cross with Magdalen, in the face of death. And what must our glorious Lady and this blessed Saint have suffered? What threats, what evil words, what shocks, what insults! With what courtiers had they to deal!—the very ministers of hell and servants of the devil! Doubtless, what

they suffered must indeed have been terrible ; but the great sorrows of Another made them insensible to their own. Imagine not, therefore, sisters, that you would be fit to bear such great afflictions, if you are now unequal to such small trials. It is by exercising yourselves in these that you may learn to endure greater afflictions.

In order to help you herein, you may carry about with you an image or representation of our Lord, not merely to wear it in your bosom and never to look at it, but to speak often to Him ; for He will teach you what to say to Him. Since you find words to speak to others, why should you want them to speak to God ? Do not believe this. I, at least, will not believe it, if you will only accustom yourself to converse with Him ; if you do not, you will be sure to want them ; for when we are unused to converse with a person, a kind of strangeness grows up between us and him, and an ignorance how we should address him ; so that we soon find a difficulty in speaking even with kindred and friends when we are unaccustomed to converse together.

It is likewise an excellent thing to take a good book in your own language, to help you to collect your thoughts, that so you may learn to pray, and by little and little accustom the

soul thereto by caresses and holy artifices, that she may not be frightened or discouraged. Remember that we have strayed long ago from our Spouse ; and so depraved are we, that great skill is required to induce us to return to His house. We have so accustomed our souls and our thoughts to follow their own pleasure, or, to speak more properly, their own pain, that the wretched soul knows not its own condition. I again assure you, that if you carefully accustom yourselves to follow this counsel, you will thereby gain such great profit as I cannot express, even if I would. Keep yourselves near, then, to this good Master, and firmly resolve to learn what He shall teach you ; and His Majesty will so order things, that you will not fail to become excellent scholars ; nor will He forsake you, if you do not forsake Him. Consider the words uttered by His Divine mouth ; for by the very first you will immediately understand the love He bears you,—and it is no small happiness and consolation for a scholar to know that his master loves him.

CHAPTER XXII.

Answer to objections against mental prayer.

SOME say, "This way of prayer is not fit for women, for they may fall into delusions ; it is better they should spin. They have no need of such subtleties ; a *Pater* and *Ave* are sufficient for them." This I also say, sisters ; and why should they not be sufficient ? We cannot do wrong in forming our prayer upon the prayer uttered by the lips of our Lord Himself. They say well, then ; for were not our weakness so very great, and our devotion so cold, we should have no need of any other prayers, of any other books to instruct us how to pray.

I speak to those who cannot fix their thoughts upon other mysteries, which seem to them too artificial ; and for them I now lay down certain principles, means, and counsels relating to prayer, though I do not intend to dwell on high and abstruse subjects. I have always been more affected and moved to greater recollection by the words of the Gospels than by any other books, however well written.

I come, then, to this Master of Wisdom, that He may perhaps inspire me with some considerations that may profit you.

Let no one deceive you by showing you an-

other way to heaven than that of prayer, whether mental or vocal. All persons should use either the one or the other ; and for yourselves, I say that you stand in need of both ; for this is the very office and employment of religious. Whoever shall tell you there is danger in this, consider him to be a dangerous person, and avoid him ; but do not forget this advice, for perhaps you may stand in need of it. It will, indeed, be dangerous for you to want humility and the other virtues ; but God forbid that the way of prayer should be a way of danger ! The devil seems to have invented the art of exciting these fears, thereby to place a stumbling-block in the way of those who are given to prayer.

See the wonderful blindness of men, who do not consider the many thousands in the world who have fallen into heresy and other great evils by not practising prayer, or knowing what it is ; and if among all those who practise it the devil, the better to accomplish his designs, has made a very few to fall, a great fear is excited in men's minds of the practice of this virtue. Let those beware what they do who thus fly from good in order to escape from evil. Such an invention, as it seems to me, can come only from the devil.

O my Lord, arise and defend Thyself ! See

how men misinterpret Thy words ! Suffer not such weaknesses as these to remain in Thy servants !

Banish these fears, then, sisters ; pay no attention to such opinions ; for these are not times when we should believe all persons, but only those whom we see to walk conformably to the life of Christ. Endeavour to keep a pure conscience, to have a contempt for all the things of this world, and firmly to believe whatever our holy Mother the Church teaches, and you may then be assured that you have taken a safe course. Cast away these fears where there is nothing to fear. Show those who would terrify you, in all humility, the way in which you are walking. Tell them that your rule commands you to pray without ceasing, as indeed it does, and that you must observe this rule. If they say that it means only vocal prayer, ask them whether the understanding and the heart are to be attentive to what is said in vocal prayer. If they answer " Yes,"—and they can make no other reply,—then you see they acknowledge thereby that, to make vocal prayer well, you are compelled to use mental prayer also—ay, and contemplation too, if God should be pleased to raise you to it. May He be blessed for ever ! Amen.

CHAPTER XXIII.

True vocal prayer always involves mental prayer.

THE difference between mental and vocal prayer does not consist in the mouth being open or shut, for if, while uttering a prayer vocally, I attentively consider and perceive that I am speaking with God, being more intent on this thought than on the words which I pronounce, then I am using both mental prayer and vocal prayer together. But if they tell you that you may be speaking with God when you recite the *Pater Noster*, and yet be thinking of the world, I have nothing to say to such prayer as this, for if you would conduct yourselves as you ought to do in speaking to so great a Lord, it is fitting you should consider to Whom you speak, and who you are, that you may speak to Him with due respect. For how can you address a king and style him "your majesty," or observe the ceremonies which are used in speaking to the great, unless you are acquainted with the dignity of him to whom you speak, and understand what is your own place? He must be honoured according to his rank, and with the honour which custom requires; and with this you should be well acquainted, un-

less you would be sent away as unmannered clowns, and so gain nothing.

Now, what is this? O my Lord! what is this? O my Sovereign! how can it be endured? Thou, my Lord, art an eternal King, for Thy royalty is no borrowed dignity. I feel a special delight as often as I hear it said in the Creed "that Thy kingdom hath no end." I praise Thee, O Lord, for this; and I bless Thee for ever. Never suffer any one, O Lord, who speaks to Thee, to do so only with his lips. What is this, Christians? Do you say you need not mental prayer? Do you understand what you say? I certainly think you do not, and, therefore, you would have us all to be mistaken with you; and neither do you know what mental prayer is, nor how vocal prayer is to be used, nor what contemplation is; for did you understand it, you would not condemn on the one hand what you praise on the other.

O my Emperor, Supreme Power, Essential Goodness, Wisdom without beginning, without end, Perfection boundless, infinite, and incomprehensible, fathomless Ocean of wonders, Beauty comprising all beauties, Divine Strength, very God! Would that I had all the eloquence of men, and wisdom also, to understand (as far as can be understood in this

world, which in reality is nothing), how to make known but some of those many things which might enable us to understand, in some small degree, how great is this our Lord and Sovereign Good.

Consider, then, and understand with Whom you are going to speak, and with Whom you are speaking. In a thousand such lives as ours we should never learn fully to comprehend how this Lord deserves to be treated, before Whom the Angels tremble, Who commands all things, with Whom to will is to do. Is it not fitting, then, my daughters, that we should endeavour to delight ourselves in these excellences which adorn our Spouse, and that we should understand to Whom we are espoused; and also what manner of life it befits us to lead, on whom He has vouchsafed to bestow so great a dignity?

CHAPTER XXIV.

Prayer of recollection—The contemplation of God as within us.

CONSIDER what your Master says: "Who art in heaven." Do you think it is of little importance for you to know what heaven is, and where your Most Holy Father is to be sought?

I tell you that it is very important for those who are subject to distractions, not only to believe this, but to endeavour to realise it by their own experience, because it is one of those things which lay the strongest hold on the understanding, and infuse the deepest recollection into the soul. You already know that God is in all places; now, it is clear that where the king is, there is the court,—and, therefore, where God is, there is heaven: you may also believe without doubting, that where His Majesty is, there is all His glory.

Consider what S. Augustine says: that “he sought God in many places, and came at last to find Him in himself.” Do you think it is of little importance for a distracted soul to understand this truth, and to know that she need not go to heaven to speak with her eternal Father, or cry aloud to be heard by Him?—for however low we may speak, He is so near that He will not fail to hear us; neither do we need wings to fly and seek Him, but we can compose ourselves in solitude, and behold Him within us. Never, then, let us separate from so good a Guest, but with great humility speak to Him as a Father, entreat Him as a Father, relate our troubles to Him, and beg a remedy for them, though we know that we are not worthy to be His daughters.

Be on your guard, daughters, against a certain false modesty, to which some persons are addicted, and think it is humility; yet it is not humility, if the King is pleased to show you a favour, to refuse to accept it; but it is humility to accept it, and acknowledge how much it exceeds your merits, and so to rejoice in it.

Pay no attention to such humility, daughters, but treat with Him as with a Father, as with a Brother, as with a Lord, as with a Spouse, sometimes in one way, sometimes in another; for He will teach you what you should do to please Him. Be not too easily discouraged, but challenge His word, since He is your Spouse, to treat you as such. Consider that you are much concerned in understanding this truth, viz. that God dwells within you, and that there we should dwell with Him.

Being thus at home with Him, you may meditate on the Passion and offer Him to the Father, without wearying the understanding by going to seek Him on Mount Calvary, or in the Garden, or at the Pillar. Those that can thus shut themselves up in this little heaven of the soul, where He abides Who created heaven and earth; and who can also accustom themselves not to stray whithersoever their exterior senses lead them, let them believe that they walk in an excellent way, and that they

shall not fail to drink water from the fountain, and thus to advance far in a little time. They are like one who makes a voyage by sea, who with a little favourable weather arrives within a few days at his journey's end, whereas those who go by land are much longer on the way.

Let us remember, then, that within us there is a palace of great magnificence; the whole building is of gold and precious stones,—in a word, it is in every way a fit dwelling for so great a Lord. Forget not, also, that the glory of this edifice in some degree depends upon you, for truly there is no building so beautiful as a pure soul filled with virtues; and the greater these virtues, the brighter do those stones sparkle which adorn this palace of the great King, Who has been pleased to become your Guest, and Who sits there on a throne of inestimable value, even on your heart. For if we did but remember that we have within us such a Guest, I think it is impossible that we should be so fond of the things of this world, because we should see how base they are in comparison with those treasures which we possess within us.

Some persons will, perhaps, laugh at me, and say, "All this is very evident;" and they may be right in saying so; but for some time it was obscure to me. I knew well I had a

soul, but I understood not the dignity of that soul, nor thought Who lodged within it, because my eyes were blinded by the vanities of this life, so that I could not see Him. Methinks, had I then known, as I do now, that in this little palace of my soul so great a King is lodged, I would not have left Him so often alone, but sometimes, at least, I should have stayed with Him, and have been more careful to prepare a fair lodging for Him.

Thus was He pleased to be confined in the womb of His most sacred Mother. He, as our Lord, brings us liberty with Him, and, because of His great love to us, abases Himself to our nature. When a soul begins to know Him, He does not discover Himself fully at once, lest she might be troubled to see her own littleness, and the greatness of Him Who dwells within her. By degrees He enlarges that soul, according to the measure necessary for the gift which He infuses into her. Therefore I say that He brings liberty with Him, since He has power to enlarge His palace. Our part is to give it to Him as His own, with a full and perfect resolution to let Him use it as His own, and place there, or take away, whatever He pleases. This is His pleasure, and this is His right: let us not refuse it to Him. He will not force our will, He takes only what we

give Him. But He does not give Himself entirely to us till we give ourselves entirely to Him: this is certain; and because it is a truth of such importance, I so often remind you of it. Nor does He work His full pleasure and purpose in the soul until, without any impediment, it is wholly His: nor do I understand how He could deal otherwise with it, for He is a lover of order.

CHAPTER XXV.

Importance of the thanksgiving after Holy Communion.

THE daily bread which we ask of God in the Lord's Prayer is either bread for our bodies, or the Divine Eucharist, which is the bread of our souls. Hence, sisters, however anxious others may be in asking for that earthly bread, let us beseech the eternal Father to give us grace to ask of Him our celestial bread. And as the eyes of the body cannot have the delight of beholding Him, because He is veiled, let us ask Him to discover Himself to those of the soul, and to make Himself known to be that most pleasant and delicious Food which can alone preserve our lives.

Know you not that this most holy Bread is nourishment even to the body, and an excellent remedy even against corporal maladies? I know it to be so, for I am acquainted with one subject to grievous diseases, who, being often in great pain, was thereby freed from it, as if by the touch of a hand; and afterwards continued in perfect health. This happened frequently with regard to diseases which were well known to exist, and which in my opinion could not be counterfeited. And because the wonders which this most holy Bread effects in those who worthily receive it are well known, I do not relate many which I could mention, and which I know to be true; with regard to the person I speak of, our Lord had given her so lively a faith, that when she heard some persons say they wished that they had lived at the time when Christ our Lord, our Sovereign Good, conversed with men in this world, she smiled to herself, thinking that since we enjoy His presence in the most Holy Sacrament as really as if He were still visibly on earth, we need desire nothing more. I know that the person of whom I speak, though she was very far from perfection, was accustomed for many years when she communicated to endeavour to rekindle her faith, as much as if she had seen with her corporal eyes our Lord coming into

her soul. And this she did (believing that our Lord was now entering her poor cottage), in order to disengage herself as much as possible from all exterior things, and so to enter in with Him. She endeavoured to collect her senses, that they might all understand so great a good, or rather that they might not hinder the soul from understanding it. She imagined herself to be at His feet, and, with blessed Magdalen, she wept as if she had seen Him with her corporal eyes in the house of the Pharisee; and though she might feel no devotion, yet faith told her that it was good for her to be there, and there she remained discoursing with Him. For unless we wish to stupefy ourselves and blind our understanding, we cannot doubt that this is not a mere representation of the imagination—as when we contemplate our Lord upon the Cross, or in some other stages of His Passion. There we represent these things as past; but this is a thing present, and an absolute truth. Therefore, we need not go far to seek Him; but, knowing that till the natural heat has consumed the accidents of bread, our good Jesus stays with us, we have but to seize so good an opportunity of uniting ourselves with Him.

Now, if, when He lived in this world, He healed the sick by the mere touch of His gar-

ments, how can we doubt that He will grant us whatever we ask of Him, while He is actually in our house? His Majesty is not wont to be a bad paymaster; let us, then, only give Him fitting entertainment. If you are troubled at not seeing Him with your corporal eyes, consider it is not expedient for us; for it is one thing to see Him glorified, and quite another to behold Him as He was when He lived and conversed on earth. Such is our weak nature, that we could not endure it; the world itself would be moved, nor would any one be able to stay in it, because by the vision of this eternal truth, it would evidently appear that all those things which we value here are a lie and a cheat. And how should such a sinner as I am, who have so highly offended Him, dare to behold Him, or to be so near Him? He is accessible under those accidents of bread; for if the king be disguised, we are able to converse with him without the wonted ceremonies and reverences, and it even appears that he is obliged to suffer this, because he has not made himself known. But if our Lord were to manifest Himself visibly, who would dare to approach Him with such tepidity, such unworthiness, and with so many imperfections as ours?

Let us stay, then, willingly with Him, nor

lose so fair an opportunity of treating with Him; for the time after Communion is the best for conversing with Him. Consider that it is fraught with the richest blessings to the soul, and that our good Jesus then delights much in our company. Take heed, then, daughters, that you leave Him not. If obedience calls you to some other duty, endeavour that your soul at least may be still with our Lord: your Master will not fail to teach you at this time, though you understand not how; but if you immediately fix your thoughts on something else, and you heed Him not, nor regard Him Who is within you, then complain of no one but yourselves.

This, then, is the fitting time for our Master to teach us, and for us to hear Him and to kiss His feet, because He has been pleased thus to instruct us; beseeching Him not to depart from us.

After you have received our Lord, endeavour then to shut the eyes of the body, to open those of the soul, since you then possess His very Person within you; for I tell you again, and would repeat it continually, that if you adhere to this practice as often as you communicate, and endeavour to keep your conscience pure, so that you may be admitted frequently to the enjoyment of this blessing, He will not come so

disguised but that, as I have said, He will make Himself known in manifold ways, according to our desire to see Him; and our desire should be that He would wholly reveal Himself to us. But if we make no account of Him, and, after we have received Him, go away from Him to seek after base earthly things, what can He do for us? Must He drag us by force to seek Him, because He loves to be known by us? No; for men did not treat Him well when He openly exposed Himself to the gaze of all, and told them plainly Who He was: there were very few who believed Him. It is, therefore, a great mercy which He shows to us when He makes us understand that it is He Who is present in the most Holy Sacrament; but He wills not to be seen openly, nor to communicate His favours and bestow His graces, except on His true friends, who, He knows, earnestly desire Him. Therefore, let not any but such as thus lovingly and reverently approach Him, venture to importune our Lord to manifest Himself to them.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Marvellous effects of Holy Communion.

I AM fully persuaded that if we approached the Adorable Eucharist with great faith and great love, one single Communion would enrich us with celestial treasures ; how much more, then, should we receive from many Communions ! But need we be astonished that we reap so little fruit from them, when it appears as though we approached the holy table only as a ceremony, and from custom ? Miserable world ! which thus closes our eyes, to prevent us from seeing the eternal happiness which we might acquire were we to receive this great Sacrament with a heart full of burning love for our Saviour and of charity towards our neighbour. O Lord of heaven and earth ! is it possible that we should be capable of receiving in a mortal body such extraordinary proofs of Thy love ? And is it possible, at the same time, that we should not desire to understand what are the favours which the Canticle of canticles shows that our omnipotent God wills to bestow on our souls ? O inconceivable favours ! O sweet and penetrating words, one of which alone, out of the tenderness of our love to Thee, my Saviour, should fill us with holy

rapture! Be Thou ever praised that it is no fault of Thine that we enjoy not this great happiness! In how many different ways hast Thou vouchsafed, and dost Thou still vouchsafe daily, to testify Thy love to us! I ask of Thee, O my Saviour, but one thing in this world,—that I may be honoured by one kiss from Thy Divine lips, by which I may be so inflamed that I shall not be able, even though I should desire it, to grow cold in Thy love, or relax from that close union which Thou hast vouchsafed to contract with me. Grant, O Sovereign Master of my life, that my will may be so submissive to Thine, that nothing may ever have power to separate those two wills; and that I may be able to say to Thee, O my God, Who art all my glory: “The milk which flows from Thy Divine breasts is sweeter than wine.”

CHAPTER XXVII.

Benefit of devotion to S. Joseph.

I TOOK for my advocate and master the glorious S. Joseph, and recommended myself much to him; and up to this time I cannot remember having asked him for any thing which he has not obtained for me. I am quite amazed when

I consider the great favours which our Lord has bestowed upon me through the intercession of this blessed Saint, and the many dangers, both of soul and body, from which He has delivered me. It seems that to other Saints our Lord has given power to succour us in one kind of necessity only; but this glorious Saint, as I know by my own experience, assists us in them all; hence our Lord, it appears, would have us understand that, as He was obedient to him when on earth (for He called him His father, and obeyed him as His master), so now in heaven He grants him whatever he asks. This truth many others, also, have experienced who, at my desire, have recommended themselves to him. They are now deeply devoted to him; and I myself have daily fresh experience of his power.

Would that I could persuade all men to prove by their own experience the advantage of devotion to this glorious Saint, and thus to receive their share of the blessings which he obtains from God! I have never known any one who was truly devout to him, fail to advance rapidly in virtue; for he assists in a most special manner those who recommend themselves specially to him. For many years past I have been accustomed to ask favours of him, and my petition has been always granted.

Moreover, if at any time it contained something inexpedient, he rectified it for my greater good.

Persons who are given to prayer ought, it seems to me, to have a special devotion to him; nor can I conceive how we can think of all the time he dwelt with our Blessed Lady and the Infant Jesus, without thanking him for his care over them both.

Those who need a director to teach them to pray, cannot do better than take this glorious Saint for their guide. They will be in no danger of going astray.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

- Spiritual love of perfect souls for God, and for those who assist them in the way to heaven—The kind of love which they bear to creatures.

It now seems to me, that when God makes a person clearly to understand what the world is; that there is another world, and what the difference is between the two,—that the one is eternal, and the other a mere dream; what the Creator is; what blessedness it is to love the one, what misery to love the other; together with many other things which our Lord truly and clearly teaches him in prayer who desires

to be instructed by Him;—that such persons, I say, learn to love in a manner far different from theirs who have not been thus taught.

You may, sisters, think it useless to insist on these points, and you may say, “We all know these things.” God grant it may be so, and that you may know them in a way which may be profitable to you, and may imprint them deeply on your hearts! If you know them, you will see that I speak truth in saying, that those to whom our Lord gives this love, and raises to this state, are generous, royal souls. They are not content with loving such vile objects as creatures, with whatever beauty or gifts they may be endowed. If the sight thereof pleases them, they praise the Creator for it; but they do not rest there. I mean, they do not dwell upon them so as to conceive an affection towards them; for this they would consider to be loving a thing without substance, and embracing a shadow; and it would make them so ashamed of themselves, that they would not have the face to tell God that they love Him.

You will reply: “Such persons as these know not either how to love, or to requite the love which is shown them.” I answer, at least, they have little desire to be loved; and though, sometimes, an impulse of nature may excite

a feeling of pleasure at the thought of being loved, yet, when they come to themselves, they see this is folly, unless the persons who love them may do good to their souls by their instructions or their prayers. Not that they fail to be thankful to such persons, and to requite their love by recommending them to God; but they refer that love to our Lord, knowing that it comes from Him. As they find in themselves nothing deserving of love, they believe that others love them because God loves them, and they leave the payment of their debt to His Majesty, beseeching Him to discharge it,—and thereby they are in a manner acquitted of the obligation; and so, considering the matter attentively, I think what great blindness it is to desire that others should love us, except they be persons who, as I have said, may assist us in acquiring solid blessings.

Now observe, that as in desiring any one's love we always have some interest, or advantage, or pleasure to ourselves in view, so these perfect souls have already under their feet all the goods which the world can bestow upon them,—all its delights, all its pleasures; so that, even if they would, they cannot find pleasure in any thing but God, and in discoursing of God. They cannot see what benefit they can derive from being loved, and so they care not for it.

When they behold this truth vividly represented to them, they laugh at themselves for the anxiety they have sometimes felt to know whether their affection has been returned or not; for even in a pure affection it is very natural to desire that it be requited. And yet, when requited, the payment is made in straws, light and unsubstantial, which the first wind blows away. For, granting that we are greatly beloved, what do we gain thereby? Hence, such great souls no more care to be loved than not to be loved, except by the persons I have mentioned above, for the good of their souls, and because they see that the weakness of our nature presently grows weary, if it be not sustained by love.

You may think that such as these cannot love any one but God. Yes; they love their neighbour also, and with a truer, more profitable, and more ardent affection than that of other men; theirs only, indeed, is true love. Such souls are always much more willing to give than to receive, and this even with regard to God Himself. This, I repeat, deserves the name of love; for those other affections have but usurped this name.

You may ask me, "If these persons do not love the things they see, what do they love?" I reply, that they do love what they see, and

are attached to what they hear; but the things which they see and hear are permanent and abiding. If such persons love, they look beyond the body, and fix their eyes on the soul, observing whether there be any thing there worth loving; and, if not, they see some beginning or disposition thereto, and so they begin digging the mine in the hope that they may at last find gold. If they love souls, the labour of digging does not trouble them; there is nothing which they would not willingly do for the love of that soul, because they desire to continue to love it for ever; and they know well this is impossible, unless it be endowed with virtue, and filled with the love of God. I say *impossible*,—though the person should have bestowed many favours upon them, were he ready even to die for them, and to do them every possible good office, and were he, moreover, possessed of every natural endowment,—it were impossible for such natural reasons alone that these holy souls should love him with a steadfast and abiding love. They understand and know too well by experience what are all things here below, to be thus deceived. They see that their judgments and that person's do not agree, and that it is impossible they should always continue to love one another,—for the love which is given to one who does not

observe the law of God must end with life,—and then they must part and go different ways. And this love, which is only for this world, a soul into which God has infused true wisdom values not above its worth ; nay, even below it. It can be desired only by those who take pleasure in the things of this world, viz. pleasures, honours, and riches, and are glad of some companion to enjoy such recreations with them ; but whoever detests all this, regards such friendships as little or nothing.

The love, therefore, of perfect souls moves them to desire that the object of their affection should love God, that so He may be loved by them ; for they know no other love will endure, and that all other love will cost them very dear. They fail not to do all they can to benefit that soul, and would lose a thousand lives to promote its sanctification in the smallest degree. O precious love, which imitates the love of Jesus, the Master and Teacher of love, and our Supreme Good !

Wonderful to behold is the vehemence of this love for souls ; how fervent its penances and prayers ! how earnestly it recommends them to all whose prayers avail them with God ! What a continual desire for their advancement ; what sorrow when it sees no improvement ! And if, after it has made some progress, a soul be-

gins to fall back a little, he who thus loves it seems to take no pleasure in life; he can neither eat nor sleep, for the care which weighs upon him, and the fear that the soul he loves so much may perish, and so they may be eternally separated (for to the death of the body in this world such persons pay no regard), since he does not wish to rely on that which in an instant may escape his hands. This is, as I have said, a love without any mixture of self-interest; all it seeks and desires is to see the soul it loves rich in heavenly goods. This, indeed, is love, and not that which is called by that name here below; and I speak not of vicious and inordinate affections—from which, may God deliver us!—but of those lawful affections which we bear to one another, such as exist between friends and kindred. Now, here we are in continual terror lest the person we love should die: if his head ache, our souls seem to ache; if we see him in affliction, we lose patience; and so with regard to every thing else.

But that other supernatural love is not like this; for though, through natural infirmity, we cannot but feel for the suffering of one we love, yet our reason soon begins to consider whether it be good for his soul, whether he grows richer in virtue thereby, and how he bears it; and then we beg God to grant him pa-

tience, that he may gain merit by these sufferings. If we see that he is patient, we feel no trouble, but rather joy and consolation, though we would more willingly endure the trouble than see him endure it, could the merit and gain which are to be found in suffering be given over entirely to him we love ; but all this without trouble or disquiet.

I say again, this love is like the love which Jesus, our good Lover, bears us ; for it embraces all kinds of afflictions, that so others, without any pain, may reap the benefit thereof. They whose hearts are filled with this holy love, use no double dealing with their friends, nor are they blind to their faults ; but if they think they can be of any service to them by their reproofs, they fail not to speak plainly to them, through their desire to see them rich in virtues. What arts do they use for this purpose, though they care not for the whole world besides ! They cannot prevail on themselves to act otherwise ; they cannot flatter those they love, nor pass over their faults.

There is, therefore, a continual warfare within them ; for though in one sense they care not for the whole world, nor heed whether others serve God or not, because they attend only to themselves, yet it cannot be thus with regard to those to whom God has united them. Nothing

is concealed from them; they discover the least mote in their souls. I tell you, such love is a heavy cross. Happy the souls who are thus loved! Happy the day wherein they became the objects of such love!

O my Lord, grant me the exceeding favour that I may have many such to love me! Truly, O my Lord, I would more willingly be loved by them than by all the kings and lords of the world; and with great reason,—for they labour by all possible ways to make us such, that we may command the world itself, and have all things therein subject to us. Love such persons, sisters, as much as you will, as long as they continue such. They are few in number. People may say to you, “There is no need of this; it is enough for us to possess God.” But I reply, it is a good means of enjoying God to be able to converse with His friends; great benefit is always attained thereby: this I know by experience; and, next to God, I owe it to such persons as these that I am not in hell; for I was always very desirous that they should recommend me to God.

This is the kind of love which I wish to possess; and though at first it be not very perfect, our Lord will cause it to improve more and more. Let us begin by what is suitable to our strength; for though it be

mingled with a little natural tenderness, it will do us no harm if only it be not exclusive. It is sometimes necessary and good to feel and to show some tenderness, to sympathise with the afflictions and weaknesses of others, even though they may be trifling. For it happens sometimes that a very little thing troubles one person quite as much as a great cross would afflict another : and persons of a timorous nature are much distressed by small things. Though you may have more courage, you must not fail to sympathise with others, neither should you wonder at their trouble ; for perhaps the devil has employed greater power and strength against them than he exerts to make you feel great torments and afflictions ; and perhaps our Lord reserves the same for you on some other occasion ; and, moreover, those trials which seem grievous to you, and which are so in themselves, may seem light to others.

Thus we must not judge of others by ourselves, nor estimate ourselves according to our state at a time when God has perhaps given us more than ordinary strength without any labour on our part ; but let us estimate ourselves according to the time when we were weakest and most cowardly. This advice is very useful to teach us to compassionate the miseries of others, however slight they may be.

CHAPTER XXIX.

We should not complain of slight indispositions, nor give way to excessive fear of death.

It seems to me, my sisters, a great imperfection to be continually complaining of little evils: bear them silently, if you can; if they are great, they will complain of themselves after another manner, and it will be impossible long to conceal them. Consider that, being, as you are, a small community, and being, as you ought to be, filled with charity, if one of you indulges in this bad habit, she will give a great deal of pain to all the rest. As to those who are really ill, they ought to say that they are so, and receive with simplicity all the assistance which they need. If you were once freed from self-love, you would feel so keenly the least kindness or indulgence offered to you, that there would be no fear of your seeking it unnecessarily, or of your complaining without a cause. But, if you should have a reasonable cause of complaint, it will be as much your duty to mention it as it would be contrary to your duty to seek indulgence without necessity. It would be very wrong, in such a case, in your superiors to withhold from you the necessary care; and you have no reason to fear that

such a thing should happen in our houses of charity and prayer, where the number of the community is so small that it is easy to observe the necessities of each member. Do not complain, then, of certain feminine weaknesses and indispositions, which are of no long duration and no great severity, and with the thought of which the devil sometimes fills our imaginations; be content to speak of them to God alone: otherwise you will run a risk of never being delivered from them.

I insist especially on this point, because I consider it to be very important, and believe it to be one of the principal causes of relaxation in convents; for the more we indulge the body, the weaker it becomes, and the more it seeks indulgence. It is wonderful to see what pretexts we find to seek relief from our ailments, however slight they may be. The soul is thus deluded and hindered in the way of virtue. Remember, I pray you, how many among the sick poor have no one to whom they can complain, for to be poor and to be well cared for are two things which seldom go together. Remember, also, how many married women there are (for I have known many, and those of a good position in life), who dare not complain even of great sufferings, for fear of annoying their husbands. Alas, sinner that I

am! did we then come into religion to live more at our ease than they? Since you are exempt from so many trials which are endured in the world, learn at least to suffer something for the love of God without letting all the world hear of it. A woman unhappily married opens not her lips to complain, but suffers without asking the sympathy of any one, for fear her husband should hear of her complaint; and shall not we suffer between ourselves and God some of those pains which our sins deserve, especially when our complaints would be unavailing to relieve them?

I am not now speaking of great illnesses,—such as a violent fever,—though I would have even these to be borne with patience and resignation; but of those slight indispositions which we may bear without taking to our beds and giving trouble to every body. Now, if what I am writing were to be seen by any one without, what would all the religious say of me? But I would willingly bear any thing that they might say, if I could thus be of service to any one; for if there be but one in a convent who thus complains without reason of trifling maladies, it often happens that others come not to be believed, however great may be the sufferings of which they have to complain.

Let us set before us the holy hermits of past ages, whom we consider as our fathers, and whose life we profess to imitate. What labours and sufferings did they endure from extremity of cold, from the excessive heat of the sun, from hunger, and many other annoyances, having none to complain to but God alone! Do you think, then, that they were made of iron, and not of flesh and bones, as we are? Be assured, my daughters, that when we begin to overcome ourselves, and bring our bodies into subjection, they will cease to torment us so much. There are plenty of persons to take the necessary care of us; therefore, fear not to forget yourselves, unless some evident necessity should arise for your keeping yourselves in memory.

Unless we come to the determination to trample under foot the fear of death and the loss of health, we shall never be good for any thing. Endeavour, then, to come to this point, —to abandon yourself wholly to God, whatever may happen to you; for what matters it if we should die? Shall we not have courage at least once to make a jest of this miserable body, which has so often made a jest of us? Believe me, my sisters, this resolution is of greater consequence than we are wont to imagine: for if we accustom ourselves to deal firmly with this body of ours, we shall gradually

subdue it, and shall master it at last. Now, a triumph over such an enemy is no slight step towards the attainment of a perfect victory in the conflict of this life. I beseech God, Who alone has the power, to grant us this grace. I believe that those alone who already enjoy this victory are capable of understanding the benefit which we derive from it, which is so great, that I am persuaded, if any one could but know it beforehand, he would account no suffering too great to purchase the repose of this victory over self.

CHAPTER XXX.

The danger of thinking that we have virtues which we do not really possess.

It is only by trial that we can discover whether we have patience, humility, and poverty. The greatest injury which the devil could do to us unawares, would be to persuade us that we possess virtues which we have not. This belief diminishes humility, and causes us to neglect the acquisition of those virtues which we imagine we already have. Thus thinking ourselves safe, we fall, without knowing it, into a snare out of which we cannot withdraw

ourselves. I assure you that this temptation is very dangerous, and, having had great experience of it, I can confidently speak of it, although not so well as I should desire to do. Now, where, my sisters, is the remedy for this evil? If we think our Lord has bestowed upon us some virtue, we should consider it as a gift which we have received from Him, and which He could take from us at any moment, as often happens by the permission of Divine Providence. Have you not felt this, my daughters? If you say no, I cannot say the same; for sometimes I think I am quite detached, and when the moment of trial comes, I find that I am so in fact; at other times I find myself to be so attached to what the day before would have made me laugh, that I do not know myself. Sometimes I believe I have so much courage that if occasions for serving God occurred, nothing would hinder me; and occasionally I find that this is really true; but, at another time, I find myself so weak that, if I met with the slightest contradiction, I should not have courage to kill a mouse for the love of Him. Sometimes I imagine that whatever might be said against me, and whatever murmurs might arise, I could suffer all without pain; and on many occasions I have found that I was not deceived, as these murmurs

even gave me joy; but at another time the least word has afflicted me so much, that I wished to be out of the world. I am not alone in these feelings, for I have noticed the same in many persons better than myself.

If this be the case, my sisters, who can say that her soul is adorned with virtues, since, when she most needs them, she finds that she has none? Let us, then, beware of such thoughts, and let us rather own that we are poor, and let us not appropriate to ourselves virtues which do not belong to us. The treasure of our souls is in the hands of God, and not in ours; we do not know how long it may please Him to leave us in the prison of our misery and poverty without enriching us. It is very true that, if we serve Him humbly, he will help us in our wants; but, if we acquire not this virtue step by step, He will leave us, and, in so doing, He will bestow on us a great mercy, since by this punishment He will teach us that we cannot too much esteem this virtue of humility, and that we have absolutely nothing but what proceeds from His grace.

Here is another piece of advice. The devil sometimes persuades us that we have some virtue—for instance, patience; because we make a resolution to practise it, and because we often make acts of desire to suffer much for

God, and because we think this desire is really sincere, we remain satisfied. But I beg of you to beware of esteeming this kind of virtue, or to think you know these virtues except by name, and do not persuade yourselves that God has given them to you until you find, by experience, that you have them; for it may happen that the least word said to you will destroy all this pretended patience. When you have suffered much, give thanks to God that He begins to exercise you in this virtue, and continue to suffer with great courage.

Here is another of the devil's artifices: he persuades you that you are poor; and in one sense he is right, because, as religious, you have made a vow of poverty, or because in your heart you desire really to practise it. Thus the religious thinks herself poor because she has made a vow of poverty, and the pious secular because she desires to die poor; they both say: "I desire nothing, and, if I possess any thing, it is because I cannot do without it; for I must live to serve God, Who wishes us to take care of our health," and a thousand other things with which that angel of darkness, transformed into an Angel of light, inspires us, and which, in appearance, are good. Thus he persuades persons that they are truly poor, and that they really have the virtue of poverty,

and that by this means all is accomplished; but this can only be tested by trial. The conduct of a secular will prove if he be really poor: if he is too anxious about temporal goods, he will soon show it by desiring more income than is necessary, or by keeping more servants than he needs, or, on occasion, of a lawsuit for some temporal matter; or, if some poor farmer fails to pay his rent, he will show no less uneasiness than if he were in danger of wanting bread. As men never lack excuses, I doubt not that this secular would reply, that in all these matters he only wishes to avoid wasting his substance by want of care; but I do not wish him to waste it,—I only say that he ought to avoid solicitude in the care which he takes of it. If temporal matters succeed with him, well; if not, let him take it patiently,—for he who is truly poor makes so little account of all these things, that, though he thinks himself bound to take a reasonable care of them, he feels no uneasiness on the subject, because he believes that he shall never want necessaries; and even were he to want them, he would not be greatly troubled. He regards all these temporal things as mere accessories, and not as his principal object: his thoughts soar above them, and are occupied on these lower things only from necessity.

As to religious who are poor, or who at least ought to be poor, since they have made the vow of poverty, it is true that they possess nothing of their own, but it is often because they have nothing in their power. If a gift be offered them, it will seldom happen that they judge it to be superfluous. They are very glad to have something in reserve. If they can get habits of a fine material, they do not think of asking for something coarser. It is the same with regard to humility. We think we do not care for honour or reputation; but, if our self-love be touched in the slightest degree, we soon show by our feelings and our actions that we are very far from being humble. If, on the contrary, something honourable or advantageous be offered to us, we are as far from rejecting it as those of whom I have just been speaking as so imperfect in their spirit of poverty are from refusing any thing which may be profitable to them. It will be well, even, if we do not seek it. We have these words, "I desire nothing—I care for nothing," so continually in our mouths that, by dint of repeating them, we come to believe what we say.

It is most important, then, to watch continually over ourselves, in order to discover this temptation, not only in the things of which I

have just been speaking, but in many others, because it is well known that when our Lord really gives us a single virtue, it seems to draw all others after it; and, moreover, when you believe you have any virtue, you should always fear lest you deceive yourself, because he who is truly humble always doubts his own virtue, and believes that of others to be incomparably greater and more real than his own.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Duty of nuns to pray for ecclesiastics and religious who are labouring in the world—Prayer of S. Teresa.

SINCE the heresies which have arisen in this century are like a consuming fire which is making continual progress, and which is beyond the power of man to stay, it seems to me that we should act as a prince would do, who, being not sufficiently strong to resist the enemies who are ravaging his country in the open field, would retire with some chosen troops into a strong fortress, whence he would make excursions with that small band, which would harass them far more than the attack of a multitude of undisciplined troops; for such a garrison is sure to obtain the victory, or at

worst can only perish by famine, there being no traitor among them. Now, my sisters, in our convents we may indeed be pressed by famine, but it will not compel us to surrender. It may kill us, but will never overcome us. Why, then, do I say this to you? It is to show you that we ought to ask of God not to suffer that in the citadel whither His good servants have retired there should be any to take part with His enemies, but that He would strengthen the virtue and the courage of preachers and theologians, who are, as it were, the leaders of His troops, and that He would grant that religious, who constitute the great body of His soldiers, should advance daily in the perfection required by their holy vocation. This is of infinite moment, because we are to expect our deliverance from supernatural, and not from natural, means.

Since we are incapable of rendering any service on this occasion to our King, let us endeavour, at least, to become so pleasing to Him that our prayers may assist those among His servants who, being endowed with learning and virtue, labour so courageously in His service. Now, if you ask me why I insist so much upon this point, and exhort you to assist those who are much better than ourselves, I reply, that it is because I do not believe that

you as yet sufficiently understand how great is the gratitude which you owe to God for having brought you into a place where you are free from the business, the engagements, and the conversations of the world. This favour is much greater than you can conceive, and those of whom I speak are far from enjoying it,—nor would it be fit that they should enjoy it, especially in these days, since it is their part to strengthen the weak and encourage the timid. For what could soldiers do without a captain? It is necessary, therefore, that they should live among men, that they should converse with men, that they should be seen in the palaces of kings and of great men, and bear themselves externally like other men.

Do you think, then, my daughters, that it requires little virtue to live in the world, to converse with the world, and to be mixed up with the affairs of the world, and at the same time to be in heart not only detached from the world, but even its enemy, to live upon earth as if in a place of banishment,—in short, to be Angels, and not men? for unless they be such, they deserve not to bear the name of our Lord's captains, and I beseech Him not to suffer them to leave their cells—they would do far more harm than good in the world; for this is no time for men to see the faults of

those who ought to be their teachers. If, then, they be not well established in piety, and fully persuaded how deeply they are bound to trample all earthly interests under foot, to be detached from all perishable things, and attached only to those that are eternal, they will be unable to help betraying their faults, however carefully they may seek to conceal them. As it is with the world they have to deal, they may rest assured that not one of their defects will be passed over, but that it will remark their very slightest imperfections, without noticing, perhaps even without believing in, their good qualities.

I often wonder from whom it is that men of the world learn the true nature of perfection, for they study it not in order to follow it—to which they think themselves by no means obliged, accounting it quite enough for them to keep the letter of the commandments—but to employ that knowledge in examining and condemning the minutest defects of their neighbour. So far do they sometimes carry their refined criticism, that they mistake for imperfection and relaxation something which is, in fact, a virtue. Do you imagine, then, that the servants of God have no need of an extraordinary aid from Him to carry them safely through this arduous and perilous warfare?

Strive, then, my sisters, to merit from our Lord these two things, which you should continually ask of His Divine Majesty: First, that amongst the many learned and religious persons who labour in this great work there may be many qualified to succeed therein, and that it may please Him to render those capable of the task who are not yet sufficiently qualified for it; for a single perfect man will render Him greater service than a multitude who are imperfect. Second, that when they are engaged in so momentous a conflict, our Lord will sustain them by His almighty hand, that they may not stumble among the continual dangers to which they are exposed in the world, but may shut their ears against the song of the sirens which beset that perilous sea. For if in the strict enclosure wherein we dwell we are enabled by our prayers in any measure to contribute to this great work, we shall have our share also in the conflict for God; and I shall account the labours to have been well employed which I have endured in the establishment of this little house, where I desire that the rule of the Blessed Virgin, our Queen, may be observed with the same perfection as at the beginning.

Think not, my daughters, that this continual prayer for others is of no avail, though many

would persuade us that we should do better to be praying for ourselves. Believe me, that no prayers are more profitable than those that we offer for others; and if you fear that they may not avail to lessen your sufferings in purgatory, I reply, that they are too holy not to avail you there. But even were you to lose something in this respect, be content; for what matter though I should remain in purgatory until the day of judgment, if by my prayers I may save a single soul—still more, if I may save many, and so greatly promote the glory of our Lord? Despise, my sisters, those pains which are but temporary in comparison with a service of far greater account which you may render to Him Who has suffered so much for the love of us. Labour continually to learn what is most perfect, and converse on things concerning your salvation with persons who are learned and able to instruct you; so shall you promote the glory of God and the good of His Church, the only object of my desire.

It would indeed be great presumption in me to believe that I could do any thing to obtain so great a grace; but I trust, O my God, to the prayers of Thy servants with whom I live, because I know that they have no other thought or desire but to please Thee. For the love of Thee they have left the little which they pos-

sessed, and would have left far more, had it been theirs, for Thy service. How, then, can I believe, O my Creator, that Thou, Who art so grateful for the love of Thy creatures, wouldst reject their petitions? I know that when Thou wast on earth Thou didst never despise poor women, but in Thy great goodness didst even show especial favour to many among them. When we shall ask Thee for honour, or gold, or any of those things which the world seeks after, then do not hear us. But wherefore, O Eternal Father, shouldst Thou not listen to those who ask only for such things as relate to the glory of Thy Son, who make it their only delight to serve Thee, and who would give Thee a thousand lives? And yet I do not ask Thee, Lord, to grant us this grace for the love of us—I know that we do not deserve it; but I hope for it in consideration of the merits of Thy Son, of the glorious Virgin His Mother, of the Martyrs and Saints who have laid down their lives for Thee. But, alas, O Lord, who am I, that I should dare to present this petition in their name! Alas, my daughters, what an evil mediatrix to offer such a prayer for you, and to obtain it! Will not my boldness rather serve to increase the just indignation of the awful and sovereign Judge Whose clemency I implore? But, O Lord, since Thou art a God

of mercy, have pity on this poor, sinful woman, this miserable worm of earth, and pardon my boldness. Consider not my sins ; consider, rather, the earnestness of my desires, and the tears which I pour forth with my prayer. I beseech Thee for Thine own sake, have pity on the multitude of souls which are perishing. O Lord, come to the aid of Thy Church, stay the torrent of evils which overwhelm Christendom, and make Thy light to shine amid our darkness.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Error of those authors who forbid the contemplation of our Lord's Humanity.

SOME spiritual books recommend their readers not to contemplate the Humanity of our Lord in prayer, and to occupy themselves solely with His Divinity, because they say that the contemplation of any thing corporeal, though it be the Humanity of Jesus Christ Himself, is a hindrance to those far advanced in prayer, and that it prevents them from attaining perfect contemplation. They allege in their defence the words addressed by our Lord to His Apostles before His ascension into heaven ; but it seems to me, that if the Apostles had then be-

lieved as firmly as they believed it after the descent of the Holy Ghost that Jesus Christ was both God and Man, the sight of His Humanity would have been no hindrance to their attaining to the highest degree of contemplation. That which leads these contemplative writers to this conclusion is their opinion, that as contemplation is a thing wholly spiritual, the representation of any thing corporeal must be a hindrance to it, and that we should endeavour to consider ourselves as surrounded on all sides by God, and as it were absorbed in Him. This consideration, in my opinion, is often very useful to us; but to carry it so far as to separate ourselves from a portion of our Lord's being, by setting aside the thought of His Sacred Humanity, which we thus class with our own miserable bodies and other created objects, is a thought which I cannot endure.

If our weakness does not permit us to contemplate our Divine Saviour amid the torments of His Passion, overwhelmed with sorrow and suffering, persecuted by those whom He had loaded with benefits, torn with stripes, bathed in His Blood, and forsaken by His Apostles, because the sight of this would be too grievous a pain to us, what hinders us bearing Him company in His risen life, especially when we

have Him so close to us in the Holy Eucharist, in the same glorified state in which He appeared before His ascension into heaven, exhorting and encouraging His disciples to become worthy one day to reign with Him eternally in heaven?

Thus, although we had attained the highest degree of contemplation, let us seek no other road than this, in which it is impossible to go astray; for it is from this Divine Saviour that we must learn to practise all virtues. He shows us the means, He gives us the example of them in His life, He is the perfect model of all virtues; and what more can we desire than to have such a Friend ever at our side, Who never forsakes us, as do worldly friends, in trial and suffering? Do we not see that the glorious S. Paul had His name continually on his lips, because it was ever engraven on his heart? and ever since I have known this truth, and have carefully considered the lives of great contemplative Saints, I have observed that they have never taken any road but this. We see it in S. Francis, by his love for the Wounds of that Divine Saviour; in S. Anthony of Padua, by his devotion to His Sacred and Divine Infancy; in S. Bernard, by his delight in the contemplation of His holy Humanity; in S. Catherine of Sienna; and in a multitude of

other Saints. I doubt not that it is good to detach our thoughts from corporeal things, as so many spiritual persons say so; but this can only be when we are far advanced in prayer; for it is evident, until we attain that point, we must seek the Creator by means of creatures, according to the grace which our Lord bestows upon each of us. Of this I do not now undertake to speak. What I wish to say, and what I would endeavour clearly to explain, because we cannot lay it too deeply to heart, is, that among the objects from which we should detach ourselves, we are on no account to number the most Sacred Humanity of our Lord.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Temptation which often assails a soul which has renounced sin in its endeavours to unite itself more perfectly to God in prayer.

INTO what trouble and temptation do the spirits of darkness cast these poor souls! On one hand, reason represents to them that all that is in the world should be accounted as nothing in comparison to the happiness to which they aspire. Faith teaches them that this happiness ought to be the object of all their desires. The

memory shows them what is the end of all things here below ; it reminds them of those who have fallen from great prosperity into extreme misery, of the sudden death of many who had lived in every worldly delight ; of those bodies, nourished with such delicacy, now the food of worms ; and many other lessons of the like kind. The will induces them to love Him alone, from whom they have not only received their life and being, but manifold other proofs of His love. The understanding teaches them that were they to live for centuries to come, they could never find so faithful a friend : that the world is nothing but vanity and falsehood ; that the pleasures which the devil promises them, and the pains with which he threatens them, are but delusions ; that it would be gross folly on their part to leave the abundance of their home and go forth like the prodigal son to feed upon husks with the swine after having squandered their inheritance. These reasons are strong enough to convince such souls, and to enable them to triumph over the enemy. But, O my Lord and God, the strength of vain custom has such a hold upon the world, that it overthrows all reason ; for faith being all but extinct, we prefer what we see to what it teaches us.

What need has the soul in this state, O my

Divine Saviour, of Thy heavenly succour! Suffer it not to abandon its enterprise, teach it that its eternal happiness depends upon its perseverance; teach it how important it is that it should depart from evil companions and stand always on its guard. If the devil sees it absolutely resolved to suffer all things, and death itself, rather than give way, he will soon retire and leave it in repose.

Here it is that the soul shows its generosity, unlike the cowardly soldiers whom Gedeon sent back when he went forth to battle. It must not look for pleasure and satisfaction; for is it not a marvellous thing that when our virtues are but newly born, and are still mingled with a thousand imperfections, we should dare to look for sweetness in prayer and to complain of our aridities? Let it never be thus with you, my sisters. Embrace the cross which your Spouse has carried, never forget that it is to this you have solemnly bound yourselves, and that they should account themselves happiest who can suffer most for the love of Him. This is the chief point, and all the rest you should account as an accessory for which you will return Him thanks if He is pleased to bestow it upon you.

You will think, perhaps, that if only you could receive interior favours from God, there are no exterior sufferings which you would not

gladly endure: but He knows better than we what is good for us; it is not our part to give Him counsel; and He may well say to us, that we know not what we ask. Never forget, I pray you, for greatly it behoves you to remember it, that those who are beginning the life of prayer should labour with all their power to conform their will to the will of God, and should firmly believe that in this conformity consists the greatest perfection which they can acquire in this spiritual exercise, and the farthest progress which they can make on this road to heaven.

I have spoken elsewhere more fully of the mode of resisting such temptations as the devil sets before us to trouble us in our prayer, and that it must not be done with violence, but that we must endeavour sweetly and gently to collect our thoughts. As to the rest, be not troubled if you think you are wanting in certain things which are not essential. Rest assured that if you persevere in the exercise of prayer, God will turn all things to your advantage; whereas if you abandon prayer, there is no remedy to hinder your gradual declension from Him but to resume its exercise. May God give you a full understanding of this momentous truth!

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Aridities in prayer ought neither to astonish nor discourage us.

WE must never be induced by any dryness which we experience therein to abandon the exercise of prayer ; though this dryness were to last continually, we ought to regard it as a cross which it is good for us to bear, and which our Lord aids us invisibly to carry. We can lose nothing in the service of so good a Master, and a time will come when He will repay us with usury for the slightest thing which we have done for Him. Be not disquieted, then, by evil thoughts, but remember that the devil tormented S. Jerome with them even in the midst of the desert. I have suffered these pains for many years together, and I know how great they are ; but I have clearly seen that God rewards them so bountifully even in this life, that one hour of the consolations which He has since given me in prayer has repaid me for all that I had suffered during that long time. Our Lord permits these troubles and many other temptations to befall some at the beginning and others during the progress of their course of prayer, and this conduct of His towards us is, doubtless, for our greater benefit ; for as He

purposes to bestow upon us such great graces at last, He desires first to make us experience our own misery, lest that which befell Lucifer should come upon us.

What dost Thou omit to do, O Lord, for the greater good of the soul which Thou knowest to be wholly Thine, which abandons itself absolutely to Thy Will, being resolved to follow Thee unto death, even the death of the cross—to help Thee to bear Thy cross, and never to abandon Thee?

Those who have made this generous resolve, and have also renounced all earthly things to seek only spiritual blessings, have nothing to fear; for what can trouble those who despise all the pleasures of earth, and seek those only which come from conversing with God? They have overcome the great difficulty in their course. Give thanks, then, O blessed souls, to His Divine Majesty, trust to His goodness, which never forsakes those whom He loves, and beware of entertaining this thought: Why does He give to others in a few days that devotion which He withholds from me after so many years? Let us believe that this is for our greater good; and seeing that we belong not to ourselves, but to God, let us leave Him to guide us as it shall please Him.

We must observe carefully—and my own

experience leads me to say this with confidence—that a soul which has begun to walk in the path of mental prayer, with a full resolution to persevere therein, regardless of what may befall her, either in the way of consolation or desolation, has no cause—though she may sometimes stumble—to fear that she will draw back, or behold the spiritual edifice which she has begun fall into ruins ; for she builds upon an immovable foundation, inasmuch as the love of God consists not in shedding tears, or in that tenderness and spiritual delight which we desire simply for our own consolation, but it consists in serving God courageously, in practising justice, in exercising ourselves in humility ; to do otherwise is to desire to receive continually and to give nothing in return.

For weak women like myself, I believe it is good that God should favour them with consolations, to give them strength to bear the trials which He is pleased to send them ; but I cannot endure to hear learned men, of great powers, and who profess to serve God, make so much account of those sweetnesses which are to be found in devotion, and complain when they do not receive them. I do not say that if God be pleased to give these favours, they are not to be received with joy,—but I say that those who have them not, are not to be troubled, but to

believe that such things are not necessary for them, since our Lord does not bestow them, and that they should remain quiet, and consider uneasiness and trouble of mind as a fault and imperfection which befits only cowardly souls, as I have often seen and experienced.

I say not this so much for beginners as for that great multitude who, having begun, make no further progress. As soon as their understanding ceases to act, they imagine that they are doing nothing, they disquiet and afflict themselves greatly, although it may be that all the time their will, unconsciously to themselves, is gaining strength for good, and that what they consider as failings and faults are not such in the eyes of God. He knows better their misery than they know it themselves, and is satisfied with the desire they have to think of Him and to love Him, which is the one thing that He requires of them; and all this sadness serves only to disquiet the soul and to render it still more incapable of advancing.

I can assert positively, from the testimony of my own experience and that of many spiritual persons with whom I have conversed on the subject, that this state of aridity often arises from bodily indisposition. So great is our misery that, so long as the soul is enclosed in

the prison-house of the body, it partakes of all its infirmities,—the variation of its humours and even the change of the weather often so affect the soul that without any fault of its own it cannot do what it would, and suffers in many different ways. At such times, the more we endeavour to constrain it, the more does the evil increase, so that we have great need of discernment to know when it proceeds from this cause, lest we burden the soul instead of helping it. Persons in such a state ought to look upon themselves as invalids, they should change their hour of prayer for a time, and pass through this trying season as best they may.

I have said that we must use discernment, because it sometimes happens that the devil is the cause of this evil; so that we must not always interrupt our prayer when our mind is troubled and distracted, but neither must we always strain a soul which is already overtasked. Books and exterior works of charity may then occupy it, and if we are not capable even of this, we must then give way for the love of God to the weakness of our body, in order to enable it hereafter to serve Him in its turn. We must take the recreation of holy conversations, and even, if our confessor advise it, of country air; experience will show us what is best for us in such cases. In whatever state

we may be, we can always serve God. His yoke is sweet, and it is of great importance not to force the soul, but to lead it gently and sweetly to that which is most profitable for it.

I repeat again, and I cannot repeat it too often, we must neither be disturbed nor afflicted by these aridities, disquietudes, and distractions; we shall never be delivered from them, nor acquire a blessed liberty of spirit, until we begin not to fear the cross; for then our Lord will help us to bear it, and our sadness shall be turned into joy.

CHAPTER XXXV.

Action, or the service of God, ought to be the end of contemplation.

I WISH, my sisters, that the end of your prayer should not be the enjoyment of contemplation, but the acquisition of greater strength for the service of God. To use that precious time for any other purpose, is simply to throw it away; for how can we expect to receive such favours from our Lord if we follow another path from that in which He and all His Saints have ever walked? To offer a fitting reception to that Divine Guest, Martha and Mary must unite together; for would it be a hospitable reception

to give Him nothing to eat? And who would have given it to Him if Martha had sat at His feet like Mary, listening to His words? Now, what is the nourishment which He desires, but that we should labour with all our power to gain for Him souls who shall love and praise Him, and who shall work out their own salvation by the praises they offer Him, and the services they render to Him?

Here you will, perhaps, make two objections: first, that our Lord says that Magdalen had chosen the better part; to which I reply, that she had already fulfilled the part of Martha when she washed His feet and wiped them with her hair; for what a mortification, think you, must it have been to a person of her condition thus to go through the street, and probably all alone, in the fervour of her love, to enter the house of a stranger, and to endure the contempt of the Pharisees, and the reproaches cast by them on her past life? for those proud men doubtless made a mock of her conversion, saying that she wished to play the saint, as such persons say still of those who desire to turn truly to God, though their reputation may not have been so evil as was that of this admirable penitent. Again, it is certain, my sisters, that she had the better part, inasmuch as she had the portion of intense suffering; for, not to

speaking of the intolerable grief which she experienced at the sight of a whole people possessed by so fearful a hatred against its Redeemer, what anguish did she endure in witnessing His death? We see, then, that this illustrious Saint was not always at our Lord's feet in joy and consolation.

The second objection which you may perhaps make is, that you would gladly labour to win souls for God, but that your condition and sex forbid it, because they render you incapable of preaching and teaching as the Apostles did. I have answered this objection elsewhere, but I will not fail to recall here what I have said before, because this thought may help you to fulfil the good desires with which God has inspired you.

I said, then, that it sometimes happens that the devil suggests to us undertakings beyond our strength, in order to induce us to abandon those which are within our reach, so that our thoughts may be taken up with nothing but projects which are impracticable to us. Content yourselves, therefore, with the assistance which, by your prayers, you may render to a few souls, and do not attempt to be useful to the whole world. Try to benefit the persons in whose society you live, and to whom you are under greater obligations than you are to others,

inasmuch as they have the first claim upon your charity. Do you think that you will be doing little by inciting and encouraging them all by your humility, your mortification, your charity, and every other virtue, to increase more and more in the love of God, and in holy zeal for His service? Nothing can be more pleasing to Him, or more profitable to you; and, when He thus sees that you do all that it is in your power to do, He will know that you would do far more still if you were able, and will reward you no less abundantly than if you had gained a multitude of souls for Him.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

That without the gift of contemplation we may attain to perfection.

I ONCE knew a great servant of God who had attained an advanced age, and led a most penitential and saintly life,—one whom, indeed, I should be most thankful to resemble,—who employed days and years in the exercise of vocal prayer, without ever attaining to the gift of contemplation; all that she could do was to dwell upon these vocal prayers, pronouncing but a few words at a time. There are many

other persons in the same state; but if only they be humble, I believe that, in the end, they will do far better than those who have much consolation and much sensible devotion in their prayer; perhaps this humbler way is one of greater security, for we have often reason to doubt whether such consolations come from God; and, if they do not come from Him, they are very dangerous, because the devil makes use of them to excite us to vanity; whereas, if they do come from God, there is nothing to fear, for they will be always accompanied by humility.

Moreover, those who do not enjoy His consolations always fear that this arises from their own fault; this keeps them humble, and excites them to a continual desire to advance. They never see others shed a single tear without imagining that if they shed not so many, it is because they are far behind them in the service of God, whereas, it may be, they are greatly in advance of them. For tears, although they be a good sign, do not constitute perfection, and there is far greater security in mortification, detachment, and the exercise of the other virtues. If only, then, you practise these, fear not but that you will arrive at perfection as surely as more contemplative souls.

Was not Martha a Saint, though we do not

read that she was a contemplative? And what can you desire more than to be like that blessed woman, who was accounted worthy to receive our Lord so often into her house, to provide food for Him, to serve Him, and to sit down at His table? If, like her sister, she had been always in raptures and ecstasies, who would have taken care of their Divine Guest? Religious ought to consider that the convent is the house of S. Martha as well as of S. Magdalen, and that it ought to partake of the character of both sisters. Let those, then, whom God leads by the way of the active life, take good care not to murmur at those whom they observe to be absorbed in the life of contemplation, because they may be assured our Lord will undertake their defence against those who may accuse them. Nay, even should He not speak for them, such contemplative souls should abide in peace, having received from Him the grace to forget themselves and all created things. Let the others remember that it is needful that there should be some one to prepare a table for Him, and account themselves happy to serve Him with S. Martha. Let them consider that true humility consists chiefly in submitting ourselves willingly to all that our Lord requires of us, and accounting ourselves unworthy to bear the name of His servants.

Thus, whether we are devoted to contemplation, whether we make mental or vocal prayer, whether we wait upon the sick, or be employed in the lowest or meanest offices in the house, what does it matter, since in all these things we are serving that Divine Guest Who comes to lodge, eat, and repose with us?

I do not say, nevertheless, that you are not to do what you can to attain to contemplation. I say, on the contrary, that you should make every effort in your power to attain to it, only remembering that your success depends on the will of God alone, and not on your own choice; for if, after you have served Him for many years in the same office, He desires that you still remain there, would it not be a strange kind of humility to wish to pass to another? Leave the Master of the house to order all things as it pleases Him. He is all-wise and almighty. He knows what is fittest for you and most pleasing to Himself. Be assured, if you do all that is in your power, and if you prepare yourself for contemplation in a manner as perfect as that which I have set before you,—that is to say, with entire detachment and true humility,—He will assuredly give it to you; or, if not, it is because He waits to give it to you in heaven with all other virtues, and treats you like a strong and generous

soul, making you to bear your cross here below as He Himself bore it as long as He was in the world. Can He, then, give you a greater mark of His love than thus to choose for you what He chose for Himself? And may it not be that it would be far less advantageous to you to attain to contemplation than to remain in the state in which you now are? These are secrets which He reserves to Himself, and which it belongs not to us to fathom. It is far better for us that He should not leave it to our own choice; for we want to become great contemplatives all at once, for the sake of enjoying greater sweetness and repose. What is most advantageous for us is, not to seek our own advantage, for so we shall never have the fear of losing that which we have never desired. Our Lord will not permit one who has truly mortified her own will by submitting it to His to lose any thing, but for her own greater gain at last.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Maxims addressed by the Saint to her religious.

1. LAND which is uncultivated, though it be very fertile, will produce briers and thorns, and so will it be with a man's understanding.

2. Speak well of spiritual persons ; such as religious, priests, and hermits.

3. Speak little when you are in company with many persons.

4. Observe great modesty in all your words and actions.

5. Never contend eagerly, especially in matters of little moment.

6. Speak to all persons with a well-regulated cheerfulness.

7. Never treat any one with contempt.

8. Never blame any one without discretion and humility, and a secret confusion at your own faults.

9. Accommodate yourselves to the mood of those with whom you converse ; be glad with the joyful, and sad with the sorrowful,—in a word, become all things to all, that so you may gain all.

10. Never speak without weighing your words well, and fervently recommending them to our Lord, that so you may say nothing to displease Him.

11. Never excuse yourself unless you have strong reasons for doing so.

12. Never mention any thing concerning yourself which may redound to your praise, such as your knowledge, virtues, high birth, unless you have some reason to hope it may do

good; and then mention it with humility, remembering that all these gifts come from the hand of God.

13. Never use exaggerated expressions; but give your opinion calmly and simply.

14. In every conversation endeavour to bring in some spiritual subject, for this may prevent idle words and detraction.

15. Never assert any thing of which you are not quite certain.

16. Never give your opinion on any matter unless it be asked, or unless charity require you to do so.

17. When any one speaks to you on spiritual subjects, listen to him with humility, and as a disciple to his master, and take to yourself whatever good he may impart.

18. Discover all your temptations to your superior and your confessor, and also your imperfections and difficulties, that they may give you counsels and remedies whereby to overcome them.

19. Do not remain out of your cell, nor leave it, without a reason; and when you do so, beg God's grace that you may not offend Him.

20. Never eat or drink but at the appointed time, and then give thanks to God.

21. Do every thing as if you saw His

Majesty present with you, for by this means a soul makes great progress.

22. Never speak evil or listen to evil of any one except yourself; and when you take pleasure in observing this rule, you are going on well.

23. Offer every action you perform to God, and pray that it may tend to His honour and glory.

24. When you are merry, use no immoderate laughter; but let your mirth be humble, modest, gentle, and edifying.

25. Always consider yourself to be the servant of all, and behold Christ our Lord in all; and thus you will show them due respect and reverence.

26. Be ever ready to obey, as if Christ our Lord, in the person of your superior, had commanded you.

27. In every action, and at every hour, examine your conscience; and having observed your defects, endeavour to correct them by the Divine assistance : by this means you will soon attain perfection.

28. Take no notice of the defects of others, but only of their virtues, and observe your own defects.

29. Always cherish a strong desire of suffering for Christ in all things and on all occasions.

30. Every day make frequent oblations of

yourself to God, and that with great fervour, and an earnest desire to possess Him.

31. Place before you throughout the day the subject of your morning's meditation, and use great diligence in this respect, for it will be of great benefit to you.

32. Observe carefully the thoughts with which our Lord may inspire you, and execute the desires which He shall give you in prayer.

33. Shun singularity as much as possible, for it does great harm in a community.

34. Often read the constitutions and rules of your order, and observe them faithfully.

35. In every creature consider the providence and wisdom of God, and praise Him in them all.

36. Disengage your heart from all things. Seek God, and you will find Him.

37. Conceal your devotion as far as possible, and never show outwardly more than you have within.

38. Do not discover your inward devotion unless constrained by some great necessity. "My secret to myself," said S. Francis and S. Bernard.

39. Complain not of your diet, whether it be good or bad, remembering the gall and vinegar of Jesus Christ.

40. Speak to no one at table, nor lift up your eyes to look at any one.

41. Think on the table of heaven and its food, viz. God Himself; and its guests, viz. the Angels: raise your eyes to that table, and desire to sit down at it.

42. Before your superior (in whom you behold Christ Himself), never speak except what is necessary, and that with great reverence.

43. Never do any thing which you would not do before every one.

44. Make no comparisons between persons, for comparisons are odious.

45. When you are blamed for any thing, receive the reproof with interior and exterior humility, and pray to God for the person from whom you have received it.

46. When one superior gives you a command, do not tell him that another commands the contrary; but believe that the intentions of both are holy, and obey the command given you.

47. Be not curious to discover secrets; ask not questions about things that do not concern you.

48. Cease not to bewail your past life and your present tepidity, and your unfitness for heaven; that so you may live in fear, which will bring great good to your soul.

49. Always do what those with whom you live desire of you, if it be not contrary to obe-

dience, and answer them at all times with humility and sweetness.

50. Ask for nothing peculiar in diet and apparel except upon some urgent necessity.

51. Never desist from mortifying and humbling yourself in all things till the day of your death.

52. Ever accustom yourself to make frequent acts of love, for they inflame and soften the soul.

53. Make acts of all other virtues.

54. Offer all things to the Eternal Father, together with the merits of His Son Jesus Christ.

55. Be gentle to all, and to yourself severe.

56. On the festivals of the Saints, meditate on their virtues, and beseech God to endow you with them.

57. Use great care every night in the examination of your conscience.

58. On the days when you communicate, let the subject of your prayer be, that so miserable a sinner as yourself is allowed to receive God ; and reflect at night that you have received Him.

59. When you are superioress, never blame any one in anger, but wait till it is over, and so your rebuke will do good.

60. Diligently aim at perfection and devo-

tion, and do all that you have to do devoutly and perfectly.

61. Exercise yourself diligently in the fear of the Lord, which keeps the soul in compunction and humility.

62. Consider well how quickly men change, and how little reason we have to trust them: adhere, therefore, closely to God, Who is unchangeable.

63. Endeavour to treat concerning the affairs of your soul with a confessor who is spiritual and learned, and follow his counsels in all things.

64. Whenever you communicate, beg some gifts of God, through the great mercy whereby He is pleased to come into your poor soul.

65. Though you may have many Saints for your advocates, address your requests particularly to S. Joseph, for his power is very great with God.

66. In time of sadness and trouble, do not omit your accustomed good works, whether of prayer or penance,—for the devil will try to make you neglect them,—but rather practise them more diligently than before; and you will see how soon the Lord will relieve you.

67. Do not discover your temptations and imperfections to those who have made little progress towards perfection (for thereby you

may injure both yourself and them), but only to the more perfect.

68. Remember that you have only one soul; that you can die but once; that you have but one short life; that there is but one glory, and that eternal: and this thought will detach you from many things.

69. Let your desire be to see God, your fear lest you lose Him, your sorrow that you do not enjoy Him, your joy in that which may bring you to Him; and thus shall you live in great peace.

Lines written by S. Teresa in her Breviary.

LET nothing disturb thee,
Let nothing affright thee;
All passeth away :
God only shall stay.
Patience wins all :
Who hath God, needeth nothing ;
For God is his All.

NOVENA

BEFORE THE

FEAST OF S. TERESA.

NOVENA

BEFORE THE

FEAST OF S. TERESA.



Preparatory Prayer.

GLORIOUS Mother S. Teresa of Jesus, who art amongst Virgins what the Seraphim are amongst Angels; happy Virgin, who wast consumed by the fire of Divine love and filled with the seraphic spirit,—if my prayers and my desires tend to the greater glory of God, present them to His Divine Majesty, and beg Jesus Christ, thy Divine Spouse, to accept them. But if, alas! I err in my petitions, change them, I earnestly entreat thee; form others for me in their stead, and obtain for me what will be most pleasing to God, most conducive to His glory, and most profitable to my own soul. Amen.

FIRST DAY.

Meditation on S. Teresa's spirit of prayer in relation to the virtue of humility.

HUMILITY consists in the knowledge of ourselves, in a sincere contempt of ourselves, and in bearing, and even desiring, to be despised by others. These are the steps by which the soul attains to this sublime virtue. If S. Teresa had not been devoted to prayer, she would have been especially exposed to the danger of pride and vain-glory by the superiority of her intellectual powers. It was necessary for her to descend into her inmost self to discover her own nothingness, and it was by a wonderful grace from God that she was enabled to bring her mind into subjection, and to lose it in the Divine Immensity. She would never have learned that she was nothing without the aid of the sublime degree of prayer to which she was raised by God. She acknowledged herself, by the light therein received, to be weak, frivolous, and liable to commit great faults ; she wondered that she was not treated as an outcast by all men, and looked upon herself as unworthy of a place in the house of God. If her prayer had not been of the highest order, her intellect would have betrayed her, it would have gained

the ascendancy over some passing desires of humility and humiliation; but finding herself absorbed in the fulness of God, in that Infinity in which all created perfection disappears, she conceived that profound contempt of herself which subdues every illusion of the intellect. When we wish thoroughly to know ourselves, we must begin by asking for grace to know God—we must enter upon the study of God, if I may venture thus to speak—which is what the Apostle recommended to the first Christians when he spoke to them continually of the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Why is the world vain and presumptuous, but because it does not possess this knowledge, which the Apostle declares to be above all other? S. Teresa possessed it in an eminent degree; and she owed this knowledge to continued prayer, inspired and animated by the quickening breath of the Holy Spirit. This wonderful woman has written of the things of God with a power and unction of which she was probably alone unconscious, so great was her conviction of her own unworthiness and inability. She in some sort resembled those Prophets who, when they announced the mysteries of salvation, declared that they knew not how to speak, and that they were as nothing in the sight of God.

Oh, when shall I understand the nature of

that prayer which was the foundation of S. Teresa's humility! when shall I devote myself to it, if not in such an eminent degree, at least in such a measure as may teach me to know and despise myself! I shall never be humble, O my God, till I give myself up to the practice of prayer! It is the only way in which I can learn to see Thy greatness and my misery, Thy benefits and my ingratitude, Thy love and my indifference. Give me, O Lord, one ray of that light which illuminated S. Teresa, one drop of that unction which overflowed her soul, one spark of that sacred fire which inflamed her heart. And do thou, holy lover of Jesus, look favourably upon me, and obtain for me the grace so to pray, that I may annihilate myself, and be lost in the abyss of all knowledge and in the furnace of pure love.

Prayer.

Most sweet Jesus, Divine Spouse of S. Teresa, Who didst engrave on her soul such solid, sublime, and at the same time such profound humility, that she never swerved from it in the high state of sanctity to which Thou wast pleased to raise her, nor ever lost sight of her lowness and nothingness, although favoured with the most wonderful graces, and raised to a

state of the highest contemplation, in which her heroic actions and wonderful miracles drew upon her the applause of men ; I entreat Thee, Divine Jesus, by this great humility of Thy spouse, to grant me such a true and solid humility, as will make me to know my faults ; dispel the darkness of my soul, and preserve me from the subtle poison of vanity, and finally dispose my heart to receive the grace which I ask of Thee in this Novena, if it be for the greater glory of God. Amen.

SECOND DAY.

Meditation on S. Teresa's spirit of prayer in relation to the virtue of penance.

S. TERESA did not lay the foundation of her perfection in penance, but in prayer ; and the royal Prophet did the same : he prostrated himself at the feet of his God, and breathed forth his sighs before Him ; then he put on sackcloth and watered his couch with his tears. It is prayer which discovers the malice of sin, and excites the sinner to avenge on his own person the injuries offered to God. Jesus Christ prays in the garden, and beholds Himself loaded with the sins of the whole human

race, and then says, "Rise, let us go; behold, he is at hand that will betray Me." Our Divine Saviour goes from prayer to the prætorium and to Calvary. S. Teresa, following His example, strengthened herself by prayer against that domestic enemy her body, and brought it into subjection. We marvel at the austerities of this Saint, and in general of all the holy friends of God; and the reason is, that we do not know the inspirations which they received from God in prayer, nor are we able to conceive the fervour of soul which set them at such enmity against their senses. A man of prayer is a mortified man; if exterior crosses are wanting to him, he invents them for himself, being convinced that, as a sinner and a disciple of Jesus Christ, he ought to suffer. It is a proof that the penitential spirit of S. Teresa had its origin in prayer, that her reform is founded on prayer and on the continual daily practice of an austere and penitential life. It would have been impossible for her to persuade men and women to embrace a life so contrary to nature, if she had not begun by making them lead a life of prayer. In the warfare of the world, men do not expose themselves to the fatigues of a campaign unless urged to it by some powerful motive, such as glory, ambition, or patriotism. In the spiritual con-

flict, we do not declare war against our senses without being furnished with interior strength ; and this strength can be obtained only by prayer. A man of prayer is never sensual, and a man without prayer is never penitent. Every body is not able to practise the austerities of S. Teresa ; but whoever applies himself to prayer will find a thousand ways of mortifying himself. He begins by cutting off every kind of superfluity, and reduces himself to the use of mere necessaries, so as to make his life at least approach to a life of austerity ; he deprives himself of all pleasures, not only of such as are dangerous, but even of such as are lawful ; he endeavours, according to the advice of the devout author of the *Imitation*, always rather to possess little than much ; he blesses God when occasions of suffering present themselves ; he never lets a day pass without denying his senses some gratification ; he secretly practises, according to his condition, his strength, and his measure of grace, some of the mortifications which devotion inculcates and authorises.

O penance, precious fruit of prayer, I esteem and love thee, all immortified though I be ! I can say nothing in my defence when I behold the example of the Saints, and especially the example of S. Teresa. I am not astonished at the

austerity of her penance, when I see how entirely she was given up to prayer. I behold her clothed with the whole armour of salvation, and I see that she perfectly apprehended those words of the Apostle, who associates this holy armour with the practice of prayer: "Put you on," says he, "the armour of God, praying at all times in the spirit." Lead me on, O Lord, to penance by prayer, and sanctify my prayer by penance, that my heart and mind may be Thy victims in prayer, and that my body may be also made a sacrifice to Thee by penance.

Prayer.

Most sweet Jesus, Divine Spouse of S. Teresa, Who didst inspire her with a most rigorous spirit of penance, Who didst suggest to her means to people the world and the desert with illustrious penitents and holy anchorites, to fill with that same spirit the most timid souls, and enable a multitude of women to triumph over the natural weakness of their sex, and, as Thy spouses, to lead an angelic life like those tender flowers which bud and blossom in the midst of thorns; I beseech Thee, O Divine Jesus, by the austere penance of this Thy spouse, to give me grace to mortify my body and to bring it into subjection, and to lead a truly Christian

life, embracing willingly the holy severity of penance, that so I may obtain the grace which I ask in this Novena, if it be to the greater glory of God. Amen.

THIRD DAY.

Meditation on S. Teresa's spirit of prayer in relation to the virtue of patience.

S. TERESA was called to a work which required an invincible degree of patience. In addition to the interior sufferings by which she was tried by our Lord, He commanded her to restore the strict observance of the ancient rule in the Order of Carmel—an undertaking in many ways far more difficult than the foundation of a new congregation. The founders of such holy societies have indeed to endure a conflict with the world and its passions; but reformers are opposed also by custom, prejudice, and even by the reason and prudence of good men. Such persons often regard with no favourable eye an attempt to set aside the mitigations granted by authority, confirmed, perhaps, by the use of many centuries, and approved by a multitude of estimable persons. It is necessary on such occasions to be able to dis-

tinguish what is due to legitimate authority from the effects of an undue indulgence of human infirmity and self-love. The remedy for abuses must be sought in the midst of the relaxed society, and the formation of new colonies necessarily leads to the depopulation of the original institute. The reformer runs the risk of being accounted an innovator, and is exposed to the imputations of fickleness, ambition, and disobedience. Such an undertaking is far more delicate and difficult in the hands of a woman. Men are slow to believe that she can have been raised up by God for the accomplishment of a work which would have been hard even to the intellect and resolution of one of themselves. Whatever her reputation for sanctity and illumination, innumerable obstacles will rise up in her path, and her success—if she succeed at last—will be at the cost of incredible labour and suffering. Such was the position of Teresa. Her natural powers might have enabled her to govern an empire, but the Spirit of God alone could have enabled her to undertake and accomplish the reform of Carmel. That Divine Spirit endued her with light, strength, and perseverance, but it left her trials and crosses. This was the very test of her direction and her influence. The founders of Christianity succeeded in establishing it, because they were

guided by the Holy Ghost; but they gave their hearts' blood for the full accomplishment of their mission. Teresa pursued her way with unchanging patience through her long course of trial, contradiction, and persecution. Whence did she derive that strength and constancy, but from the unremitting exercise of prayer? Prayer was the foundation of her work, the source of her illumination, the armoury and the treasury whence she derived her means and weapons of success. She rose from prayer to confront the difficulties in her path as the martyrs went forth from prayer to torture and death. No labour for her Divine Spouse was too great for this courageous woman to undergo. She roused the hearts of men to aid her, and quickened them with her own energy. Toilsome journeys, dissensions within, opposition without, the human prudence of friends and directors, earth and hell arrayed against her—all were alike impotent to dismay or discourage her. In the distraction of business around her, in the multitude of obstacles before her, she kept herself closely united to her Divine Saviour—the cross of Jesus was her shelter. It was in prayer alone that Teresa acquired her wonderful gift of patience. The reform of Carmel is the crowning work of prayer; whence I may conclude that, if I am feeble in my undertakings, im-

patient in the trials of life, full of distrust in the work of my salvation, it is because the un-failing support of prayer is wanting to me. A soul which is founded on prayer is like a rock continually beaten by the waves, which is un-moved by the utmost fury of the storm. O my God, shall I always continue thus negligent in prayer! Shall I never seek to establish my soul in peace by that mighty, that only means of acquiring constancy amid the troubles which surround me! O great Saint, may I at last become thy disciple in the life of prayer! I am not called to a work so sublime as thine; but the enemies of my salvation are terrible. Obtain for me the gift of prayer, that I may resist and overcome them.

Prayer.

Most sweet Jesus, Divine Spouse of S. Teresa, Thou didst fill her with the spirit of power, and with an heroic courage to undertake immense labours for Thy glory; Thou didst give her invincible patience in all the trials which she had to endure; her life, her happiness, and her glory consisted in suffering for Thee, and the continual cry of that magnanimous and burning heart was "to suffer or to die." I beseech Thee, O Divine Jesus, by that invin-

cible patience of this Thy glorious bride, to grant to me a patience so perfect, that it may be my consolation and glory amid the sufferings and labours of this miserable life; that it may secure to me happiness and eternity; that it may efficaciously lead me to live amid sufferings, and to be crucified with Thee; and, lastly, that it may merit for me the grace which I ask in this Novena, if it be for the greater glory of God. Amen.

FOURTH DAY.

Meditation on S. Teresa's spirit of prayer in relation to interior trials.

It is in these interior trials that prayer is especially needed, although at such times it will be an extremely difficult and laborious task. Interior trials are—temptations, aridity, dereliction, the repugnance of the heart and mind to all spiritual exercises. With the best will to serve God, we seem then to be without will, because clouds darken the soul and storms overwhelm it. Under such circumstances prayer is at once the only resource and the greatest torture of the creature. Feeling its misery and its need, it casts itself on the bosom of its Creator, and that bosom seems to be closed

against it; it is attracted towards God, and at the same time it seems to be repulsed by Him; it desires to love Him alone, and yet feels as if it were filled with opposition to His love; glimpses of heavenly light are succeeded by horrible darkness. No one ever experienced the severity of these trials in a greater degree than S. Teresa; and she had, moreover, to endure perplexing doubts, arising from the extraordinary nature of her vocation. Our Lord led her by an interior guidance, the reality of which men were slow to see and hard to believe. Her directors disturbed instead of consoling her, and, far from guiding her aright, would have led her astray. If that great soul had not been sustained by prayer, it would have sunk under the weight of its trials, and the marvellous work of its perfection would have come to naught. But what a glorious light of prayer arose in the darkness of that night! It is not given to me, my God, to penetrate that mystery. All I know is, that Teresa persevered in union with Thee, and in the intimate persuasion of her own nothingness; that prayer was the altar on which she continually offered her whole being to Thee; that, notwithstanding Thy seeming severity, she held fast to Thy cross; that, with all her docility to her directors, she persevered with unshaken

constancy in the path marked out for her by Thee, and that this hard and rugged path led her on to the sublimest summit of perfection. The Church needed an example like this for a multitude of faithful souls whom God tries by interior sufferings. They learn from S. Teresa never to relinquish the path of prayer, in whatever darkness it may be shrouded, to deepen the knowledge of their nothingness by the consciousness of their weakness; to redouble their fervour when their heart seems like a dry and thirsty land; and to await with patience the visitation of the Lord. If all the Saints had, like S. Teresa, written the history of their lives, we should see them triumph over these dark and stormy seasons, by the constancy and fervour of their prayer. This was the refuge of the great Apostle himself in his terrible conflicts: "I besought the Lord thrice," he says, "and He said to me, My grace is sufficient for thee."

O holy prayer, support of weak souls, light of those who are seeking God in the dark, I devote myself to thee, I take thee for my companion, and will follow thee whithersoever thou shalt lead me, and whatsoever difficulties may beset my path. I will pray always, according to the counsel of the Apostle, and the example of S. Teresa. Holy Spirit, do

Thou pray in me, ask Thou in me; may Thine ineffable groanings atone for my aridity, hardness, and coldness! Keep alive in me the love of prayer, and feed me with that celestial bread until the day when I shall be united to Thee eternally in heaven.

Prayer.

Most sweet Jesus, Divine Spouse of S. Teresa, Who didst try her constancy and fidelity by many long years of acute interior sufferings, Who didst purify her love by veiling Thine Own, and didst unite her more closely to Thee by the withdrawal of Thy consolations and the infliction of the most painful trial of dereliction, and by the rough way of dryness and desolation didst raise her to the highest degree of prayer; Divine Jesus, her Guide and her Master, I beseech Thee, by this long martyrdom of Thy faithful spouse, to sustain my weakness in the trials and temptations of this life, to enkindle my confidence in the midst of interior pains and perplexities, to preserve my soul from weariness and tepidity, to fix my imagination, to enlighten my mind, to inflame my heart in the holy exercise of prayer, to be Thyself my Guide in the narrow and difficult way of salvation, and, lastly, to grant what I ask of Thee

in this Novena, if it be for the greater glory of God. Amen.

FIFTH DAY.

Meditation on S. Teresa's spirit of prayer in relation to prayer itself.

THE science of prayer is not like other sciences, which require preliminary studies in some respects foreign to their subject. We can become learned in prayer only by prayer itself. We all know that prayer requires the full attention of the mind and all the affections of the heart; but we do not all know how to silence our imagination and to empty our heart of every affection which does not tend to God. We are all willing to receive consolations from Heaven; but hardly any of us can resolve to wait for the Lord, and to depend upon the operations of his grace. The Holy Spirit guided Teresa in the way of prayer, and she was docile to His teaching. She had an exceeding love of prayer, and a determined will never to depart from the Divine Presence, knowing that, without that holy Presence, not only habitual, but vivid and actual, it is impossible to attain to intimate union with God.

I understand not, O Lord, the prayer of S.

Teresa, I know not the secrets which Thou didst unveil to her in that holy exercise of Thy love; it is not for me to presume to enter that sanctuary. I am too profane to be initiated into the sublime mysteries of the intercourse between Thee and Thy chaste spouse; but I see throughout the whole life of this holy lover of Jesus, that she ever rose from prayer more humble, more lowly in her own eyes, more fervent in love, more devoted to the good pleasure of God, more eager to suffer for His glory, stronger in her holy resolutions, more detached from her own will. I behold her prayer as a fruitful field in which she reaped continually the fruits of holy self-denial.

O prayer of S. Teresa, how dost thou exalt my soul, how dost thou detach me from earth, what glories dost thou disclose to me from the world to come, the kingdom of Jesus Christ! Well did that great soul comprehend the value of detachment from all that is not God; fully was she enlightened as to the vanity of all earthly things! Yes, Lord, Teresa accomplished literally those words of thine Apostle: "Our conversation is in heaven." She lived upon earth like the blessed dead of whom the same Apostle says that "their life is hidden with Jesus Christ in God." I aspire not to the sublimity of her prayer, but I have greater need than

she to die to myself, to break at once and for ever with the world and my own passions; and, like Thy disciples, I say to Thee: "Lord, teach me to pray." And do thou, great Saint, so rich in merits gained by prayer, obtain for me the prayer of faith and love, that I may be so closely united to Jesus in all my actions as never to lose sight of the Beloved of thy heart.

Prayer.

Most sweet Jesus, Divine Spouse of S. Teresa, who didst bestow on her so sublime a gift of prayer as placed her among the Cherubim and Seraphim, and made her so enlightened a mistress of that science of the Saints as to be able to point out to all who walk in the ways of prayer, meditation, and contemplation, the paths which they should follow each in his several degree,—I beseech Thee, O Divine Jesus, by the sublimity of her prayer, to make me a faithful disciple of that seraphic mistress, and to enable me to make such progress in her school as to attain to an attentive, fervent, and solid prayer, a prayer which may enable me to fulfil Thy holy law, and which may obtain for me the grace which I ask in this Novena, if it be to the greater glory of God. Amen.

SIXTH DAY.

Meditation on S. Teresa's spirit of prayer in relation to the virtue of faith.

IF S. Teresa had not been a child of prayer, her faith would have been weak, and a weak faith borders closely upon that dead faith which leads to perdition. "He that cometh to God," says the Apostle, "must believe;" but it is no less true, that to believe we must come to God. Faith led Teresa to prayer, and prayer perfected her faith. Her whole life is made up of faith and prayer. The lights afforded her were sublime because her prayer was unceasing. Oh, how many lessons may we learn from this! We are enslaved by our senses, they separate us from God, they crush us to the earth; prayer alone can free us, and bear our soul to heaven. Teresa seems to have been raised up in these latter times to console the Church for the rebellion of her children. She received special light upon the truths assailed by heretics, she read them in the very light of God, and spoke of them with an eloquence which was like the voice of God. Is it not wonderful that a simple nun should have written so fully upon such sublime subjects without a word escaping her which could be

censured by the severest criticism? The most gifted men tremble when they take these subjects in hand, and continually fear lest they should make a false step on so difficult a road. Teresa was guided by prayer, and the Spirit of God guarded her from all danger. The sublime faith which was His gift extended not only to the mysteries of religion, it instructed her in all the secrets of the interior life. It taught her what God is to a soul full of good will, and what such a soul is to God; it unfolded to her all the consequences of her religious profession, all the degrees of perfection, all the various ways in which God is pleased to guide the soul, all the illusions which spring from self-love or from the malice of the devil. She learned all these lessons in prayer; prayer was the school of faith, and faith the reward of prayer. If we reflect upon our want of faith, we shall see that it arises from our coldness in prayer. If we will but give ourselves to prayer, faith will revive in our soul, faith will control our senses, faith will overcome our immortification; and our judgments of the world, and all that the world esteems, will be conformed to the judgment of Jesus, the Author of our faith. Our conversation will bear upon it the impress and the seal of faith; our vocal prayers, now often so cold, so hurried, and so fruitless, will be

clothed with the intelligence of faith ; holy Scripture will become to us the food of faith, and faith will be strengthened and preserved by the Sacraments of the Church.

O prayer of faith ! O faith nourished by prayer ! how gloriously do you shine forth in the life of S. Teresa ! When, O my God, shall I enter on the way of prayer, that I may be filled with the light of faith ! Alas, my faith has hitherto been dim because my prayer has been cold. I desire to believe, O my God, and I desire to speak to Thee. Thy prophet separates not these two things, "I believed, and therefore will I speak ;" and Teresa's life was filled with these alone. Give me, O Lord, the spirit of prayer, that I may believe, and give me faith, that I may pray.

Prayer.

Most sweet Jesus, Divine Spouse of S. Teresa, Who gavest her so firm a faith in Thy mysteries that she believed them more confidently than if she had seen them with her bodily eyes, a faith so luminous that it lighted her to walk securely in the highest paths of perfection, a faith so vivid and so burning that it brought about the conversion of a multitude of souls ; I beseech Thee, O Divine Jesus, by

that marvellous faith by which Thou didst vouchsafe to enlighten Thy glorious spouse, to give me a living, enlightened, firm, and constant faith, which may subdue my heart and mind to the teaching of our holy mother the Church, a faith which may direct me in the spiritual life, and which may obtain for me the grace which I ask in this Novena, if it be for the greater glory of God. Amen.

SEVENTH DAY.

Meditation on S. Teresa's spirit of prayer in relation to the virtue of hope.

THE two objects of Christian hope are salvation and the means of salvation. We are all obliged to hope for salvation and for the means necessary for its attainment; but it is prayer which secures us in the way of salvation, and affords us the means to attain it; and, of all kinds of prayer, mental prayer is the most effectual, because it is the exercise of the mind and heart, and because it unites the soul to God, the Author of salvation and of all the graces which lead to it. It is a dangerous presumption to hope to attain salvation *without* prayer; and it is an insult to the Divine goodness, and a

distrust of the promises of our Lord, not to entertain a sure hope of salvation *with* prayer. S. Teresa's confidence was founded on prayer. By prayer she rose superior to all creatures, and to all the faint-hearted fears which hold back so many souls called by God to perfection. Her confidence rested not upon visions and revelations,—gifts which may be communicated even to the enemies of God, such as the false prophet Balaam and the high-priest Caiphas. Teresa's confidence rested upon a prayer which was humble, lowly, dependent on the Spirit of God, and animated with a single desire to serve Him. The spirits of evil might trouble her,—men might censure her,—events might seem to cross her designs,—still she remained unshaken. She went forth from prayer as the Apostles from the cenacle, prepared to act, to suffer, or to die for the glory of God. Some persons pray, all the time distrusting prayer, or rather distrusting God, Who has led them to pray. They are like those imperfect Christians who waver, according to the expression of S. James, and are, therefore, inconstant in all their ways; they know not how to listen to the Lord in prayer, and this it is which leaves them in trouble and uncertainty. Teresa excelled in this art of listening to God, of hearing Jesus *ist* speaking within her after Communion;

and this is one of the most precious lessons contained in her works. She knew that in prayer we must speak little and listen much ; that the Spirit of God delights to teach us, and that His lessons go home to the heart by their divine power.

O Divine Spirit, speak Thou to my heart ; strengthen it against the fears which disturb it: the fear of sorrow, the fear of humiliation, the fear of poverty, the fear of sickness, the fear of death. Prayer dispels all these fears, because it establishes the heart in God, the Sovereign Master of all events, Who turns them to the greater good of those who love Him.

Prayer.

Most sweet Jesus, Divine Spouse of S. Teresa, inspire me with the same hope and confidence which enabled her to undertake and carry through things which seemed impossible. In the power of Thy Divine Spirit she founded a multitude of houses, having no other aid or support but Thy good Providence ; amid the hottest fires of persecution she looked confidently for success ; and when the world and hell were leagued together to overthrow her work, she stood firm against the artifices of the devil and the oppositions of men, yielding

neither to their unjust suspicions nor their vain alarms. Unmoved even by the human prudence of learned divines, Teresa pursued the way marked out for her by the Holy Spirit; and, unshaken by the tempests which swept across her path, her heroic heart clung unchangeably to Thy Divine promises. I beseech Thee, my loving Jesus, by this firm hope of Thy faithful spouse, to grant me a like hope of my salvation, and of the means necessary for its attainment,—a hope which may inspire me to seek always the greater glory of God without regard to the fear or favour of men. And I beseech Thee also to grant the petition which I make to Thee in this Novena, if it be to Thy greater glory. Amen.

EIGHTH DAY.

Meditation on S. Teresa's spirit of prayer in relation to the love of God.

PRAYER is at once the school and the exercise of love. It is in meditation, as the Prophet says, that the fire is kindled. S. Teresa was a living victim to Divine love because her whole life was united to God in prayer. We think of her now in glory; and we imagine that when

on earth she led a life beyond the possibility of our imitation. This is a great mistake. Teresa was a simple religious, like many others; but she was devoted to prayer in a measure far beyond that of ordinary souls, even in religion; and it was this which had raised her to such an exalted degree of love. Is it impossible for us to pray and to love? If God does not enkindle in our hearts so vehement a flame as burned in the heart of Teresa, do we place no obstacles in the way of the Divine operations, such as our voluntary distractions, our needless intercourse with the world, our repugnance to solitude? Have we learnt to listen to our Lord in prayer? do we lose courage after a few faint efforts to unite ourselves to Him? Are we ready to sacrifice to Him our vanity, our ambition, our self-love? Do we converse with God as children with their father? Are we simple, persevering, and hearty in our communications with our Lord? Teresa was not always prostrate before His Tabernacle or before the Crucifix in her cell; she was continually in action and overwhelmed with labours; but she lived and worked in the presence of God, and conversed with Him even while she held intercourse with creatures. When she received Divine illuminations, she increased the more in humility, and in the

conviction of her own nothingness. When she experienced interior trials, she blessed God for His seeming severity, and her love was strengthened by these very privations. We admire and wonder at the multitude and singularity of the extraordinary graces which were lavished upon her ; let us rather admire her gift of prayer, and learn that it was the way which led her to perfect love. Let us acknowledge the unspeakable goodness of the Lord, Who communicates Himself to the humble and lowly, that they may learn to pray and to love. When S. Paul was struck down on the way to Damascus, he began to pray, and Ananias found him praying. Who has ever loved more fervently than S. Paul, or written more burning words in praise of Divine charity ? Love is the life of the soul, and prayer is the food of love. The whole difference between Teresa and the worldling farthest from the kingdom of God is, that Teresa nourished her soul with the food of love by the exercise of prayer, and that the affections of the worldling are swallowed up in death, because they are fixed upon earthly objects. He also loves ; but his love is misplaced, because it is turned towards creatures ; he also offers aspirations, but to the demon of ambition, to the demon of pleasure, to the

demon of wealth. O fearful illusion of misplaced love ! there is nothing needed but sincere and fervent prayer to restore order to that soul : but the worldling has no taste for the things of God ; he knows not the prayer of the heart ; he has no conception of the nature of Teresa's communings with Jesus.

O Lord, I am but too probably in this way of death ; recall me to Thee by prayer, pierce my heart with the dart of Thy love : it is full time ; and I say to Thee in all sincerity with David, " My heart is ready, O Lord ; my heart is ready."

Prayer.

Most sweet Jesus, Divine Spouse of S. Teresa, Who didst so enkindle her with love that she became a seraph in human form, Who didst so wound her heart with the sharp arrow of Thy Divine charity as to consume it by that heavenly fire, and break the bonds which held her captive upon earth, bearing her soul on the wings of that most pure love before the throne of Thy Divine Majesty ; I beseech Thee, Divine Jesus, by the love which consumed Thy blessed Spouse, to enkindle my heart with the same Divine fire, that it may be offered as an acceptable holocaust to Thee, that every moment of my life may be devoted

to Thy love, and that my last breath may be a sigh of love to Thee. May that love hold up my hands, and with a holy violence obtain from Thy Divine goodness what I ask of Thee in this Novena, if it be for the greater glory of God, the honour of Thy spouse, and the good of my soul. Amen.

NINTH DAY.

Meditation on S. Teresa's spirit of prayer in relation to her blessed death.

THE spirit of prayer accompanied Teresa to her last hour; for, as the Church sings in her Office, she died rather of a transport of love than of any bodily ailment. So close had been her union with Jesus during life, that, like the great Apostle, she could defy death to separate her from His love. This thought would suffice for my instruction and conversion; for it will be impossible to be united to God at the moment of death unless we have spent our life in the holy exercise of prayer. The faculties of the soul will not then turn towards their great Object, if they have been continually absorbed in objects of sense. The consolation of the dying depends upon the

daily practice of prayer during life. Our Lord then communicates Himself most abundantly and most lovingly to the heart which has been open to His inspirations during a long series of years. If we would die like Teresa, we must pray like her.

Spirit of prayer ! Source of light, of peace, and of consolation ! when the world disappears before the opening vision of eternity, when the senses fail, and the soul breaks its bonds,—Thou art its only resource, its only support, its strength and its hope; these precious privileges belong only to the deathbed of those who during life have subdued their senses to Thy sweet yoke, who have devoted all the faculties of their soul to thee, and have acquired the blessed habit of unceasing prayer. May prayer, then, be my nourishment and my delight; may it unite me, as it united Teresa, so closely to God, that neither death nor hell may be able to separate me from Him.

Prayer.

Most sweet Jesus, Divine Spouse of S. Teresa, whose life was an unbroken chain of extraordinary graces and favours, a continual exercise of Thy holy presence, an intimate union with Thine infinite greatness, a perfect sacrifice of

love, and whose death was the crowning work of Thy grace, the consummation of that ineffable union, the triumph of charity,—I beseech Thee, Divine Jesus, by that death so precious in Thy sight, to enable me to walk all the days of my life in Thy holy presence ; to keep me continually united to Thee, my only and Sovereign Good ; to cast upon my cold heart some sparks of that sacred fire which consumed the heart of S. Teresa, that at the awful moment when time shall be no more, and eternity shall begin, I may have a sweet and lively hope to enjoy Thy Divine presence, to be inebriated with those rivers of joy of which Thou art the Source, and to burn throughout eternity with that heavenly fire of which that which consumed Teresa on earth was but the symbol, the foretaste, and the pledge.

Most sweet Jesus, Divine Spouse of S. Teresa, Thou didst give to her, as to Thy beloved disciple, Mary for a Mother, and didst inspire her from her very infancy with so lively and tender a devotion to that blessed Mother as attached her throughout life devotedly to her service, and inspired her with a fervent zeal for her honour. At her altars she conceived the plan of her reform ; under her auspices she carried it out ; under her mighty protection she placed her finished work ; she trans-

mitted that same devotion to Mary to her children, and by its power she still keeps alive amongst them the love of their holy state. I beseech Thee, therefore, Divine Jesus, by that tender and filial devotion of Thy Spouse to Thy most holy Mother, to give me the same childlike love, that I may consecrate myself to her service; that I may be zealous for her honour, and fervent in promoting it; that I may labour to multiply the number of her servants and her children, that so I may have her for my prevailing advocate with Thee.

Blessed Virgin, I prostrate myself before thee, and humbly beseech thee to present my prayers to thy Divine Son. I am unworthy to be heard. All my hope to obtain the grace which I ask at the close of this Novena rests upon thy all-prevailing intercession.

THE END.

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