

THE
FOUNDATIONS
OF
The Spiritual Life:

DRAWN FROM THE
BOOK OF THE IMITATION OF JESUS CHRIST.

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TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH, AND ADAPTED TO THE USE
OF THE ENGLISH CHURCH.
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PREFACE.

THE following book is founded upon one, long prized among us, "The Imitation of our Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST." It is the application and enforcement of maxims thence derived, circling around the fundamental truth, that "the practice of the doctrine of the Cross is the foundation of the spiritual life." Like all other Catholic teaching, it assumes as its basis the same two truths, which have been strongly, though of late somewhat nakedly, enforced among ourselves as the instrument of conversion to God,—a vivid, penetrating, pervading sense of our own corruption, with the participation of the Cross of Christ. For these, if expanded duly on all sides, must needs contain the whole of our reception of the Gospel. The fervent words of a saint's¹ devotion, "Who art Thou, and who am I?" are a summary of the Gospel, since they comprise Him Who is our End, as He is, and ourselves in relation to Him. The conviction of our own nothingness and God's Infinity, our own sinfulness and His Holiness, our own boundless misery and His boundless Mercy, is the condition for prayer, the preparation for Sacraments, the ground of penitence, the element of faith, hope, and love. Of course, this must not be understood negatively, (as it too often is,) to the exclusion or disparagement of any truth not distinctly expressed in it, (this were at once heretical,) but as entering into all; not as a distinct confession of faith, but as the outline of it, and the life of all our practice.

Yet, without speaking now of the necessary limitations of such statements, it is hoped that, besides the effect of high maxims and well-tried rules on minds which are striving after "the more excellent way," works like the present may in this way also benefit us, if those who have an earnest perception of certain limited fundamental truths, see the truths about which they are anxious, to be the very foundation of Catholic teaching; that it is proposed to them, not to unlearn any thing they have learnt of positive truth, but to act upon it, carry it out, expand it; receive, it may be, other truths in addition, but to part with nothing which has been a portion of their own spiritual existence. For as such a shock is in all cases perilous, so can it never be needed. Heresy in itself consists in the denial of truth; it is simple poison, and must therefore destroy, not nourish. If then there be any thing in connexion with it which nourishes and preserves life, that is not heresy, but faith, however mingled with misbelief. This, in any case, it is the office of the Church to disengage; to appeal to what

¹ S. Francis of Assisium.

people do believe, and engraft the fuller truth upon it; to supply what they have not, not to seem to take away what they have. This St. Paul shows us even in his preaching to the heathen, teaching them Whom they ignorantly worshipped. Much more, when truth, however partially it may at all times have been held, and with whatever negative elements it has of late been unhappily blended, was in its earlier days the instrument of a great moral revival. It was a vivid and energetic, however partial, preaching of the corruption of human nature, and of the Cross, which, by the Providence of God, broke in upon an age of torpor and smooth easy ways in religion. As far as it pressed these truths, it was in warfare with the world, and was derided by it, and prevailed.² It may have been that a technical state of things, in which “regeneration” was a *mere* “change of state,” bringing men into an external covenant; “conversion” was thought to be a denial of regeneration, and so was itself denied; “sanctification” was little more than “moral amendment;” “Divine calls” were rejected as enthusiasm; “communion with God” as mysticism; “Divine grace” was little more than an external help; the very Sacraments were things outward; “mental prayer” was held to be excitement; could not have been broken up, except by some strong antagonist statement;—that holding the shell and skeleton of a true system, some such vehement action was needed to make us aware that it was but a casket deprived of the pearl within, a framework without life or power of motion. Not, of course, that in saying this, one judges those who acted, one must believe, on either side, more truly up to their light,³ than those to whom more has been given, may know that they have done themselves. Nothing controversial is hereby meant; still less to criticise individuals, to all of whom the writer must be inferior. It is rather meant to acknowledge a debt, to indicate the points of contact between the teaching of the last century, which broke through the stagnant state into which we were fast subsiding, and the fuller Catholic teaching; and to suggest that such as hold in earnestness the truths then inculcated, will find more sympathy in the larger system of Catholic truth, than in the stiffening form to which their predecessors found themselves opposed.

² In thus acknowledging what was done for our Church by one earnest section of it, the editor ought to repeat the conviction expressed elsewhere, that the doctrine often found along with their teaching, viz. that “they who believe they are saved, are saved;” that “man’s salvation depends on his own personal assurance that he is saved;” that “an act of faith, (as it is called,) conveys in itself the pardon of past sin;” are, however qualified or inconsistently held by individuals, deadly heresies. In Wesleyanism, the system thereon founded threatens to be one of the most dreadful scourges with which the Church was ever afflicted, the great antagonist of penitence, as those who have the charge of souls most sorrowfully find.

³ There were also, in the worst times, exceptions, and moat, perhaps, among those of whom the world knew nothing, who still belonged in spirit to a former century, before sins entailed by the act of 1688 brought this blight over our Church.

Both of the systems which were in conflict in the last century were partial, and could not meet together because they were so. Neither was extensive enough to embrace the other. Each had its strong points and its weak ones; each its own texts; until at last people came tranquilly to divide Holy Scripture between them, leaving as the other's property what they could not master as their own. The true Catholic system is, of course, co-extensive with Holy Scripture. It must embrace all which a partial system cannot grasp. It can reconcile the doctrine of predestination with Sacramental grace, the necessity of the entire conversion of sinners with Baptismal regeneration, deep repentance with Christian joy, the acceptableness of good works with the imperfection of the Christian's best acts. It can combine forms of prayer with the freest and highest mental devotion, spiritual Communion with the intensest devotion for the Sacramental, inspired understanding of Holy Scripture with implicit submission to the Church, the superiority of the teaching of the Holy Spirit with deference for Divine learning. It is absolutely shocking to have to say that the highest eminence of good works leads but to a more implicit reliance on His merits Who gave them; that to holiness such perception is given of its own entire dependence upon Grace whence it sprung, and of the deformity of its remaining imperfections, that it must become the more intensely humble. Living in the Divine light, it gains an insight into its own intrinsic nothingness, which to ordinary men appears exaggerated. But with it every thing is strictly personal. It confesses and abhors, not the short-comings of human nature, but its own. To use the expressive words of St. Francis, after his future glory had been revealed, he still accounted himself the greatest sinner in the world, for, he said,⁴ "If God had bestowed on the greatest sinner the favours He hath upon me, he would have been more grateful than I am; had He left me to myself, I should have committed greater wickedness."

Whatever signs of decay, then, there may any where be, or however the warfare with worldliness may have been relaxed, we may hope that it is of God, that jealousy for the doctrine of the corruption and helplessness of human nature, and for the preaching of the Cross, has taken such extensive possession of the English mind. The ground-work, we may hope, is laid. Those who hold these truths, such at least as are of the more real sort, will gladly, it is trusted, embrace an expansion of them,

⁴ Butler's Lives. Words remarkably similar have been transmitted as expressing the habit of mind of a holy Bishop of our own. The Editor would take this opportunity of saying, that nothing was ever further from his intention than criticising any whom he knew to be saints of God. In any thing he ever said, he was following, he hopes, authority, or regarding words only in themselves, or in what seemed their natural or unavoidable effect on ordinary minds, such as his own, quite abstractedly from those who used them.

when they come to see that the truths they hold are not interfered with, but their reception heightened and deepened. For since the Gospel is “not in word” and confession only, “but in deed,” and “is the power of God unto salvation,” then these fundamental truths must have practical consequences, extensive in proportion to the position they occupy. Since our nature is thus corrupt, then we have need to be guarded against it on all points. Since the flesh rebels, it must be subdued; since the world entices, it must be renounced; since the lust of the eyes captivates, they must be ruled; since “the pride of life” excludes the love of God, it must be tamed; since covetousness is the root of all evil, it must be plucked out; since the praise of men shuts out the praise of God, it must be shunned as a pestilence. But, without giving further instances, what have we already but the value of the Evangelic precepts, of fasting, of large and self-denying almsgiving as a corrective of the danger of riches, of discipline of the body, of detailed vigilance over the senses, of one continuous warfare with our whole selves, of “bearing hardness, like good soldiers of JESUS CHRIST,” of living the hidden life in Him?

And, in truth, ascetic practice is not only the natural expression and embodying of our knowledge of “the infection of our nature,” but inseparable from any deep sense of it. Feelings live in acts. Can any one be thought to be, in real earnest, persuaded that he bears about him a domestic enemy, ever eager to betray him to Satan and his own destruction, who in act takes no heed to it? If we in earnest believe it, we must feel it as a subtle poison, ever ready to taint all we think, or say, or do, seeking at the time to corrupt, or by after-thought to turn into sin all the good we would do; an active principle, as far as it is unsubdued, craving indulgence, using all our senses as its instruments, our likes or dislikes, our activity or our sloth, our labour or our refreshment, our speech or our silence, our doing or our leaving undone, centering in self as its end, and compassing to make us do all things to ourselves, not to God; to take “His gold and silver, His corn and wine and oil,” His gifts of nature, the world, or grace, and offer them to Baal. Can one then really be thought to have any sense of the depth, and extent, and subtle intertwining of this evil, who thinks that its hold over us can be loosened and destroyed, except in detail? that if we cultivate in us certain frames of feeling, things must, as a matter of course, go right, instead of assuredly going wrong? that any mere general desire to love God can, by a compendious method, dispense with the irksome, painful task of plucking up, nipping, weed by weed, what has been sown in us while asleep? Our diligence must surely be co-extensive with the evil; where this is all-pervading, so must be the self-discipline. Since self is in every form our

great internal enemy, denial of self, in equal detail, must be our safeguard. A systematic attack at all points cannot be warded off by a mere desultory general defence. Can one really by thought, e. g., to believe in earnest, that “the tongue is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison,” “a fire,” “a world of iniquity,” who yet exerts no reserve in speaking, talks freely of self, relates every unauthenticated tale he hears, disputes fearlessly on sacred subjects, has no rules of silence, criticises freely all he dislikes, or lets his speech run on in an easy careless way, uttering all which occurs, and content if it be not stirred up by some energetic passion, as if there were no Judgment-seat where “idle words” were to be given account of, or no temptations to censoriousness, self-display, evil-speaking, irreverence? Can one be thought to believe deeply in the “deceit-fulness of the heart above all things,” and its “desperate wickedness,” who proposes to go through the trials of the day, with no definite contemplation of his own especial failures, or definite rules to which to appeal, when his besetting temptation offers a bribe to his conscience to judge untruly? It seems quite inconceivable that any should in earnest feel that we have a strong energizing principle within us, “lusting against the Spirit,” “warring against the law of our mind,” and tempted or set in motion by Satan, and yet think that it is not to be met by an equally energetic series of acts, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit of God. Almost equally inconceivable is it how any can suppose that these acts will (for any considerable time at least, until they have themselves become habitual) be carried on as perseveringly, if left to the disposal of the moment, as if brought under rule. Doubtless the advanced become a rule to themselves, and the Holy Spirit is so present to their souls, that Divine contemplation is the element they breathe, devotion their bodily sustenance; temptations of the flesh absolutely disappear; the very discernment of what they eat or drink is through habitual mortification lost; what is bitter becomes sweet, through memory of “the gall;” suffering with Christ becomes their very craving; humiliation their joy, praise their confusion.⁵

The mistake has been, not, of course, in exalted thoughts of the all-

⁵ The above are in part the characteristics of the saintly character; the love of humiliations and sufferings being found in all, out of desire of conformity to our Lord (*e. g.* witness the saying of St. Theresa, “Suffer or die;” or St. Catherine of Sienna, “I desire, Lord, to live here always conformed unto Thy Passion, and to find pain and suffering my repose and delight;” St. Philip Neri, “Increase my pains, but increase my patience,” a prayer also of the Ven. John of Avila). In part they have been special gifts; as temptations of the flesh were suddenly, at once, removed from St. Francis and St. Thomas Aquinas; St. Peter of Alcantara lost the power of distinguishing food; St. Thomas Aquinas often knew not what he had eaten; St. Catherine of Sienna lived for a length of time on no food but the Holy Eucharist. “Can I forget,” said St. Francis Borgia, “that Christ drank gall for me upon the Cross?” Five or six hours, again, spent in prayer, appeared to him as a quarter of an hour. St. Antony, after nights of prayer, grieved that sunrise broke in upon their silence, &c.

sufficiency of Divine Grace, but in the unsuspectingness of human weakness; not as though Divine Grace would not regulate every action of our lives, but as though we, without systematic self-discipline, should not yet more often fail to respond to it; or, still more painfully, whether, when we neglect this, we are really in earnest enough to receive it. Yet something of this sort, some notion that men were setting limits to the free Grace of God, instead of restraining their own ill-regulated freedom, must be at the root of the objection to forms and rules, and systematic self-discipline. But, besides, there is, if it be sifted, a real unsuspectingness of the deep corruption of human nature, and a vague impression that the whole battle is won, when the soul is once in a state of grace; as though all resistance would then be so slight, that the soul would, almost of its own accord, obey the influences of grace, and might be left unbridled, as being sure to obey its Master's Voice. And yet, if self-examination were really used, one can hardly understand how people, day after day, could go on thus; how they could commit the same faults, e. g. be guilty of the same acts and words of vanity, or self-indulgence, or distractions, and not see that there is need for some stricter rule and self-discipline; or, again, how one, who is not very far advanced, can so little account of tendencies to sloth, or distraction, or the absorbing power of duties, occupations, human affections, earthly interests, curiosity, things of sense, or the soul's own heaviness and lassitude and inaptness to things spiritual, as to think that it will spontaneously, as it were, rise of itself to God; that the soul will be equally fixed upon God as if it had regularly recurring hours of prayer through the course of the day, prescribed rules, (as at going out, coming in, entering into society, conversation, in the course of it, pauses of business,) or even conventional occasions, as beholding the sky, natural beauty, the striking of a clock, whereby one may bind the soul to pray. In other words, that if the soul were at regular times forced to pray, it would at others be less with God, than if not thus continually checked and recalled. It really seems a master-piece of Satan's craft, or of man's deceivableness, to persuade men either that the acts of any grace, as prayer, will be more devout when left, so to say, to chance, than if, with the view of guarding against irregularity, or hurry, or weariness, or self-deceit, they are made matter of precaution and forethought; or, as in the use of penitence or humiliation, they either could not, continuously, be done, through God's grace, penitently or humbly, or, if so done, would not enlarge the grace out of which they flowed; or that the grace could long exist without them.

It will be granted probably, that acts of avarice tend to deepen the character of avariciousness, acts of self-display that of pride, acts of

cruelty harden the heart and aggravate ferociousness, and so on; that every character of sin is deepened by the continuous acts of the sin which springs from it; and yet it is practically denied either that acts of humiliation can spring from the grace of God, or that so springing, they do not increase the grace of humility. Satan understands the human soul better. He knows how petty, continually renewed acts of evil rivet his chains, and he takes care continually to provide baits and occasions for them, and to suggest thoughts of them, that the soul may at least in will consent. And this in things which are according to the bent of our nature. But where, as all resistance of evil and acts of duty are, it is against and above nature, there it is thought needless to restrain the soul, or do violence to it, or to seek occasions of practising and inuring it to what it shrinks from. When it is a mere natural and easy descent, Satan takes pains to urge the soul downwards; and men think, when it is against nature, that no continued regular effort and holy wisdom are needed to constrain it to follow Him Who calls it upwards. It will be allowed that human love, which never expressed itself in acts, would become torpid; it would reasonably be questioned whether the feeling had ever existed, or was not a mere phantom: but people doubt not that humility can live without acts of humiliation; they only question whether it can co-exist with them. For to what else do all objections to regular self-discipline, penitence, mortification, fasts, acts of humiliation interior or exterior, come to, than this, either that they cannot proceed out of, or be supported by, the grace of God; or that, so supported, they would not increase that; grace of which they were the effect? Either of which, except for profound ignorance, would be nothing short of words of blasphemy against that Holy Being Who gave and sustained them.

One or both of these fundamental errors seem to lie at the root of the practical deficiencies of the popular system of religion. People seem to think, either that acts have nothing to do with forming habits, but that certain feelings will sustain themselves, or be sustained, and issue in action whenever any difficult occasion comes, or that they will be equally performed without any definite purpose of the will binding us to their performance. On the first of these, people seem to act as to the combat with their evil; on the second, as to the practice of what is good: and both arise in an entire ignorance of their own nature, and unsuspectingness as to the extent of its corruption. Doubtless, were we perfect, feelings might sustain themselves without habitual energy in action, although we know not that they are so sustained in any created beings. Of all the Heavenly hosts, it is said, that they “do His pleasure;” and if the Seraphim live in continual and exclusive adoration, their whole being is one act of

enkindled contemplation and praise. And if we may in this respect speak reverentially of Him, from Whom all being derives its properties, His Being, when time and creation were not, and there were no beings out of Himself to whom to manifest His Love, was still One Eternal, Unchangeable Love, within Himself, in the Three Co-equal Persons of the Adorable Trinity. For “God is Love.” But in this our state of partial restoration, to imagine that any right feeling can abide, or wrong one be subdued, without an habitual effort, co-operating with the inworking grace of God, involves a real denial that we are “not already perfect.” For, since we are so miserably imperfect, hold nothing securely even of what, by God’s grace, we have gained, it can only be by continual laborious progress that we can ever maintain our ground. This indeed is so elementary a truth, even of Heathen morality, and would in the abstract probably be so readily acknowledged by all, that nothing but a radical failure to perceive the extent and minuteness and subtlety of our temptations, can account for its evident neglect.

It is nothing to say, that, apart from that grace, mere outward acts would become worse than worthless; to doubt of this were Pelagianism; or that, if contemplated and reflected on with self-complacency, they would be Pharisaic and idolatrous. One who could build any thing on this objection would only imply that he had not formed the very idea of self-abnegation. Some, of course, every where will stop short in forms and formulæ, in confessions of sinfulness by word or act, and substitute some more subtle form of self-contemplation, whether of its faith, or works, or feelings, or observances, or phrases, or spirituality, or soundness of confession, or self-renunciation in word or partial deed. Self-abnegation is complete. It relates not (as men picture) to outward actions only, but to the affections, the feelings, the thoughts, the will, our very deepest and most awful hopes and fears. Catholicity prohibits too anxious curiosity or reflection as to its own state. To build upon or to reflect on good deeds, is with our own hands to undo them.⁶ By God’s grace, the soul, under His teaching, does what it can; it seeks by that grace to love, to repent, to humble itself more; and then it commits itself, its past sins, its penitences, its hopes, its fears, its sufferings, its crosses, its consolations, its present and its to come, to Him Who loved it, and in His love redeemed it, and has borne with it until now.

Self-discipline would indeed be dry and arid, except in union with the Cross; as, conversely, there can be no real loving contemplation of the Cross without self-discipline. Holy Scripture says, “If we suffer with Him,

⁶ “Would you that God should remember your good deeds, forget them; would you that He should forget your evil, remember them.” St. Chrysostom on St. Matthew.

we shall also reign with Him.” It speaks of “fellowship with His Sufferings, conformity to His Death.” It has been noticed how the preaching of the Cross in Holy Scripture is always accompanied with a mention of the participation of suffering. It seems a miracle how any can, in the midst of ease, lightness of heart, fulness of bread, abundance of all things, (one would say it reverentially,) sympathize or be in harmony with the Passion; it seems strange how members of the Thorn-crowned Head can live delicately. But it is of the very elements of Catholic teaching, that whosoever would love the Cross must bear it; and whosoever would bear it, must bear it after Him as His Cross, uniting it with His, with Whom he has been united. “He is borne by the Cross that he may bear it;” the Cross he beareth, beareth him.

Self-discipline is never distinct from the doctrine of the Cross; not as, in a modern system, the consciousness of our corruption and sinfulness is to bring us to CHRIST, and therewith its office seems ended. It is the application of His Cross to heal us; it is a cleansing of the soul to receive Him; keeping it clean, through the Virtue of His Cross, that it may retain Him; a chastising what would rebel, and offend His Holy Eyes and grieve His Spirit, through Whom He vouchsafes to be present: it is, in its highest sense, a casting out whatever could usurp His place in the soul, or divide her affections with Him, or distract her from Him. His grace is its commencement and support; His love its consolation; Himself the reward it seeks.

It must, then, be said, not as if in apology, not yet censoriously, but in charitable warning, that whatsoever difference there may be in the acknowledgment of man’s helplessness, or of entire dependence upon our Lord and cleaving to Him, the deficiency is not on the Catholic⁷ side. The point of difference is not in the truths believed, but in the mode of carrying them out into life. Happy, at least, is it, if they who think they hold most accurately the corruption of nature, can even understand the language of the self-abhorrence of Saints. Take his, who being asked, “Who were the sheep?” said, “I know not; I only know that I am of the goats;”⁸ or his who ever prayed that his sins might not bring the vengeance of God on the

⁷ The Editor need perhaps hardly say, that he uses this word of what has ever been the doctrine of the Church, as opposed to the private opinion of individuals, not as though it was found abroad only, to the exclusion of ourselves. The hair-shirt has been concealed under our lawn also; sleep has given way to devotion; grace has endured abstinence above nature, and Bishops have been models of a saintly penitence. With us, too, those who have most borne the Cross, have most loved it. Bp. Taylor, *e. g.* the author of our strictest work on penitence, is the author of the “Life of Christ;” Bp. Andrews, whose own daily manual, which came to us “moistened by his tears,” is our most deeply penitential collection of prayer, is, perhaps, also our most fervent and devotional preacher of the mysteries of the Faith.

⁸ I think, one of the Eastern Anchorites.

towns where he preached;⁹ or of those who wept for their sins, until sight was impaired;¹⁰ or his, who, having renounced all the riches and glories of this world, habitually accounted his only fit dwelling to be hell, or being spit upon all night, counted no place fitter than his own face;¹¹ or hers who, having followed God's leadings since she heard His Name, confessed, "All my life long has been nothing but darkness, but I will hide myself in the Wounds of JESUS Crucified; I will bathe myself in His Blood, Which will wash off all my sins;"¹² or his,¹³ who, being asked to pray for the continuance of a life spent in winning souls, answered, "I am an unprofitable servant, whom neither God nor His people needeth;" or that which has been the common maxim and first principle of all Saints, that they are to account themselves "the chief of sinners," not professing it only with their lips, but on each occasion acting instantaneously upon it, wishing others to believe it, bearing all reproach patiently, glad to be evil-spoken of untruly, acutely pained at any hint of praise, confounded at the mention of any good in them.¹⁴

⁹ St. Dominic. The like is related of St Catherine of Sienna, that she thought all the chastisements of Divine justice, which desolated the provinces in her time, to be the miserable effects of her unfaithfulness. Nouet.

¹⁰ St. Francis of Assisium and St. Ignatius Loyola. The largeness of the gift of tears continually recurs in the lives of the Saints.

¹¹ St. Francis Borgia. St. Alphonsus Liguori gives this as one of the preparations of any mental prayer (and so of his own), "1. My God, I believe Thee present within me, and I adore Thee from the abyss of my nothingness. 2. Lord, I ought now to be in hell, on account of my sins; I am sorry for having offended Thee; pardon me in Thy mercy." (Quoted by Mr. Ward, p. 350.)

¹² St. Catherine of Sienna.

¹³ St. Francis de Sales.

¹⁴ All these tests of deep humility may be verified to any extent in the lives of the Saints, not as the results of reflection, but as part of themselves.

The following instances are given by Nouet, *L'homme d'oraison, Conduite dans les voies de Dieu*. Ent. xi. St. Francis Borgia having employed much time every day in acquiring knowledge of himself, reduced the principles of self-knowledge to these. (1.) I was formed from nothing. (2.) I shall return to nothing. (3.) I know not what I am. (4.) If I know any thing, my only knowledge is, that hell is my [fitting] home. (5.) Of myself, I do no good work. St. Theresa being warned one day to take heed of vain-glory, answered, "Vain-glory! I know not why, knowing who I am; it is much for me not to despair:" and in her life, "It seems as if, even would I try to have vain-glory, I could not. For I know clearly through the grace which God giveth me, that of myself I can do nothing. On the contrary, God makes me see my miseries, and discovers to me so many unfaithfulnesses, that whatever time I could employ thereon, I should never see so many truths, as I see of them in an instant. Besides, I know not how I could attribute to myself the good which is in me, seeing that a little while ago I was entirely bare of the virtues I possess, which also are the fruits of the mercy of God, and His free gifts, wherein I am, and can do nothing, no more than a painter's canvass, in that, on my part, I can do no more than receive the grace of God, without rendering Him any service. For certainly I am the most useless person in the world; I am ashamed to see what progress every one makes, except myself who am good for nothing. What I say is not humility, it is truth. I do not believe that there is in the world a creature worse than myself, and when I consider the little profit I make of the graces I receive, I sometimes come to fear that I have been deceived." The B. Angela de Foligny said, with unspeakable ardour, "O unknown nothingness! O unknown

It were strange undoubtedly if, really sinners as most of us are, we do not honestly account all, one by one, superior to ourselves; but in those who were really great Saints, it is a very mystery of humility, which one can only explain in that, living in the light of God, their very perception of that lustre they have received is taken from them, and they only see any remaining spot of corruption. Their humility seems a special supernatural gift, to preserve all their other graces, and it has been so accounted. They have not at times understood it themselves, but received it by intuitive inspiration. "All that I can tell you," said "the holy Abbot Zosimus,"¹⁵ "is, that I know I speak truth, and that I am very sensible of what I say."

Such is the way in which they have felt the corruption of human nature, who have taken the course of humiliation and self-discipline, because they felt it. Sorrowful indeed is it, that so strange a paradox should have gained possession of people's minds, as that to act upon a truth is the way to efface our conviction of it. Could any thing tear the veil off our eyes, it must be surely that they who did so act believed it in a degree, which is as much above ours as was their practice. At least, if each of us could feel habitually, not only when reflecting upon his past sins, that he is "the chief of sinners," but appreciate vividly at all times, and under all circumstances, that he is a greater sinner than any one whom he sees, miserable as these often are, and take occasion from each of them to humble himself, and is willing to be so accounted, if God sees fit,—as far as this is so with any of us, we may hope that we are in a way to acquire the humility which befits us. And yet, after all, what are we, but what, if

nothingness! I tell you in all truth, that the soul can have no richer knowledge than that of its nothingness." And to St. Catherine our Lord said, "Knowest thou well, who I am and who thou art. Happy wilt thou be, if thou understand it well. I am HE who IS, and thou art she who is not." "In this [Divine] light St. Ignatius looked upon himself as an ulcer continually discharging pus; Alphonso Rodriguez compared himself to graves of dead, putrid carcasses, sewers and sinks of vessels where all defilements collect." [Comp. our own Bp. Andrewes, Morning Devotions, "Despise me not, an unclean worm, a dead dog, a putrid corpse."] "St. Ignatius used to say that he did not believe that another could be found, in whom there was so much ingratitude joined with so many graces and favours which he had received of God; whence he prayed our Lord to deprive him of his spiritual consolations, in chastisement of his unfaithfulnesses, to make him more careful and faithful for the future. St. Francis cried out, from time to time, 'Lord, keep, if it please Thee, the treasure of the graces Thou hast deposited in my soul. For I am a thief who rob Thee of Thy glory.' St. Gertrude thought it one of the greatest miracles that the earth should endure her, seeing there was no one who did not deserve the favours of God better than herself, and did not employ them better." See also St. Vincent Ferrier and St. Catherine of Genoa, below, p. 105. "St. John-of-God, when accused to the Archbishop of Grenada of harbouring dissolute people in his hospital, said, 'The Son of God came to save sinners, and we are bound to labour and pray for their conversion. I am unfaithful to my calling that I neglect this; and I confess that I know no other bad person in my hospital but myself,'" &c. Butler.

¹⁵ Quoted by Rodriguez on humility, c. 34. St. Francis does give an explanation of *his* conviction; see above, p. viii.

we so think, we think ourselves?—and what were not they? The lives of Saints is, alas! a new world to us. Yet had we some portion of their humility, whence all this unloving blame so rife among us, instead of ascribing the evil which is desolating us, each to his own sins?

It is a warning, however, given uniformly by those who guide along this way of humiliation, that the depressing contemplation of our own corruption and infirmity would, alone, prove a snare of Satan, tempting to despondency and sloth. And so, when the foundation of this self-knowledge has been laid, they too (as has been the course among ourselves) bid us go forth out of ourselves, and meditate on the Cross of Christ, contemplate His Sacred Wounds, and bury ourselves and our sins, in their whole weight and number, in those sorrowful and amazing Depths. The language is so far alike. Yet would again, one must say, we who practise not suffering could so lovingly contemplate His Passion as they who do! Would that our trust was as entire and as forgetful of self, that the very idea of “uniting our sufferings with those of our Lord,” to be sanctified by His, and blessed to us, were as common among us! Doubtless it is found among very many who know deep bodily or mental pain, and among our simple-minded sufferers who have never unlearned His truth. To such, suffering itself has been a teacher sent of God. “Blessed is the man whom Thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of Thy law!” But are fervent books, directing us not to the doctrine, but to contemplate the Blessed Person of our Lord in His Sufferings, common among us? Are helps to such meditation familiar? Does not “the soul upon Calvary” sound to us a beautiful, but mournfully new, title for a solace for all suffering, within or without? But, apart from Christian sufferers who are taught directly in the very school of Christ, and to whom He often imparts the Virtue of His Passion, and makes them to understand It more than in years of our teaching, is habitual contemplation of the Passion a part of the very elements of our devotion? We have not even attempted to replace that form of devotion ordinary in the Roman Church, whereby meditations on the chief mysteries of our Lord are combined with the use of His Divine Prayer, joining meditation on His Incarnation, Passion, and Resurrection, the Mysteries of His Humility, Sorrows, and Glory, with “those words of the Son, in which we may best hope to be heard of the Father,” blending (what is so difficult to any beginner) vocal and mental prayer, evolving some portion of the manifold meaning of that Prayer, and habituating the pious mind to find a whole Liturgy¹⁶ in it, so that it should

¹⁶ It may be observed, how, in consequence of this neglect, even valuable persons ceased to understand our own Prayer-book. There was no more frequent complaint among the Church Reformers (one of whom those who knew him must venerate), than the frequency of the repetition

never be at a loss for words, but might gather every longing aspiration, pang, penitence, and want, into its all-comprehensive words, with the affections of a son submitting all to its Father's will, to the Father's glory. On account of one small proportion which we cannot use, we have, without any apparent consciousness of our loss, willingly or wilfully parted with the whole of that wonderful mode of bringing the contemplation of the mysteries of our Faith home to minds of every capacity or with the narrowest leisure. And now, in our entire ignorance of its very nature, the name of "the Rosary" or "Beads" is associated only with ideas of superstition, even in minds who, if they knew it, would be shocked at their own thoughts. It is painful to think how much superstitious contempt of simple devotion, of the worship of child-like souls among the aged, is virtually involved in the habitual censures of it. This daily, continual memorial of our Lord, in His Life and Death for us, is lost to our very habits, and replaced by nothing.¹⁷ We can see (if it be so) incidental negligences; we have no sense for that worst evil, spiritual death.

Again, the very observation of the hours of the Passion, which carry on the mind which uses them devoutly, in reverent sympathy with our Lord, through "the burthen and heat of the day," quelling the sad turmoils of our own thoughts, or recalling them at least continually to Him, and which, the Fathers tell us, were always "accounted the most solemn times of prayer and Divine Offices in the Church of God," have, after having been reintroduced among us for a time by Bishop Cosins, slept, with slight exceptions, for above a miserable century.

Again, many forms of the devotion upon the Passion, long practised by fervent Christians, would probably, at least on first acquaintance, startle us. We should fear whether we could use them reverentially. Happily, the devotional thought of His wounded Side, as the Fountain of the Sacraments, the Fountain wherein to "wash from sin and

of the Lord's Prayer. One is ashamed to say that people counted how often, when "occasional services" occurred, those blessed words were repeated, as if the fact of their often repetition was in itself a decisive proof of the need of a change. Pious minds felt otherwise, as one expressed it, "When I come to the last in the service, I begin to feel what it is." Any one who has tried it, must know how repetitions, either of the whole of our Lord's Prayer, or of single petitions in it, consecutively, add to our perception of its fulness, and our own earnestness of prayer; how, e. g. on a threefold fervent repetition of "Forgive us our trespasses," the mind seems to feel unutterably more than it ever felt before.

¹⁷ The use of the Lord's Prayer alone at the great hours of the day, in connexion with the memory of the Passion, is a suggestion which our poor will most gratefully receive. One knows not what a source of holy meditation and of enlarged use of that blessed prayer might not thus be opened to them. Their habitual use of the Creed also, in their morning devotions, which has so often been thoughtlessly interfered with, may have been of untold blessing in fixing their thoughts on the mysteries of the Redemption, and might be carried out further.

uncleanness,” the Cleft in the Rock wherein we may be safely hidden, has been perpetuated among us. There is, too, a devotion towards His Sacred Name (however imperfect, and, for lack of austerity and self-discipline, deficient often in reverence), there; is a latent sense also of its mystical and sacramental efficacy, which are happy signs of individual love to the Redeemer, and a “feeling after” some fuller contemplation of His Sacred and Suffering Humanity. Love has broken through system, and sits with St. Mary Magdalene, in heart and sight, at the Foot of the Cross. And yet, with this as a testimony to us, I fear, the fuller carrying out of this devotion to CHRIST CRUCIFIED (such as we find universal on the Continent) would seem a strange thing to many of us; we should have at first, almost with doubt, to adapt ourselves to it.

Detailed devotions with reference to each of His Five most precious Wounds, or to the Seven sheddings of His Atoning Blood for us, either with reference to the seven deadly sins, or the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, or His seven words upon the Cross, or devout adaptations of the petitions of His Prayer to them, or detailed recitations of the events of His Passion, in union with His Sacred Name,—whereby we might plead them, one by one, to Him, and by each, with deepening feeling of His boundless love, and our boundless thanklessness, pray Him to have mercy upon us—or, the manifold repetition of that Saving Name (as in the Litanies of the Passion),¹⁸ have not been the product of our own practical system. They find response enough among us not to create undue or over-anxious misgiving; our own Litany contains a precious witness to them. And yet how little have we developed its meaning, how foreign mostly (it is to be feared) the very thought of the Circumcision¹⁹ as a great mystery, or of that Blood-shedding as a meritorious prelude of the outpouring of all His Blood upon the Cross. One ought not, of course, to lay too great or too painful a stress on the absence of any particular form of devotion. But we should bear in mind, that these were part of our ancient inheritance; and they flow so naturally from the contemplation of our Blessed Lord’s Humanity and Passion, that we must have misgivings whether we should ever have lost them, or he now to such an extent without them, had our Devotion to the Person of our Suffering Redeemer been what it ought. There are but too many indications (little as we have suspected it) that the

¹⁸ Such litanies have, of late, been reprinted for our poor under the title, “Short Meditations for the Sick,” containing the Litany of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Golden Litany of the Passion, Litany of the Blessed Sacrament, and for a happy death, with the Jesus Psalter. The latter was here and there altered for our own use. The same collection contains fourteen brief meditations on the Passion, from the Abbé Landrieu.

¹⁹ It is observable how the first herald of restored Catholic teaching brought back the reverence for its mystery. See *The Christian Year*, Feast of the Circumcision.

way in which the doctrine of “justification by faith” (relatively to ourselves) has been made to take the place of contemplation of our Lord in Himself, has very injuriously affected, not only the completeness, but the soundness of the faith of many. Had it been deeply impressed upon us that He is “Very God and Very Man,” and that every thing that He wrought or suffered for us had therefore an Infinite Value, or had we contemplated His Sacred Humanity as they only may venture who think habitually of His Human Nature as wholly taken into God, we could hardly have ceased to have dwelt reverentially on each single act and moment of His Life and Passion.

It is almost the inevitable consequence of such compendious or arbitrary selections or substitutions of doctrine, as of “justification by faith,” or even “the Atonement” for “Christ Crucified,” that in the end they contract men’s faith, risk its forfeiture, and banish contemplation of the Object. The selection of one doctrine overshadows others; the habitual abstract statement of it turns away from meditations of its detail. The very emblems in our older churches show how reverentially the thoughts of our forefathers dwelt, one by one, on the

“Thorns,²⁰ and Cross, and nails, and lance,
Wounds, our treasure that enhance,
Vinegar, and gall, and reed,—”

How they

—“stored deep in heart’s recess,
All the shame and bitterness.”

Such is the real contemplation of love. Think we not that such must it have been to those who were on Calvary, love riveting them, while each awful infliction pierced the soul with a sword, and upholding them to endure the pain it gave? But since His love comprehended us, as though we were there, and He beheld us, one by one, from the Cross, and loved us, and shed that Precious Blood for us, and each pang was a part of the price of our Redemption, how must not a living faith, “the evidence of things unseen,” be present with Him, and behold the Crucifixion, not “afar off,” but as brought by the Holy Gospels to the very foot of the Cross, and, if not standing there with His Blessed Mother and the beloved Disciple, yet kneeling at least with the penitent who embraces It? To love, nothing is of small account. Human love finds a separate ground of love, a

²⁰ Devotions on the Passion, Hymn at Matins.

separate meaning and expression of that inward holy loveliness which wins it, impressed on every part even of the pure visible frame of what it loves. Grief loves to recall each separate action, and token of love or holiness, and muses upon them, and revolves them on all sides, to discover the varied bearings of what yet is finite. How much more when the Object of Contemplation is Infinite, and that of love! When the Passion was “the book of the Saints,”²¹ they contemplated it letter by letter, and combined Its meanings, and explored Its unfathomable depths, the depths of the riches of the mercy and loving-kindness of God; each Wound had Its own treasure-house of the depths of Divine Mercy, its own antidote to sin. They, in spirit, “reached forth their finger, and beheld His Hands,” mightier to aid, because bound to the tree; they felt themselves encircled within the outstretched all-encompassing Arms of His Mercy; they fell at his wearied and stiffened Knees, and their own “feeble knees” were strengthened; they bathed with tears His transfixed Feet, that so He might forgive the mournful liberty and wanderings wherewith their own had gone astray; but chiefly were they ever drawn to the very Abyss of His unsearchable Love, His pierced Side and His opened Heart, there to “draw of the fountains of salvation,” to “drink that water after which they should never thirst” for aught beside, there reverently to “enter, and to penetrate to the inmost recesses of His boundless Charity,”²² to “enter into Its Chambers, and close Its doors about them,” there to “hide them in the secret of His Presence” from the wrath to come. They wearied not of contemplating His Wounds, His healing Stripes, His Words, because the unutterable love, of which they were the tokens, being Infinite, there issues from them an Infinite attractiveness of love. How can we be thought to love, if we linger not there, now we may bear to behold It, since we see not the Pain, but only the Love which sustained it? Can we conceive but that the Magdalene, to whom alone in that blessed company we could be like (would that we were!), must, when His Holy Body was removed from the Cross, have gazed with unutterable amazement of love, one by one, on the Sacred Wounds, and have found even a special miracle of sorrowful comfort in touching the pierced Feet “at which she had found mercy?”²³ Can we think it was not grief to her to part with Them out of sight? Or

²¹ This is said, e. g. of St. Francis, who “wished to open no other book than the Four Gospels.” From him St. Bonaventure inherited it, who, when St. Thomas Aquinas asked him where were his books, showed him his crucifix; and generally St. Francis is said to have transmitted the love of the Cross as a sort of inheritance and patrimony to his order. Nouet *Conduite*, iv. 4. “The Passion of Christ was the book” also of the venerable John of Avila, “the father of so many eminent saints of Spain,” and one of their most eminent devotional writers.

²² St. Bonaventure.

²³ St. Bonaventure, *Life of Christ*.

that, when the time came, even amid that bewildering perplexity, the memory of them remained not impressed upon her soul? Think we not that she beheld, as far as she could bear, each of those awful “Stripes” by which “we are healed,” and through which, “from the sole of the Foot even unto the Head,” all was “wound and bruise? “and how have we the blessing of those who have “not seen and yet have believed,” if we cannot behold them with her, or are not touched with sorrow at the sight, or in that mirror shrink not at “the wounds and bruises and putrifying sores,” wherewith our whole selves have been ulcerated, and which were the Thorns, and Nails, and Stripes, which tore His All-Holy Body to heal the unholiness of ours? And that the more, since we may now behold those Wounds, not merely in their extreme humility and painfulness, but glorified; and Tabor and Calvary are united, and “the lifting up from the earth” has been the Ascension to glory, and His Sacred Wounds have of the capacity of His Godhead; and His Heart, Which is ever open to receive us, can contain the sorrows, and hide and heal the sins of the whole human race.

“Oh the blindness of the sons of Adam,” exclaims a Saint,²⁴ “who know not how to enter into JESUS CHRIST through these Wounds! They toil in vanity above their strength, and the doors to repose are open. Know ye not that CHRIST is the joy of the Blessed? Why, then, delay to enter into that joy through the openings in His Body? Why so mad, when the bliss of Angels is open, and the Wall which encompassed it broken through, ye neglect to enter? Wait ye, then, that your body may be dissolved, not thinking that the soul can even now be soothed to CHRIST? But, believe me, O man, if thou wouldst enter into Him by these narrow Openings, not thy soul only, but thy body also, shall find therein a wonderful repose and sweetness. What in you is earthly, and tends to earthly things, shall become so spiritual by the entrance into those Wounds, that thou wilt esteem all other pleasures as nothing, save those which it tastes there. Yea, it may be, at times, the soul shall oft repeat, that for duty or some good end, thou must depart thence, and the flesh, won by that sweetness, will say, it must linger there. And if it shall be thus with the body, what sweetness, thinkest thou, will the heart enjoy, which, through those openings, is joined with the Heart of Christ! In truth, I cannot express it to thee; thyself essay it, and quickly. Lo! a store is open to thee, full of sweet spices, and in medicines rich. Enter thou then through the windows of those Wounds, and receive a medicine, healing, restorative, preservative. Take what kind thou wilt. Whatever tender healing thou wouldest desire,

²⁴ St. Bonaventura, *stim. amor. par. c. 1. civ. med.* [Opp. t. vi. p. 194] quoted by Nouet.

take it there. Or wouldest thou be softened by the sweetest ointments, delay not to enter through those Wounds. Lo, open is the gate of Paradise; the flaming sword removed by the soldier's lance! Lo, the Tree of Life pierced in its trunk and in its' branches! if thou puttest not thy feet, i. e. thy affections, in Its openings, thou canst not gather Its fruits! Lo, open is the Treasure of Divine Wisdom and Eternal Charity! Enter then through the aperture of the Wounds; with light thou wilt find delights. O blessed lance and blessed nails, to whom it was vouchsafed to make this opening. O had I been in the place of that lance, loth had I been to go forth out of the Side of Christ; I would have said, 'Here is my rest for ever; here will I dwell, for I have a delight therein.' 'O fools and slow of heart' who, to possess some vanity, trust yourselves to enter perilous and doubtful openings, whence ye often cannot go forth; but to possess the Son of God, the Sovereign Good, the Eternal Purity and Brightness, enter not by the open gates of His Wounds! Soul, created in the image of God, how canst thou contain thyself? Lo, thy most sweet Spouse, wounded for thee, and now All-glorious, longeth to embrace thee, and give thee the Kiss of Infinite sweetness; and thou neglectest to go to Him speedily!"

"He through exceeding love hath opened for thee His Side, to give thee His Heart; He hath willed that His Hands and His Feet should be pierced, that, when thou comest to Him, thy hands should so enter into His Hands, and thy feet into His Feet, that thou shouldest be indissolubly united with Him. Make trial, I pray thee, as the Apostle says, 'Prove all things, hold fast that which is good;' and, if thou findest thyself well there, go not forth again: I doubt not that, when thou hast essayed it, thou wilt account all things, except Himself, bitterness. After thou hast entered there, thou wilt desire with thy full heart that the doors of His Wounds should be so closed, that thou couldest not go forth. Amazed exceedingly wilt thou be at thine own and others' blindness. Yet thou wilt joy in such exceeding sweetness, and thy heart will be so kindled, that it will be as though thy struggling spirit would burst from thy body, to dwell, as in its own home, in the Wounds of CHRIST. And the soul shall be inebriated with such sweetness, that scarcely shall thou be able to turn it away to aught besides. O Wounds, wounding hearts of stone, kindling souls of ice, melting with love affections harder than adamant!"

"What more marvellous," says St. Bonaventura again, "than that Death gives us life, Wounds heal us, Blood makes whole and cleanses the inward parts, an excess of sorrow gives an exceeding joy, the opening of the Side unites heart to Heart? Yet cease not to be amazed; for the sun when eclipsed enlightens the more, fire when extinguished gives the greater heat, the ignominy of the Passion glorifies us; and truly wondrous

is it that Christ, when thirsting on the Cross, inebriates us; naked, He arrays us with the ornaments of grace; His Hands nailed to the Wood set us at liberty; His pierced Feet make us run; expiring, He gives us life; dying on the Tree, He calls us to the things of heaven.”

It is indeed so intense a paradox, that to act on a belief weakens it; that the unwearied effort to tame and chasten the rebellions of nature makes men less alive to its rebelliousness; that to call the flesh an enemy and to treat it as a friend, impresses the sense of its enmity, more than to act towards it as we believe it to be; that to bear the Cross after Him hinders the belief in It; that conformity—in whatever degree His Saints might through Him attain—to His Holy Poverty, or Watchings, or Fastings, or Stripes, would make men forget Him Whom they sought to imitate, and out of love and penitence to express in their lives; that one would hope it cannot stand for a moment in the presence of realities. On the contrary, with the amazingness of love in those Saints who were most penetrated with love, there was a proportionate intensity of love for conformity with Him Whom they loved, in suffering. We can, for the most part, would we be true to ourselves, as little understand the one as the other, and may thereby the more come to suspect that mysterious connexion which Holy Scripture itself points out between the love of Christ and of His Suffering. Indeed, as has been already said, the contrary, as it is unscriptural, would seem in the highest degree unnatural—a very paradox of unreality—how people could indeed love that to which they are wholly unlike,—how, any way, appreciate that, which they never in any degree felt, and which it is a very pain to think of, until the pain itself, by paining, give pleasure. “Suffering is the livery of Christ Crucified.”

“The Passion of the Saviour,” says St. Bonaventura,²⁵ “must be the rule of our life; and the degree of the consolation we derive from this is the measure of our conformity with Christ, while the absence of this consolation is the evidence of our departure from this rule and example. We must long, as far as in us lies, to be, like Him, trampled under foot, rejected, despised, mocked, persecuted, beaten, and, in the exercise of holy duties, to be reprobated by all the world. Be it ours to be naked like Him Who was bared of all things, and desire to possess nothing; nay, to hold it our greatest punishment and sorrow to possess anything, our greatest joy to have nothing. Be it ours to abhor all the pleasures and delights of the earth, and wish that all in the world had for us the taste only of gall and wormwood; thereby to imitate Jesus Christ, Who in His extreme thirst had only a draught of vinegar and gall.” ... “Then truly is the whole man

²⁵ 1. 2. c. 4.

changed into Christ, when detached from himself, and rising above all creatures, he is so wholly transformed into his Suffering Lord as to see nothing and to feel nothing but Christ Crucified, mocked, railed at, and suffering for us.”

There is a danger in even imagining that, with any thing like our usual practice, we can even understand, or any way make our own, the language of the exceeding love of the Saints. Miracles seem far less amazing than their superhuman love. We hear of outward manifestations of it, as that the very mention of the Passion would melt persons into abundant, overflowing tears, or cast them into ecstasy, so that they became insensible to the external world, or It filled them with holy raptures, so that the very face beamed with the light and joy within,—not to speak of higher yet certain instances, in which the Holy Spirit within so acted upon the outward frame, that it ceased for the time to be subject to earthly laws—at the Holy Eucharist, the utterance of Priests, for excess of devotion, was habitually interrupted by streams of tears;²⁶ “the grace of tears” was a gift to sanctity.

Yet even these outward signs²⁷ are as nothing to that ineffable nearness to our Lord, that close and supernatural union with Him, which exhibit to us as visible realities what we know by faith, that Christ dwelleth in His Elect, and they in Him.

The present volume lays, as it claims, but “the foundations of the spiritual life;” yet with an entireness of self-abnegation, whose extent will almost startle us, a sense of oppression from any remnant of self-love, a complete baring of the soul from all self-will, “that Jesus may fill it all, be its only support, and His Cross its sole dependence;” there are almost overpowering hints of the amazing overflowing of His Love,²⁸ which He pours upon the soul which follows this course faithfully. They are hints only, for, as the words which St. Paul heard were “unspeakable,” so all the Saints say (in the words of St. Bernard),

No tongue of man hath power to tell,
No written words can prove;
But he who loveth, knoweth well

²⁶ The above instances are frequent in the lives of the Saints.

²⁷ Or if any look to visible fruits only, would that our Sermons in Passion-tide yielded the same fruits as theirs, in the conversion of sinners; would that we could so melt stony hearts; or (which, it is to be feared, is at the root) that our own hearts were so kindled at the thoughts of the Passion, as those in the Continental Churches have so often been. “Brother Bernardin” (it was said to an eminent preacher, who asked why his sermons did not produce the same fruit) “is a fiery glowing coal. What is only warm hath not the power of kindling fire in others, like the burning coal.”

²⁸ See especially pp. 225, 226, but also up and down the work, as pp. 85. 93. 128. sqq. 150. 158. 171, 172, &c. 192. 196. 198. 216.

What Jesus 'tis to love.

Indeed, the Author knew in its inmost depths, what is self-abnegation, and what “the abundance of the consolations” of Christ. This book, like so many others,²⁹ was the direct fruit of the Cross. “We are,” he says, towards the close of life,³⁰ “grown old insensibly, and have passed the vigour of our age in suffering.” He adds, “God maketh us feel that He is so good a Master, that one could not complain of Him. He changes so blessedly evils into good, that the soul would not wish to be otherwise dealt with. He gives happiness in proportion to the miseries which any has suffered, and the slightest pain is so richly recompensed, that it is a loving-kindness to be miserable under His Guidance.” So God conducts souls; to one He assigns severe bodily pain; to others, mental; some He guides by that special token of His favour, a likeness to our Lord in undeserved and shocking calumnies. Surin He led by what in later times has been a yet rarer way,—direct visible conflict, as it seems, with Satan. He was brought into the trial in the way of duty, as sent by his superiors, to succour Religious, over whose bodies God had allowed Satan to have power. His office was, by God’s grace, accomplished; and after nearly three years (with one interval of absence) all³¹ the Religious were set free. During the period of his ministry at the convent, he retained his full powers of body and mind, but seems to have suffered in some way which they only may understand, who, themselves holy, have been brought into contact with (“have,” in his own words, “touched”) the Evil One.

The subjoined notice, to which alone the Editor had access, gives no intimation of the nature of his subsequent sufferings.³² Sufferings, resulting from conflict with Satan, could probably no more be described than the consolations which turned them in the end to gain. Yet, to take the outward circumstances only, a period of twenty years, during which he had full possession of his faculties, but was, for the most part, wholly³³ cut

²⁹ As those of Boudon, of whose life, thus far, a notice will be shortly given; Scupoli, whose “Spiritual Combat” was written when yielding to an atrocious calumny; F. Thomas, who wrote “The Sufferings of Christ,” in a Moorish prison, exhorting his fellow-prisoners when tempted to apostasy; St. John of the Cross wrote his mystical treatises, having learnt “a love for sufferings, and a high idea of heir value, in the prison of Toledo,” and then again in solitude and disgrace.

³⁰ Lettres Spirituelles, end.

³¹ A letter, I think, in 1637, mentions that some were already freed.

³² The letter to the P. d’Attichy, in which the author of the notice in the Biographic Univ. says that he “describes” them, must have been in MS. Those to that Father, in the Lettres Spirituelles (6—9) are all of an early date. In his printed letters he speaks of his sufferings generally; “My great sufferings” (Lett. 51. 56); “My great infirmities” (Lett. 102); “Strange sufferings and exceeding crosses,” without any nearer description.

³³ He lost the power of writing for the whole twenty years (Lett. 15), and probably all power of communication (see note in p. lxvi). He wrote in some way at the close of 1650, and resumed his

off from all communication with the outer world; with intense suffering within, both spiritual and bodily, yet unable to communicate the very nature of his sufferings, and so almost wholly cut off from all sympathy or counsel; with power of thinking for those he loved,³⁴ yet of expressing nothing; accounted and confined as one insane; unrefreshed and unrelieved even by sleep,³⁵ and so living an unbroken intense existence,—this was a life of isolation from all but God, a vivid ever-present separation from all created things with which he was yet continually encompassed, such as is but rarely vouchsafed. Still more wonderful is it, yet not unexampled, even to this extent, in the history of those near to God, if for almost this whole period he had to abandon all sensible consolations, having for eighteen years that fulfilled in himself, which he had ever taught, “that man must seek God for Himself Alone,” in abnegation of his whole self, “remaining³⁶ tranquilly under His good pleasure and Almighty Hand, sacrificing to Him all the motions of the heart, holding it in expectation of His orders, abiding and lost in God, awaiting His Light.” He speaks, at least, in one place, to an intimate friend, as though the first eighteen years had been passed in suffering, unmitigated by any sensible Divine comfort; certainly that fulness of joy, which he every where speaks of as bestowed upon those who “give all for

correspondence early in 1657 (ib. fin. and 123); but if the dates be correctly printed, he must have lost it again that year, for at the end of August he says (Ep. 17), “When it shall please the Lord to give me the power of writing, I shall use it with extreme joy to communicate with you, and unfold my thoughts from the bottom of my heart.” Of his then state he says, “To say a word of my present condition, I find more facility and more freedom for the functions of the mind; but I have need, if our Lord will to loose (déliver) me entirely, that you entreat Him for this by your holy Sacrifices.”

³⁴ “Not that I did not often remember you in my great sufferings, but now I wish to give you marks of my remembrance of you, and to recal to you that of old.” (Lett. 56.) “I never forgot you in my great sufferings, and I always had the same affection for you, and the same zeal for your good and your progress in the love of the Lord.” (Lett. 51 to another.) He speaks in other places of the charity of those who wrote to him. (Lett. 102, 123.)

³⁵ This is implied by his mention of the contrary as something new after his recovery. The whole passage, in which he seems carried on, by very thankfulness, to speak of himself in a way quite unusual to him, gives such a picture of his childlike mind, that it is valuable, amid the slight notices open to us:—“My natural strength, by the grace of God, is so renewed, that I have almost forgotten past sufferings; and this, which is the sixty-second year of my age, seems to me to be joined on immediately with my eighth. I recollect how I was enjoying peacefully the joy God gives to children. This autumn, which has been so beautiful, I have passed entirely in the country. I am but just come from it, and expect to return again till Advent. For some time past I have slept the whole night through, a peaceful and unbroken sleep. In all truth, it seems that I am as a child in the arms of our Lord, with as little care as at eight years old. I have no longer any Cross but the sight of the miseries of my neighbour, and the extreme poverty of the people, which I cannot see without sorrow. This is to tell you that our youth is sometimes renewed as the eagle’s, after ills which would have been thought remediless. Pray our Lord that He will give me grace to take to me no stay in this world, but always to live on earth as a stranger, who is only occupied with the thought and desire of his home.”

³⁶ Letter 93.

All,” came not upon him until those eighteen years of fiery, purifying, trial were closed. “For twenty years,” his words are,³⁷ “I have been in strange sufferings and exceeding crosses. For two years our Lord has begun to re-establish me in peace, and to overwhelm me with joy.” It is also the more marvellous, that this state of suffering isolation came as an answer to his early longings, yet was brought about directly by God’s Hand, without any co-operation of his own, and in a way apparently the most opposite to the end. On a period of intense occupation of mind, in which all his spiritual skill and wisdom were called forth in direct conflict with the spiritual cunning of the Evil One, there followed this dreary stillness. Not the mind, as might have been expected, but the body, was allowed to give way; yet this too in such sort as to impair no power of the mind, even while its every outward function was absolutely suspended. It had not even such mitigation of pain as exhaustion mostly gives to intense suffering. With full powers of reflection, conscious of all around, within, and against it, his mind was imprisoned in a body over which he had no control,—a living soul within a body, as it were, already dead, except so far as it was allowed to be Satan’s instrument for the infliction of suffering. Thus was he marvellously brought into the state for which, following God’s leadings, he had first prepared himself, and then ardently longed,—a state like our Lord’s, wherein he was deprived of all, and our Lord his only portion. He says, in one of the earliest of his published letters³⁸ (he was then thirty-four): “I own frankly that it has been so beneficial to me, for the amendment of my life, to break off all intercourse with all sorts of persons, and even with my most intimate friends; and to efface from my memory, as much as I possibly could, all objects except Him Who Alone is essential, that the benefit which I have derived from this loneliness leads me to abstain from many actions which might seem very lawful. I even doubt whether the great good which I find in this general detachment from all things, will not oblige me hereafter to keep a continual silence.” And—“In order that Jesus Christ should take the place of all things, we must forsake much; and if any ask me what we must forsake, I should answer, ‘All things, great and small, without reserve and without ceasing, at all moments of our life.’”

³⁷ Letter 15. In Lett. 123, he writes (Feb. 16, 1657), “To fulfil your wish to hear of my state, I will say, that after twenty years of no slight sufferings, our Lord has given me much peace, and has restored to me the power of writing; but I have not yet free use of my limbs. I seldom leave my room; I cannot say mass, and can perform but very few of the outward actions, which my profession would require of me, or which I would, though, to say truth, I have no longer any will but what God wills.”

³⁸ Letter 6.

In another letter of the same date,³⁹ he seems almost to describe by anticipation his subsequent condition. It may be well to premise, in his own words, the tenor of his thoughts. “My taste is changed extremely. Would to God my life were also! I can prize and take pleasure in nothing but that affectionate simplicity which carries the heart to God and things Divine. All besides wearies and pains me. The object which occupies me above all others, is the ineffable Gift which God has bestowed on the world in giving it His Son, the humble and gentle JESUS,—a Gift so great and so precious, that the feeling of such a mercy ought to absorb all the powers of man, leaving him unable to recollect aught save JESUS, to esteem or have pleasure in aught save JESUS. It seems even as if, at sight of JESUS, all which is of nature is lost; the mind becomes stupid with amazement, through the desire it hath of being consumed by love of an Object so Lovely; it has only strength enough to sink itself in an awe-stricken gratitude before an Incarnate God.”

The words immediately describing that state of severance from all created things which was so soon to be his, are written on occasion of one, by birth a peasant, but whose high spiritual gifts had placed her as instructress in a family, of whom Surin had the spiritual charge. Of her he says:—“I should never have thought, and had never yet known, how God would bare us of all things, to what a desert He would lead us, to bring us up to the purity of His grace. In a word, the soul must feel nothing of the things of this life, nor its own operations; it must not feel itself; it must live in an obedience which turneth upside down all its movements, good,⁴⁰ bad, and indifferent; in a poverty which leaves it not the free use of its own faculties; in a purity which does not allow it to take pleasure in any created thing; that thus, bared of all, and become, as it were, a ‘wild man’ in this wilderness, it may be capable of being tamed to God, and becoming familiar with Him; that, returning into the simplicity of its first origin, having gained a new birth, it be recognized no more, either by itself or others, having no longer life or motions, save to adore and serve Him, the Man-God, the Saviour of men, to Whom all men owe their adoration, and Whom most know not; Whom even they who adore oppose by a conduct the entire reverse of His.”

“Here it is that God seems to me to have appointed us a great and trying exercise, commanding us to imitate His Son, and to lead a life wholly opposed to that of the world. For since we cannot possibly live

³⁹ Letter 8. The date 1654 must be a misprint for 1634, to which internal evidence assigns it. In 1654 the power of writing had not been restored to him. Madeleine Boinet, referred to as living, died in 1650. Lett. 129. t ii. p. 106.

⁴⁰ The context limits this to motions of nature, as distinct from those of grace.

thus, without giving a shock to those with whom we live, by sentiments and maxims contrary to theirs, it cannot be but that they will rebut us, treat us as fools and extravagants, God so permitting, by a wise guidance of His Providence, that, rejected by creatures, and deprived of all the consolations of the earth, we may be constrained to have recourse to Him, and to seek in Him our consolation and our stay.”

“In this state the soul is strengthened, established, inrooted in God. She lives by faith and hope, feeding on the truths she believes, and the Sovereign Good she hopes for; she dwells in a void where she sees nothing sensible; suspended, as it were, in air, without any distinct object; plunged into the abyss of faith, and, as it were, wholly lost in the darkness wherein God dwelleth; seeking neither to experience nor to enjoy aught, reserving for the future all her joys. Yet love occupies, fills, frees her from all care, thinks not whether she be ridiculed or censured. If stricken, she feels it not; if caressed, they cannot gain her. Neither promises nor threats can bend her; nothing is capable of moving her, because she takes no account of what is done to her, nor of what is passing around her, ever hanging on the Object of her love, and thinking but of Him.”

It may complete this picture to show from another letter of uncertain date⁴¹ wherein it centered; the meditation on the Passion of our Lord.

“The third disposition which binds us immediately to our Lord, and which makes us enjoy the closest embrace of His love, is that which St. Ignatius so much recommends, and which he calls a precious step in the spiritual life, viz. to desire with our whole might that condition wherein Jesus Christ appeared in the prætorium, when Pilate showed Him to the people, His Body all torn with scourgings, His Head covered with thorns, His Face all marred, a reed in His Hand, an old purple mantle on His Shoulders, compared with Barabbas, set below that accursed criminal, and judged more worthy of death than he. This condition, which the Son of God chose for love of us, and to give us an example, was one universal loss of all which could give credit in the eyes of men,—honour, reputation, credit, authority, comfort, peace, life; a state of hatred, rejection, contempt, abandonment; a state wherein He retained as His own nought save His Father’s will and perfect obedience; a state which He has so ennobled, that we ought to love and desire it, as men ordinarily desire a marshal’s staff, a cardinal’s hat, and the highest offices and dignities of the

⁴¹ Letter 10 au Père L. Frison. Letter 11, which is connected with it, in the printed edition bears date 1661; the date of the third, 1694, ought perhaps to be 1664, as he died in 1665. This throws some doubt whether the state of mind was the fruit of his experience in Buffering, or a preparation for it. The Editor feels incompetent to decide the date on internal evidence.

world, wherein, when they have arrived at them, they rest complacently as the centre of their being.

“True, that to arrive at this, costs nature much; but one is well recompensed for the labour and the pain, for one finds one’s-self forthwith brought within the inmost Friendship of Jesus Christ; one embraces Him closely, possesses Him fully, tastes His Spirit, has an amazing familiarity with Him; one feels a strength and power for all sorts of good, a noble determination towards all Apostolic employments, a most pure desire of His Glory alone, an ardent zeal for the love of souls; one leads on earth the life of Heaven, and is overflowed with those Divine consolations, the excess of which forced St. Xavier to cry out, ‘Enough, Lord, enough.’”

Strange (if this too were written before that period of trial) that he should have been allowed so wonderfully to anticipate in longing, and by a deep feeling of necessity for his soul, the state into which He was brought by the immediate Hand of God, to crave for it, as a hungry man for his food, and have a foretaste of it, and with what sweetness he should be satisfied; to sketch out what God, in His secret purpose, had willed to do with him, while yet it was wholly hidden from him what he himself should do. For God did indeed “bring” him “into the wilderness,” (Hos. ii. 14,) and there in the inmost solitude which thought can conceive, bared of all things without and within, “without pleasure in any created thing,” and “in a poverty which did not leave it the free use of its own faculties,” He “spake to” his “heart;” but the fruit of all seems to have been rather in what He made himself, than in forming him for “Apostolic employments,” or giving him “strength and power for all sorts of good,” at whose thought his heart had kindled. For when his health was restored, his bodily strength was well-nigh gone;⁴² his great achievement⁴³ (so to speak) seems to have been, at the outset, the visible triumphs over Satan at Loudun; after his twenty years of suffering, his chief office seems to have been to tell others the blessedness of privation, and to exhort those under his guidance to attach themselves to God Alone; even to those whom he had in earlier years guided, he writes almost as one returned from another world, ignorant of all that which had passed in the fulness of twenty years of religious life; nor was he ever permitted to revisit them. He had, it seems, for his few remaining years, chiefly that high but simple office of gaining to Christ the poor villagers near Bordeaux, among whom he preached, and in whom he did indeed reap an “abundant harvest.”⁴⁴

⁴² Letter 50. Towards the end of 1658, he writes to the Marquise d’Ars:—“Yet I am more incapable than ever of serving you, and can only see you by letters.”

⁴³ He speaks of it, in a letter to one of the community, as the chief office of his life.

⁴⁴ His own expression in a letter.

So far other must God's thoughts be from ours, that He broke, so to say, His own instrument in two, in the vigour of his age; and when, by destroying it, He had perfected it, employed it for nothing outwardly great in His kingdom. For twenty years lie tempered and polished and refined this sharp sword, and then laid him up in His everlasting armoury, for what ends in the world invisible we know not, but here chiefly, as a memorable specimen how His weapons of proof are formed and tried in the fire. Like Isaac, his one great office seems to have been to yield himself meekly to suffering, and therein to be a type of blessings, and transmit them. God employed chiefly not his active service, but himself.

He is a very ideal of the blessedness of privation; a witness, with what awful maevellousness of mercy God will accept the ardent longings which willing souls receive from Him, "calling them to His Feet," and "leading them safely by a way that they know not," the path of the Sufferings of their Lord. He is a living witness and picture of the truth of the great sayings which he early learnt, "Bare⁴⁵ thyself of all, and thou shall have All;" "Empty thyself of all creatures, and Christ will dwell with thee;" "To forsake himself inwardly, joineth man to God." God set His seal upon him, and in that He fulfilled those intense longings in His own way, while He accepted His servant, bore witness to the good part which he had chosen. The value of sufferings and privations and mortifications, which the Saints have chosen, is no dream, since He has poured in upon them such abundance of His love, has moulded minds, within and without, for suffering, and through that suffering purified them for closer union with Himself, and the fuller reception of His love.

"Good courage," writes Surin in an early letter to a Religious, "in poverty, my very dear daughter, it will bring you riches; full discharge of ourselves on God; large abandonment to His love, confidence in that love which will draw the poor out of his misery, and make no difficulty about losing every thing except grace and eternal bliss. The more you shall lose, the more God will gain in you. Remain absolutely exposed, forsaken, despoiled of all which you ever possessed. Prepare yourself to see new worlds, and to experience all diversities at the will of God. So shall thou be brought under the power of love. Be for ever His spoil and His captive, and praise His mercy."

It is hardly to be expected in our times, that that deep and universal love of the Cross, which this book implies, will be at once vouchsafed. We

⁴⁵ Thomas a Kempis.

have neither patterns to follow, nor have the very ideal of it before us, nor have been brought up in sympathy with the Saints who practised it, nor (except one, perhaps) have spiritual guides along it; and too often are clogged by the chain of past sins, which leaves us no strength to follow it. Yet if we cannot hope that such large grace should be vouchsafed to us, at least the commencement, as it is necessary to salvation, so it is open to us. And for this too, besides the general tenor of the volume, many very valuable suggestions and definite practical rules will be found up and down in it. *Est quadam prodire tenus, si non datur ultra*. If, in dependence upon God's grace, the foot be once set in the course of self-discipline, and any can, in simplicity and sincerity of heart, say, "Give what Thou commandest, and command what Thou wilt," who knows whither the heart which so yields itself to God's Hand, may not be carried?

But, in emerging from our state of sloth and self-indulgence, (if such as the Editor may in any degree judge,) humble beginnings are for the most part most fitted for us. A deep and searching examination into the whole past life, with prayer to God to unfold its recesses, is obviously indispensable to any course of amendment or self-discipline. There is indeed a more awful knowledge of self, which God has from time to time vouchsafed, when He has upon prayer revealed the soul to itself, as it is; but if this be asked for, there needs, even in purer souls, much grace, and strength, and sense of His mercy to endure the sight.⁴⁶ Yet, short of this, that insight which He will bestow upon a faithful, painful, search into memory, recalling periods of life, scenes, persons, local circumstances, conversations, every thing which aids its associations, and, above all, not shrinking from gazing on any the faintest trace of a forgotten sin, until what we wish had never been, or have "hid from our own memories," gradually takes a distinctive shape, and we see a self we would fain have turned from; such insights will both set a person upon a truer penitence, and give him the groundwork of real well-directed self-denial. Books developing the Ten Commandments, the seven deadly sins, the abuses of the senses, are of use in this search; but if these be not at hand, "the best

⁴⁶ "After the use of the *Exercitia Spiritualia* of St. Ignatius had been introduced into Portugal (among other countries) with a wonderful change of life, it was reported in Coimbra that those who made these holy retreats had strange visions, which led them to extraordinary fervour. One, employed by Card. Henri, Inquisitor-general, to ascertain the truth, applied, among others, to a good Religious, whose sincerity he knew, who told him in all simplicity that he had had a terrific vision during those exercises. On being pressed further what was this strange sight he had seen, he said, "I saw myself, which I never had before! O horrible monster! I assure you I never saw any thing more deformed, or which more terrified me." Nouet, l. c. It is related of two Saints, that, having prayed to God to show them themselves, they were obliged, when heard, to pray that the sight might be removed from them. And if so with them, how inexpressibly more with us!

book,” says a very eminent Confessor,⁴⁷ “is the book of conscience.” This discovery of self must be the ground of our continual repentance, the guide of our habitual self-examination, the basis of self-discipline, the substance of continual confession to God, if confession to man is not open to any. Continual confession will, by God’s grace, fix and deepen repentance: rules founded on that knowledge will help on the narrow road of self-discipline. Well is it, if the mind can bring itself to the solemn task of discharging the heavy load, of which it will too often become conscious, under the sacred seal of confession to God’s Priest; for the Absolution so solemnly bestowed has often been, among us, the source of new life. And little as we of the Clergy (as far as the Editor may speak of an Order in which he is of the last) may be fitted as yet for Confessors, and still less as spiritual guides,⁴⁸ to lead on others, yet we cannot think that He, Who is so putting into the hearts of the children of our Church the longing to disburthen their hearts, and for individual guidance, will fail either her or them. The very emergency calls on us to use fervent prayer, self-discipline, to deepen the solemn sense of our responsibility, and to supply by study⁴⁹ what we want in experience; so may we, even if little fit

⁴⁷ B. Leonard, *Traité de la Confession Générale*, in the *Manuel des Confesseurs*, § 424, p. 434.

⁴⁸ The Editor is glad to take this occasion of expressing his sense of the considerateness of the article on Confession in the *British Critic* (No. 66), and of the great value of the practical hints and temperate and thoughtful cautions, in Mr. Ward’s recent book, in the chapters vi. vii. “on our existing practical corruptions,” and “additional suggestions by way of remedy,” which are most seasonable to those who are in earnest about the amendment of the deep practical evils and sins of omission in our Church. Of course, in making such a statement, any one must include himself as the guiltiest. It does not become such an one as the Editor to speak at all, and he has hitherto avoided it, having no office in the Church which any way entitles him to do so. Perhaps what has been said about himself (not in Mr. W.’s book) may excuse his now saying, that, however there were in the *British Critic* statements which he could not go along with, or which at times (as he understood them) gave him pain, he could not but see that there was a moral depth about the writers of the articles which gave most offence, to which he had himself no claim; he could not but, on that ground, feel more sympathy with their writings generally, than with those of others, with whom negatively, as to one extensive practice in the Roman Church, he was more agreed; he could not but respect them deeply as much superior to himself; and he felt satisfied, that they were an important element in the present restoration of our Church, and an instrument in the Hands of its Lord. To Him, therefore, Who Alone can guide her amid her present perils, he cheerfully committed the result, and would rather, to any extent, have been misunderstood in the one way, than have been supposed to undervalue what, amid whatever differences, he highly estimated. Especially we seem very mainly indebted to those writers for a more humble tone as to our own Church, which must be the very condition and basis of all solid restoration. Only that our humility must ever be personal; for who knows how much of our present sad confusion may not be owing to his own sins! On the other hand, the vivid sensibility to any thing on the one side, while a document, full of miserable heresy, put out without any religious earnestness, and largely signed, elicits no protest, is no good token of our religious temper, or of our sense of the sacredness of God’s truth.

⁴⁹ The *Manuel des Confesseurs* is a most valuable digest of the judgments of some of the most experienced Confessors of the Church, and of the greatest use, whether in the receiving of Confessions, or the more ordinary spiritual ministrations. Mr. Newman’s *Sermons* furnish a most wonderful body of instruction to any who have to guide souls, as they would go very far to supply

for the office of leading on others, yet obtain grace to discern God's guiding of a soul, and ourselves follow it.

Nor is this any slight help. It is no little relief in perplexity, and no little safeguard against waywardness, to have our own judgments or half-judgments of what is best for us, confirmed by an authority from without. At the last, our All-merciful God never will be wanting to those who are His. Let any one really desire to do His Will, pray for guidance and a guide, and God will either provide him one, or will Himself guide him.

It is not, I hope, through sluggishness, or inexperience in the ways of God, that I have ventured to recommend to any gentle steps; if any are led by giant strides, happy are they. I am speaking only of the ordinary preparation of heart, until persons know themselves, and whereto God calls them. Let any one give himself up without reserve to God, and He will either send him crosses, or guide him directly or through others what to lay upon himself. "I have received," Surin writes to a Religious,⁵⁰ who became "one of the most perfect of her day," "some of your letters, wherein I see your condition of poverty and suffering. I see, my very dear sister, what it is to abandon one's-self to God. When a soul has had the courage to resign itself entirely into His Hands, He fails not to purify it by severities, and to conduct it by this way of entire privation to the great goods which He will give it, as a recompense for having abandoned to Him its interests and itself."

But I suppose it is the most ordinary way, that God leads people step by step. It may be because they have not great fervor, perhaps because previous unfaithfulness makes it unfitting to bestow more grace at once, and to preserve penitence and humility. "Perfect service," says Surin,⁵¹ "comes not all at once. It is attained little by little with patience, retaining constantly the good purpose to stretch towards God in the most perfect way, often renewing it on occasions in which it might be relaxed, permitting no disorder of the senses or the mind, holding up vigorously against that heaviness into which one falls unceasingly through the weight of nature, never discouraged by falls or unfaithfulnesses; lastly, ever keeping one's-self united to Jesus Christ by a lively faith, a tender love, a continual remembrance of His Life and Death, and endeavouring to taste His Sorrows." "The good I wish for her," he says to another,⁵² "and the grace which I ask without ceasing for her, is, that Jesus Christ in His

the absence of individual direction. Every body may find himself in them, and what he needs. But chiefly we must be impressed, that the first element in guiding others is self-discipline. Without earnest care for our own sanctification, we should most miserably be "blind leaders of the blind."

⁵⁰ Letter 98 to La Mère Angélique de St. François.

⁵¹ Letter 48 to the Marquise d'Ars.

⁵² Letter 23.

glory, His greatness, and His victory, will overthrow and destroy in her all which would resist His purposes, and cast into her soul such fire and flames, that her heart should become a furnace, wherein she should be blessedly consumed with the burning glow of the Seraphim. This is not so impossible as we often imagine it. Step by step, by a scrupulous faithfulness, and a constant attention in watching over our inward selves, we carry at last what seemed to us at first inaccessible, and accomplish things the very idea of which seemed to exhaust our whole strength.” But if one might select one maxim as of importance to beginners, it is, that there are no little things in religion. As “he who despises little things shall fall by little and little,” so, too, little steps in faithfulness carry a great way. Little self-indulgences, slight evil-speaking, petty self-praise, unceasing slight distractions, trivial self-reflection, are the countless cords of vanity which wind around the whole man, and bind him fast, so that he can no way move freely, or go straight to God. No one, until he have tried, will have any thought how much occupation the cutting off of these petty things will give him, or how it will open the heart to Divine grace. It is a first principle, that nothing is indifferent. Every thing, we know from Holy Scripture, ought to be done to “the glory of God;” and at every turn self thrusts itself in and takes the place of God. Every sense is an avenue of distraction, or an instrument of self-gratification. We are by nature scattered abroad amid the manifoldness of outward things; by Grace we must be gathered up and collected into God. Not a glance of the eye, not a resting of a thought, not an attitude of our bodily frame, but may have some connexion with the infirmities which keep the mind on the ground. Nor is there any sacrifice ever so slight, made out of love to God, which He does not almost instantly reward. “To one⁵³ who wishes to know what relates to his spiritual progress, I would say, ‘Enter into thy inner self; shut the doors of thy senses; flee all sorts of pleasures; do no useless action; receive no impression from any objects needlessly; empty thy heart continually of all things, and seek God unceasingly in the depth of thy soul. Thus thou wilt know what hinders thee from uniting thyself with the Sovereign Good; thou wilt discern the very smallest atoms; thou wilt see that the slightest pleasure retained habitually, even if not of set purpose but by connivance only, curiosity in little things, familiarity with outward persons, a glance of the eyes cast on some object needlessly, every superfluous care, are obstacles to union with God.’”

And if the Editor might allude to the higher uses of this book to such as may profit by it, to a degree he dare not hope himself, it may, he

⁵³ Letter 7

trusts, have come providentially into his hands, as a sympathizing voice speaking to those who are now lying under a degree of suspicion and obloquy, and (it is to be feared) often more angry and un-Christian tempers, of which he himself is not worthy to be the object. Such had been the special suffering of the Author, and there is hardly any point of self-abnegation on which he lays so much stress as the love of contempt and reproaches. It seems the crowning gift of the Cross, likening them most to their Lord, and tending to form in them “the same mind which was in CHRIST JESUS.” Such indeed is the one voice of the Saints. Since then our Lord has vouchsafed now these many years to turn that to chiefest good to our Church, from which “flesh and blood” and human calculation would most have shrunk; so now this Cross of shame and reproach, “the livery of CHRIST JESUS,” is, we may trust, a gracious vouchsafement and a special token of His Presence, to those to whom it is in any real measure granted; and since our individual character is of far more importance to the well-being of the Church than even our labours for her, they who, through the unhappy circumstances of our times, are hindered from serving her as they would, may, by the blessing of Almighty God, in the more secret life of self-abnegation to which they are called, yield her higher service, than they might perhaps, had their most devoted labours been accepted of their hands.

E. B. P.

Vigil of St. James, 1844.

“Grant, O merciful God, that as thine holy Apostle Saint James, leaving his father and all that he had, without delay was obedient unto the calling of thy Son Jesus Christ, and followed him; so we, forsaking all worldly and carnal affections, may be evermore ready to follow thy holy Commandments, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”