The Traditions

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The Society of St. Margaret

being

The Rule of Life

The Internal Rule

and

The Spirit of the Founder

Rule of Life for Sisters and Novices.

T.

ORIGINAL TIME TABLE.

On Week days.
6.0 a.mRise.
6.50 Prime and Litany of the
Holy Name.
7.0 Celebration.
8.0 Breakfast.
9.0
9.15 Conference.
10.0-12.0 Silence and work.
12.0-1.0 Sexts and Chapel.
1.0 Dinner; Conference im-
mediately after.
1.30-3.0 Recreation.
3.0 Nones.
3.0-5.0 Silence and work.
5.0-5.30
5.30 Tea.
6.0 Vespers.
6.30-7.0 Work, not in silence.
7.0-8.30 Silence and work.
8.30 Supper.

9.0 Compline.
9.30 Matins.
11.0 In bed.
On Sundays.
7.0 a.m Rise.
7.50 Prime.
8.0 Celebration.
9.45 Tierce.
10 Matins (Prayer Book).
10.30 Children's Celebration.
12.0 Sexts.
1.0 Dinner.
3.0 Nones.
5.0 Vespers.
5.30 Tea.
6.0 Evensong (Prayer Book).
8.0 Compline and Benediction.
9.0 Supper.
9.30
11.0 In bed.
On Festivals.
7.0 Rise.
7.50 Prime.
8.0 Celebration.
9.0 Breakfast.
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10.0	Tierce.	6
12.0	Sexts.	v
1.0	Dinner.	
3.0	Nones.	
5.30	. Tea.	
5.0	. Vespers.	
	. Compline and	Benediction.
9.0	=	
9.30	Matins.	
11.0		

The Mother has power to alter the Time Table as shall seem to her most expedient for the good of the Convent.

On Thursdays the Litany and Hymn of the Blessed Sacrament are sung at 8 p.m.

Prayer

- 1. Each Sister shall have at least one hour and a half daily for her own private prayers. This would not include the time required for saying Office when she is unavoidably absent from Choir.
- 2. Every Sister shall have her own day in each month as a day of Retreat, when she shall examine herself by the Rule of Life and the Internal Rule.

The Sisters shall attend a long retreat every year if possible.

- 3. The Sisters who are in Chapel shall say the Lord's Prayer at 9, 12 and 3 for the whole Sisterhood, and especially for its absent members, and those who are not in Chapel, or are from home, shall make a point of saying it, whatever be their occupations, at the same time and with the same intention.
- 4. They shall say also the appointed Collect of self-dedication and the Lord's Prayer on first rising from, and before going to bed, as follows:

Morning.

O Lord Jesus Christ, Whose I am and Whom only I desire to serve; I pray Thee look down in compassion upon me this day, and grant that I may neither do nor think nor say anything that may displease Thee. Help me to remember throughout this day that I am Thy poor bride and Thou my Blessed Bridegroom, and may I seek Thy glory and honour all the day long. I pray Thee grant Thy blessing to my dear Father, the Mother, the Sisters, and the children. And this I beg for Thine own dear sake. Who livest. Amen.

Our Father.

Evening.

O Lord Jesus Christ, Whose I am and Whom only I desire to serve; I pray Thee to look down in compassion upon me this night, and forgive all Thou hast seen amiss in me this day. Grant that if I live to another day I may love Thee more and serve Thee better than I have ever yet done. I pray Thee grant Thy blessing to my dear Father, the Mother, the Sisters, and the children. And this I beg for Thine own dear sake. Who livest. Amen.

Our Father.

Conduct to the Priest.

Due deference and obedience in spiritual matters are to be paid to the Priest by all members of the Society at all times.

Conduct to other Sisters.

- 1. It is the special duty of every Sister never to say anything unkind of, or derogatory to, the character of any other Sister in her absence, but most especially of the Mother or Assistant Superior.
- 2. If any Sister have cause of complaint against another, it shall be mentioned to the Mother or the Priest.

3. Never to mention the domestic occurrences of the Convent to strangers, still less one's own subjects of discontent, if such exist, either to strangers or to one another, except to those whose office it is to remedy them.

Travelling.

- 1. Every Sister shall hold herself in readiness to leave the Convent for nursing, or any other business, at an hour's notice, if required.
- 2. The keys of every Sister in charge of offices are to be taken to the Mother when she leaves the Convent.
- 3. In travelling by railway, except in cases of necessity, no Sister shall travel by first class.

Receiving or making Offerings.

- 1. No Sister may receive any present for herself, however small, without permission from the Mother (but they may receive without troubling the Mother, little offerings of goodwill from the poor, or presents of fruit, vegetables, flowers, or perishable things). Presents of value may not be received except on behalf of the Society.
- 2. A Sister when out may give, in an exceptional case, from the money put into her charge

by the Mother, to any poor person whom she thinks the Mother would approve. And she may give a small sum at the offertory in the like case.

Recreation.

Each Sister shall have an hour's recreation in the day, and if she cannot be spared from her work at the ordinary time, it shall be given her at another.

Conduct when isolated from the Houses of the Society.

Sisters cannot visit for social amusement in any place where they are working. When out walking they may recognise any one in passing, but may not stand talking. (Receiving hospitality when engaged in work for the Community, or talking to the poor or children of the schools in the street are not forbidden.)

Sisters cannot, without leave from the Mother, attend public meetings, except such as are connected with their own work (nursing, parochial, educational, &c.) or with the work of the Community.

Giving of Orders.

No order is to be given in any department verbally. Everything shall be ordered in writing.

Silence.

1. Silence shall always be observed throughout the Convent, except so far as absolute necessity may require.

From 10 a.m. to 12.

" 3 p.m. to 5 p.m.

7 p.m. till after breakfast the next morning, except during supper.

- 2. In the Mother House there shall be silence at all meals except supper. In Affiliated Houses in the Refectory during dinner on all Fridays, and on Wednesdays in addition in Advent and Lent, and every day in Holy Week.
- 3. All shall come into the refectory in silence from the ringing of the bell. Silence shall last till grace has been said before meals, and from the grace after meals till all have gone out.
 - 4. Silence shall also be observed as follows: Throughout the Convent on Ash Wednesday, and from Vespers on Wednesday in Holy Week till Anticipated Nones on Easter Eve.

In the Chapel cloister, on the stairs, landings, in the passages, and in the box room.

In the Dormitories (see "of the various Offices," 1 and 2).

Between the two Chapel bells.

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(There shall be no obligation of silence on Sundays and Holy Days from breakfast till supper time, nor on the eves of Sundays and Holy Days from the First Vespers till supper).

III.

Chapel.

- 1. No one is to enter the choir after the second bell is rung.
- 2. The Sisters should observe properly the accents of their words and the stops taking care not to say or sing the service indistinctly,
- 3. They shall kneel uniformly, and they must not prostrate themselves at Office, nor during the Canon, nor when the Priest is giving Absolution or Benediction. At other times they may use whatever position is most conducive to their devotion.
- 4. None shall leave the Chapel between Mass and breakfast, nor on Sunday between Vespers and tea, unless required to do so by their work.

The Common Room.

The senior Sister present shall at once put a stop to any discussions which are tending to disunion and want of charity, and shall see that the rules of silence are observed.

The Dormitories.

- 1. No Sister may remain in her dormitory during the day except in the hour of recreation, and then alone; and, when her work will admit of it, in the silence hours from 10 a.m. to 12 and from 3 to 5 p.m.
- 2. Every Novice shall make her own bed and dust her own room.
- 3. The lights shall be out in the dormitories by 11 p.m., except in cases of illness.
- 4. Sisters returning tired from nursing, or who are obliged temporarily to keep in their dormitories from illness, will be visited by the Infirmarian at any time, and by those Sisters who have permission from the Mother to sit with and cheer them, whenever their work will admit of it. But no Sister may go to the room of another without such particular or general permission.

Of the various Offices.

1. No one is to enter the sacrisity, infirmary, kitchen, wardrobe, linen rooms, laundry, waiting room, or sitting rooms, of Sisters in charge of schools or other offices, unless she has special business there.

- 2. The Sisters in charge of these Offices must not enter into conversation with those who come to them, apart from their special business, without permission; nor are those who go to these offices to talk unnecessarily to them.
- 3. It is the duty of the Sister in charge of any office to see that it is kept neat and clean.

Of Daily Conferences.

- 1. After Tierce, and again after dinner, all the Sisters at home shall go to the Common Room, and if any wish to speak to the Mother, she shall then express her wish, and the Mother shall appoint an interview in her private room, but the Sisters must not go to the Mother's room without such preliminary arrangement.
- 2. At Conference also the Sisters make all appointments and arrangements for the day.

A copy of the General and Internal Rules shall be kept by each Sister for her own use, but not shewn to visitors without permission.

Of the Internal Rule.

- 1. Everything for God alone, to His greater glory and more perfect love.
- 2. This to be the first resolution at waking in the morning, and the last at night.

At Holy Communion.

- 1. To communicate on the days appointed for her by the Priest. If any doubt as to fitness to communicate on any of these days, she is at liberty to abstain.
- 2. To fix on some especial grace to be asked for, and some especial offering to be made to God.
- 3. Those who do not receive, to follow the service generally, as in its whole structure setting forth the Lord's Passion.

Confession.

- 1. To confess at least fortnightly. In Advent and Lent, every week, if possible and advisable.
- 2. In case of any great fall, to ask to be allowed to confess at once.

- 3. As far as possible to prepare every evening for the next confession.
- 4. As a general rule, to confess as soon as possible before leaving home, and after returning.
- 5. If absent, to confess as usual to any priest approved by the Chaplain or the Mother.

On Physical Penance.

- 1. Not to use any physical penance unless directed by the priest; nor even then without permission from the Mother.
- 2. Except to them and the Mistress of the Novices, such penances are not to be spoken of.

Of Retreats.

- 1. To spend the day of Retreat as far as possible in the Chapel.
- 2. When recreation is taken, to spend it in silence.
- 3. To plan the day's meditation, self-examination, and subjects of reading and prayer the day before.
- 4. If possible, to communicate and make confession on the day of Retreat.

Employments.

- 1. As far as possible, never to refuse what is given.
- 2. Willingly and cheerfully either to be placed in any charge or displaced from it.
- 3. To receive it as coming from the hand of God.
 - 4. To do it as a direct service to Jesus Christ.
- 5. To hear the bell or the call that summons to any employment as the voice of God, and to obey it instantly.

Conduct to the other Sisters.

- 1. To bear all things and give them nothing to bear.
- 2. Either not to speak of them or to speak only good.
- 3. To bear their faults as we should wish they would bear ours.
- 4. Never to blame another unless it be the duty of the office so to do.
- 5. To seize every occasion of doing them service.

- 6. To pray for all the Sisters and Novices by name once a day.*
- 7. If there be any Sister for whom less regard is felt, to pray more especially for her.

In Recreation.

- 1. Self-respect and respect for others.
- 2. Therefore no loud talking or laughter.
- 3. But, nevertheless, cheerfulness and liveliness are great duties of every Sister.
- 4. Never, even in recreation to be ashamed of speaking of the Lord to whom they have given themselves.

Temptation.

- 1. Resistance without delay, but without anxiety.
 - 2. To turn at once and confidently to our Lord.
 - 3. Perfect contempt of the tempter.
 - 4. Distrust of ourselves.
 - 5. Union with our Lord in His temptation.
- *A Sister is only bound to pray for all the Sisters of her own House daily, *i.e.*, a Mother House Sister for the Mother House Sisters.

After a Fault.

- 1. Never to be discouraged, dismayed, or perplexed.
 - 2. Instant return to God.
- 3. Acknowledgment of the fault, open if against others, secret if concerning ourselves; sincere, calm, full of trust, even if it had occurred twenty times previously the same day.
- 4. This acknowledgment made, to believe the fault pardoned, and that the pardon will be sealed in the next Absolution.
- 5. At once to continue the work in hand, and to do it as perfectly as possible.
- 6. Then, not to think anxiously of the sin till next self-examination; nor, after that, till the next Confession.
- 7. To believe that a fault thus treated can never really injure.

In Nursing.

1. Not to be discouraged or distressed at any feeling of isolation, unhappiness, or shrinking from the work.

- 2. To make the patient and the work of nursing the subject of constant prayer.
- 3. As far as possible to say the Hours at the same time with the other Sisters.
- 4. When possible, which may not be often, to have spiritual communion at the same time that they are communicating.
- 5. Yet not to be distressed if a whole day should pass without time for an actual and set form of prayers.
- 6. While shrinking from no fatigue or danger which is necessary, to incur none through carelessness or wilfulness unnecessarily.
- 7. To remember that there is far greater likelihood of temptation in intercourse with casual visitors than in attendance on those to whom the Sister is sent.
- 8. To pray that by no foolish word or action she may injure the Sisterhood or dishonour God.

Of the Offices.

1. To carry a book of Hours when travelling, and to say the Offices as nearly as possible at the times appointed. If more convenient they may be said all together. The Little Offices of the Passion or the Holy Ghost may be used.

- 2. When necessarily absent from Choir the Office should be said at some other time.
- 3. To fix on a special intention before each Office.
- 4. To join in the Office as a direct act of worship to God, requiring the best efforts of mind and body.
- 5. Therefore no lounging or idle postures, nor carelessness in making the responses or singing.

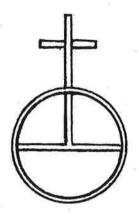
In Sickness.

- 1. Rules 3, 4, and 5 for the Sisters in nursing will apply.
- 2. While using such dispensations from the Rule as may be granted, to accept the absence of greater indulgences as part of the life of poverty that has been embraced.
- 3. Discretion and prudence are essential till restored to health, but care should be taken not to exceed what is really necessary.
- 4. Avoid giving unnecessary trouble to those in attendance, and receive all care and kindness with thankfulness and cheerfulness.

Of Reading Holy Scripture.

Some portion of the Bible to be read and meditated upon daily.

The Spirit of the Founder



"Behold, I build an House to the Name of the Lord my God, to dedicate it to Him, and to burn before Him sweet incense, and for the continual shewbread, and for the burnt offerings morning and evening."

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Dicit Fundator:

The Holy Name.

DEDICATION TO THE HOLY NAME.

1856.

-That Name which we now, again and again, take on our lips every morning, that Name, my dear Sisters, to which I wish you all to feel as it were dedicated.

OF OUR FESTIVALS.

1865.

It is a remarkable point in our community, my Sisters, that we should have our two chief festivals so close together: the one, of the Bride of the Lord; the other, of the Bridegroom of the Virgins: how the one shews the love to the Name above all names; the other, the help which standeth in the Name of the Lord: how the Pearl in one is the sought, in the other, the Seeker.

MONTHLY COMMEMORATION OF THE HOLY NAME. 1858.

It is a singular pleasure to me whenever the monthly day of our Commemoration of that most dear and blessed Name comes round — a day I hope we shall not forget, even when we are dispersed for a season in the service of God.

LITANY OF THE HOLY NAME.

1857.

"That the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." What life? And I do not know that there can be a better answer than that of your Litany. Remember that, common through the whole Western Church as it has since become, the Litany was originally written for a Sisterhood: and you can find traces of its first employment all the way through. That is the life, then, which you are to manifest: that is the life, which, because He led, you ought to lead: that is the life which, because He led, you can lead. Those suffrages are, as it were, the stars which should light up the darkness of this your mortal life. They tell you what He did: they tell you whence to derive each of His victories for yourself. Your strength in overcoming your own temptations comes from Him that was most mighty: your strength in conquering external

difficulties, from Him that was most powerful: so, of all a Sister's graces, obedience, purity, gentleness, love, patience, peace, all here are traced to that one, to that most dear source. Oh, if we could live that Litany as easily as we can say it! Oh, if as for us it opens every fresh day, so it would abide and continue with us during its course! I know nothing of the kind so exquisitely beautiful, worthy of the honey-mouthed Doctor who composed it; and who, on fire as his words always are with love, yet never rises to such a height of fervour as when he is preaching on the Name of Jesus. Oh, how many virgin souls have said that Litany, for whom Litanies are now no more! It was, as it were, the watchword of the Japanese Martyrs, in that greatest and fiercest of all persecutions: they repeated it at the stake: recited it at the frozen pond, when, in the bitterness of the winter night, dying by inches for the sake of Christ. I remember once hearing it myself said by Sister under circumstances, if not to compare with such a persecution, at all events touching enough. It was in the north of Spain; where the name of Sister is held in nearly as much contempt and abhorence as it is round us: and where all the property belonging to the Convents has been confiscated, and the nuns themselves are all but left to starve. On a summer

evening, late in the twilight, five or six Sisters were kneeling in the nave of a Parish Church, a dark, ancient gloomy Church, — there, because their own Chapel had been destroyed, and there, by themselves, without any Priest, with no knowledge of music and with harsh untrained voices, but with a mournful earnestness that went to the heart, singing this very Litany: their support in the sad days of their trouble and rebuke, as no doubt it had been in the time of their riches and honour.

Hows and Name.

NAME: - SISTERS OF CHARITY.

You know that however much in common conversation, you are called Sisters of Mercy, your proper title is Sisters of Charity. Sisters of Mercy are they who visit the sick, and these have only one shock, though a goodly one: * Sisters of Compassion are those who teach the young, and they have only one shock, though a goodly one also: Sisters of Fidelity are they who receive penitents, and they have only one shock: though doubtless a shock acceptable to Him Who said, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." But Sisters of Charity have all these and many other occupations, all these and many more shocks: and God grant, dearest Sisters, that each of you may have a glorious sheaf to present to the Lord in the Day of Sheaves.

VOW OF POVERTY.

1858.

Of the three vows that every Sister implicitly or explicitly takes – Poverty, Chastity, and

*He is preaching on the binding of sheaves.

Obedience – the two last are perfectly easy to understand. They bind you to a Sister's life, not certainly here, but certainly somewhere, as long as you live. They bind you to admit no other love but His, Who loved you and gave Himself for you: they bind you to obey, cheerfully and uncomplainingly, the rule of that Sisterhood in which you are. That is, these promises are capable of a logical definition: they always mean the same thing, and always must be kept in the same way.

But it is not so with the promise of Poverty, and that for two reasons. Firstly, because the meaning of the promise varies so excessively in various Orders, and next, because all have not the same means of making it. Some, in giving that promise, in fact only promise to remain what they were; others, to surrender all that they possess.

Now the most perfect vow of Poverty ever taken was among the early Franciscans. Here, every Brother and Sister, before entering the Order, gave away every single thing they possessed; entered it without a farthing, the Order itself possessing not a farthing. Hence, daily begging for daily bread, the use of money not allowed, every thing given in kind, no man having anything that he could call his own.

But this state of things lasted but a very few years. Then various explanations, as they were called (they were really explaining away) of S. Francis's rule were made: the Houses were allowed to beg and to acquire estates: the questors, those who went out seeking alms, to receive money: - and their sale of false relics, no doubt infinitely aided the suppression of the Monasteries. But the rule of Poverty as usually understood is this: let us speak of it as applying to ourselves, and then we shall comprehend it more clearly.

Let us imagine a Sister wishing to join us with a certain income belonging unrestrictedly to herself: when she makes the vow of Poverty, what does she promise, and what does she not promise?

She promises, in the first place, to give up what is called the usufruct of it: that is, neither directly nor indirectly to lay out a farthing of it on herself. She promises to keep nothing in hand, to have, as the usual expression goes, no pocket money, to buy nothing for herself with her own money, either necessary or unnecessary. She does not promise – God forbid – to devote all her income to this House. When I say, God forbid, I mean what I say. There have been some griping, grasping Religious Houses which have been

satisfied with nothing less, but they have always been regarded the plague spots of Religious Communities.

She does not promise necessarily to lay out all her money in charity: for there may be relations who have a right to part of it.

Nay, she does not promise to lay out all her money at all: it may lawfully, in some cases, accumulate for the benefit of younger relations. Remember, I am not speaking to you out of my own head. All these things have been settled long before; learned men, especially Belgian Divines, have written folio on folio regarding them: discussing the minutest particulars, and laying down what are open questions and what are not. What then is a Sister who has this £100 a year bound to do when she joins us?

In the first place she is bound to tell the Superior what part of it she may lawfully dispose of to this Sisterhood. And here relations have the first claim: old charities the second; but the Sisterhood ought to take precedence of all new charities. This seems plain enough to you: a learned Jesuit treated each clause of it in a folio volume, with innumerable examples and discussions. This is the general rule: but there are exceptions. Now first take the case of one who is

able, without any doubt or difficulty, to pay the yearly sum required, when possible, by the House which she joins. The rest of her money she may give, if she so pleases, entirely to her relations, whether they are in particular need of it or not. I should not recommend any one of you thus to bestow it on relations who were not in need: but still you might do it without sin.

Much more might you bestow the remainder of your income on any charity extraneous to the Sisterhood.

But you cannot bestow it — this is a ruled point — on any especial work in the Sisterhood without leave. Thus, you could not say: "Here is so much, which I intend to give to such a Mission of my Sisters: or to such a poor person whom such a Sister is nursing." You could not say, "I am nursing in such a house, I am visiting in such a village; I will devote so much money, over and above that which I give to the Sisterhood, to them." You must give it to the Sisterhood with the request that, if it can so be done, it may be bestowed on the object you have mentioned.

But now take the case where a Sister's income is not sufficient to give both the full amount of the sum expected by the House, and to give to relations that which is required to keep them in the necessaries of life. Then, as I said, the relations have the first claim. Only this must be understood, that they really are necessaries, and not luxuries; and this will vary in different cases. I will give you an example in the words of one of those learned and holy writers who have gone to the bottom of such things. And, to shew you how they did endeavour to exhaust these subjects, I may tell you that it is the 1,407th question in the 7th book of a learned writer, Vasquez, on Poverty.

"Caia and Titia are two Sisters, each with an income of £100, in the same House. The House has a dowry of £50 a year": (that is, the sum which it expects to receive with each Sister is of that amount). "Caia has an aged mother who has seen far better days, and who cannot be supported in what, from her former habits, would be to her simple comfort, under £80 a year. Caia is bound, under pain of mortal sin, to give that £80 to her mother, and to reserve but £20 to the Convent. Titia has an uncle, who has been brought up to lead a hard life, but who is now in distress: such, however, has his life been, that an income of £50 a year from Titia would make him sufficiently comfortable. Titia is bound only to give him £50, and will sin if she infringes on the dowry of the House by giving him more." This is a very clear example: there is one thing more. I said that old

charities also took precedence of the claims of the House. But this is to be understood only of personal charities, not of money bestowed upon a Society; for, of all Societies, that to which you belong has the greatest claim. Thus any poor person, any sick person, to whom a Sister has been in the habit of allowing a certain sum, must continue to receive that sum, even though it infringes on the dowry of S. Margaret's: but a subscription to any Society, however good, must in the like case be dropped.

Have I made this question a little clearer, my Sisters? Then to put the matter particularly. A Sister coming to us, and able to pay the dowry of this House, is at perfect liberty to dispose of the rest of her money as she pleases, provided it be not on herself. She may give it to whom she will, without mentioning the subject even in Confession.

A Sister coming to us, and not able to pay any, or all, of the dowry of this House, is then bound to mention in Confession why not, and to tell the Priest how she disposes of her income.

In all cases, you are never to give anything away as from yourselves in the work of the Sisterhood, or in anything connected with it. All must come through that. In all cases, you cannot buy anything with your own money, even

of the articles most necessary, such as clothing: you must ask for all. Does this seem hard? I know it does: but then comes in the text, "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He were rich, yet for our sakes He became poor;" so poor that to pay the tribute money He had to work a miracle; so poor that He had not where to lay His head; so poor that He was beholden to a manger for His cradle, and to the charity of a rich man for His grave.

Now one thing more – and, dearest Sisters, what I am going to say must not hurt the feelings of any of you; because you have never been told of it before. The vow of Poverty, taken in its strictness, forbids any use of personal ornaments. You would all see the impropriety of wearing earrings or bracelets; the same thing also applies to rings. It is possible to give a dispensation for this, and it is often asked for and bestowed: but, without that, undoubtedly a ring, except the one ring, is contrary to your profession. "What?" says S. Thomas de Villâ Nova, "shall the bride of Christ dishonour His ring by wearing other oranments with it? Shall the hand, accounted worthy to testify of His love, speak of any earthy love, bear witness to any earthly remembrance?"

And it is the same thing with respect even to any religious emblem, to any cross, save the one cross worn openly. I should rejoice that you all wore round your neck, only within your dress, the crucifix; but not so as to be seen, not so as to form part of your external habit.

One thing more. The question has been raised before now, "If I promise poverty, how can I allow myself in pictures in elegantly bound books, in images, in any ornament of that kind which is after all an ornament, and which is expensive?" The answer has been given over and over again: "Whatever is not forbidden by your rule, is allowed to you. If anything of the kind is given you, you may receive it as from God, and enjoy it. It is intended to, and it may, help you in His Service."*

One order there was, the Cistercian, which refused all such things. Their churches had no towers, their windows no stained glass, their walls no frescoes; there was even a sermon by S. Bernard against the use of wood-carving. This strictness was allowed by the Church, but can hardly be said to have been approved.

^{*}But he also made this proviso, that any clinging to any possession, however trifling, became matter for confession.

Another question that has been asked this. Supposing a Sister, vowed to poverty, but supplied for a particular purpose with a certain sum of money, meets a beggar in the street who asks alms, and whom she considers to need them, may she give them or not? Some writers have tried to lay down an absolute rule that she may give up to a certain sum, but not beyond. The best rule, is, that she may give what she thinks that her Superior, if in her place, would think it right to give. And this applies also to another case which may occur. You are in church at the Offertory; are you to give or not? And the best rule is, Yes, for the sake of good example. Give a small sum as from your community, and not from yourself.*

Dearest Sisters, this sort of sermon is rather like setting husks instead of wheat before you. It seemed to me almost necessary now. But this thing remember; how incomparably worthless all these exterior matters are to that one: whether that which they signify, that of which they are the shadows, that to which they are outposts, is

*This direction, as will be seen by the date, was to prevent giving scandal, which might then, when Sisterhoods were so new, arise from their not sharing in the general practice. It would now, of course, only be expedient or right in similar circumstances.

as it should be. Oh, dearest Sisters, it is not external poverty, it is not external obedience, it is not your profession of chastity, which will make you Brides of Christ! It is love first, love midst, love last; love, that makes you resign all possessions and all appearance of them; love, that makes you delight in submitting your own will to that of others; love, that cannot endure to think of any love but His own. Try, struggle, pray after that. With that, let what may happen, let your falls be or have been what they may, let your weakness be never so great, you must be safe. Without that, let your Hours be never so religiously said, let your vows be never so tenaciously kept, let your self-denial and selfdenial and self-discipline be never so strict, it is only as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.

If you have promised chastity and obedience to our Lord, you have promised Him poverty also. It may be less by word than in fact, but you are acting out the promise, and, thank God, you are doing it cheerfully. You have most of you tried for yourselves what poverty is in its own actual form; you are living here as those who do not seek this world's riches; it is my comfort that, did circumstances ever make it necessary, you would live yet more self-denyingly, more sparingly, more frugally. And, for the love of Christ, you are voluntarily rejecting the best of earthly riches, namely, earthly love.

THE SPIRIT OF THE VOWS.

1859.

But then, O my Sisters, look that your foundation be well laid! You who profess obedience must not have any little favourite pieces of selfindulgence which are not brought under His obedience! You must not despise this or that rule because it is so little or so useless. Shew me a Sister perfectly obedient, and I will shew you one who is on the high road to be a Saint. You profess poverty: and that means that home you have none, relations you have none, friends you have none, to compare with this place. Not poverty of money only; that in comparison is easy; but that you strip yourselves of everything to possess Christ the more, to be the more possessed by Him. And chastity involves not the mere outside grace, but the perfect love bestowed on Him. To concentrate all that love which, had you been happy wives and happy mothers, would have been drawn out from you, on Him, and on Him alone. Not only to love Him more than they, who have the strongest ties of earthly love, love those things to which those ties bind them.

RENEWAL OF VOWS.

1862..

I think, my Sisters, that some among you are a little perplexing yourselves about the renewal of your vows; therefore, as I shall not have another opportunity,, I will say a few words on the subject to-night.

Although, as you most likely know, it is the custom in almost all orders, the thing vowed, the words used, the form employed, differ most widely.

In some cases, those who are bound by the Three Vows for life, renew them for life. In some, only for the next year: and that is the more usual, and, to my mind, by far the better way.

If you ask, "What is the use of promising to do for a season what I have already promised to do for ever?" you ask it, dearest Sisters, from not rightly distinguishing the two kinds of renewal.

The Sister, whose temporary vow of chastity is expiring, and who retakes it, is certainly (though not with perfect exactness) said to renew it; but a Sister who has already taken it for life, and who renews it, simply does this: she promises, with God's help, to be more faithful to it, more exact in its observance, to become more that which it would make her, than ever she has been before. There is no difficulty about this, my Sisters, is there? And there is this advantage in the renewal for the year over that for life, that each renewal, having respect to a fresh portion

of time, is more like turning over a new leaf. Say you renewed your vows, in that sense, for life, on Wednesday. If it pleases God to spare you to another year, you would in all likelihood say: "Ah! now, I made this very same promise before, and how I have fallen short of my hope and resolution! I am now about to make it again, with that other renewal still on me, and why should I do better?" But in the yearly renewal, you might say, if it were so, "Well, I have fallen far short this year of what I had hoped. All *that* is now passed. By God's goodness a new year is before me."

With respect to the Novices: those whose vow will not expire this year, renew it in the same sense: those whose vow will expire in the course of the year, do that, but they do more also; they lengthen out the time for which they have already pledged themselves, and they do it now anticipatively.

It shews how God has implanted in our very nature that feeling of keeping especial seasons, which His Church has almost made a part of her own self, that we should be so much impressed by the ending of what we call another year. Of course we know that every day a year ends, not more really to-night than any other through which we have been living or shall live.

There is no reason why, the Holy Ghost helping us, no reason, as yet, why during the next year we should not be entirely free from mortal sin (to say the very least), and, the Holy Ghost helping us still more, why we should not keep clear even of venial sins. Of the last, which of us will be able to say so much this day week? And if not, why not?

Well now, see what it is you are about to do to-night. Not to enter on anything new, not to try some fresh adventure, but solely and simply to say over again what you have said before. Is that so much worth while? Yes, it is indeed. Therefore you have this present service. Some of you it will bind to a little bit further of the road, to a little deeper entrance into the battle; most of you it only rebinds to what, could you loose yourselves from, I know you would not be torn away. But now then, let each of you think what she is meaning, what she is doing, when once more she says what she has already promised and vowed before.

Confession and Self-Kxamination

CONFESSION BEFORE LEAVING HOME.

"Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps." And you are told, dear Sisters, to do so by your very rule; you are told to confess as near as you can to the time of your going out to a distance. Oh! how earnestly I wish that that at least might always be done! Going into the misery, going into the desolation, going sometimes into the danger of such a ministration, should you not, as far as in you lies, put on the whole armour of God?

SELF-EXAMINATION.

1861.

When Satan would hinder you from making a careful confession, it is "Sit down quickly and write. Get it over as quickly as you can. See how much else you have to do. Besides, you need not put anything down to-day; you will have plenty of time before you confess . . ."

Sit down quickly! No, never! My Sisters, you will try your best: you will, I know, work your truest: no time can be so well spent: no labour so well laid out.

Now, my Sisters, we have most of us known that feeling of wishing to do some particular work, to fight some particular battle for God, from the possibility of which He cuts us off. Any one of you laid aside by physical weakness, for example, from active work, must find the disappointment very hard to bear. And, believe me, I can well understand it. When I was at College, my one great desire was for parish work. I did not know then, as I do now, that few people could be more unfit for it; but I feel certain that. had I know that I was only to be a parish Priest for six weeks in my whole life, I should not have wished for Holy Orders at all. And after having a very neglected living given me, even before I was a Priest at all, and just beginning to work in it, I shall never forget (I scarcely ever am at Three Bridges, which is in that parish, without remembering) the bitterness of the disappointment, when it was said to me, "Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live."

I do not, as you all know, often speak to you about myself; and I only do so now that you may see how thoroughly I can sympathize with every one under the like circumstances, and disposed to say, as I did then, "What have I done? what

hast Thou found in Thy servant, so long as I have been with Thee unto this day, that I may not go fight against the enemies of my Lord the King?"

What have I done? Ah! my Sisters, let our Confessions tell. "You," our Lord might well say to all of us, "you have fought so ill My battle in your own heart: what right have you to expect permission to fight it before the world?" What have I done? "Why, this and that have I done. I was warned against such a besetting sin: and I took no more pains against it than I had before, and perhaps not so much. I was told, and I promised, to be more earnest in and to give more time to my prayers; and I did nothing less. I was told to keep a stricter watch over my temper, and I have sadly fallen again and again."

What have I done, that I may not go fight against the enemies of my Lord the King?

We are verily guilty concerning this matter.

THE ANNUAL ADVENT CONFESSION.*

1861.

I hope that each of you in those [preparatory] hours will go over the past year with all the power and earnestness of her memory, that she

*The Confession made in the Annual Retreat has usually superseded this.

may see what advance on the whole she has made. First, that question of questions, whether you can say, without a shadow of doubt, that He, Whom you profess to love best, is dearer to you now that He was last Advent. If that is so, all must be right; and every Priest, who has the charge of Sisters, ought to oblige them at this season to say distinctly, "I know it is so," or "I fear it is not so."

Then again, about your earnestness in prayer, and the pleasure you take in it. Whether it is less often a weariness to you than it was; whether less often the time you have for it seems tedious and wearisome. Above all, whether in that most blessed of all Sacraments, you love more dearly, and hope more ardently, and believe more fervently.

She among you who has tried the hardest, how much more might she have done? How very much more self-denying she might have been! How much more thorough and earnest in her work! How much more kind and gentle to her Sisters! How much better a guard she might have set over her words! Well, and now to try all over again. Tell me, each of you, where you see that in these and the like matters you have, in the last year, failed the most deplorably; and then with a

good courage take up the Cross again, and resolve to bear it better, and more closely to follow its Lord.

SACRILEGIOUS CONFESSIONS.

And this I say not so much about you, as about the confirmed girls. Whoever of you prepare these for their Communions, this above all things teach them, the great danger of a sacrilegious Confession: the utter uselessness as well as wickedness of each succeeding one, while that first sin remains unwiped out. And this more especially, that if any one of them leaves us in that state, in all human probability she will never come out of it. Because, even granted that she is pressed about Confession, after she has gone out into the world, the sin will grow more and more terrible to look at; and if she kept it back from her first Priest, small chance is there that she will have courage to make it known to a second. And there is need indeed to pray about those girls, as there is about them and about you all, "Deliver me from lying lips, O Lord."

PROGRESS.

I suppose there are very few persons (I will answer for one, the only one I have a right to answer for) who have not often in Confession said, "I don't see that I have made one step in advance since my last Confession." That may be so; that often is so; and then it only means that you have been going back, for standing still is impossible. But that you think so is no proof that it is so, is it? It nowhere is promised to you that you shall make a great advance, shall win great battles in a certain and definite time; but it is promised that, if you try, you shall go on from strength to strength, however slowly.

Suppose any one of you came to me in Confession and said, "When I received Absolution last time I resolved that I would serve God to the best of my ability, and I have done so." What should I, what should any Priest think of her? Either that she miserably deceived herself, or that her aim was set miserably low. But mind, that is a very, very different thing from what any one of you might sometimes, might often do; - the coming to say, "By the grace of God there is nothing, though I have examined myself as closely as I could every night, that I have to confess to you." I suppose that every Priest has sometimes (perhaps not often – that God only knows) had such a Confession (if one may call it so). But, my own dear Sisters, why should it not be so with any of you?

Prayer.

DIFFERENT DUTIES AND OFFICES OF DIFFERENT SISTERHOODS.

1864.

I have been led to think, as how should I not have been? of the various duties and offices of different Sisterhoods, by the visit of a Sister who does not belong to us. Now, it is well to go to the root of the matter. You know very well the two great divisions into which our dear Lord's servants were cast - the Secular and the Religious life. So, in the Religious Life, there are different stages, from those who only give themselves to prayer, to those whose chief work and aim is work. See how it is abroad. The Carmelites were an entirely ascetic order. They had fallen off in their zeal. They were neither one thing not yet another. They were cloistered: therefore they could not act as Sisters of Charity; they were corrupt; therefore they could not act as Sisters who lived for prayer. It pleased God to raise up S. Theresa. A certain portion, perhaps the third, of the Order, followed her reform, that is, returned to the original rule of the Carmelites. These are the most cloistered Order. They neither teach

nor visit, nor help sinners in any outward way. They only pray, and by their prayers, doubtless they win great battles: and in and by itself they led the higher life.

Then at the very other end of the scale come the Béguines, who are entirely given to the work of Sisters of Mercy, who do not even take vows of perpetual chastity: and who have little, very little time for prayer. "All these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit."

And so of you, my Sisters: of all the Sisterhoods in the English Church, you have the duty which gives you hardest work and least prayer. I was looking at your time-table to-day. More than once, as you know, I have wished that you should have more time for your own private prayers. Now I am satisfied. You have all that you can have. Only, *only* those hours that you have to yourselves, how dear, how earnest they ought to be!

It has pleased God to give to me you, a Sisterhood banded together for work, sometimes for terrible work, in the first place; for prayer in the second. Your motto is, He that works well, prays well. Others have to do with those who have prayer in the first place, work in the second. Their motto is, He that prays well, works well.

Both most true. As to me, I know how little I am worthy, how little I have the power to help any one. But what little power I have is on the side on which we are engaged. The other work is the highest in itself; I think this is the highest, considering the present state of things. Only I say to you, the less time you have for prayer the more intensely earnest you ought to be in it; the more glad of every opportunity for it. I should say to cloistered Sisters (I once abroad did say so, and it was very dearly taken), the less opportunity you have of serving Christ's poor, the more heartily you ought to serve them in the few moments which you have.

ON TIMES FOR PRIVATE PRAYER.

1864.

And now, my Sisters, we all know too sadly how that time of prayer has been shortened from what it at first was, till now it is less than that of many a Christian engaged in a secular life. I said I would speak to you of this when I had learnt from each of you what time that really was. I have learnt it now, and all we can say is, that the time past of our life may suffice us so to have failed.

And this we must lay down as a rule first: that two hours a day is the very least that a Sister ought to have for her own private prayers. Look now in the morning. I take it for granted that every one of you, the very first thing after getting out of bed, and before you begin to dress, say those collects that we fixed years ago; - and the same thing at night, after undressing, and before you get into bed. Then Celebration and Litany take from 7 to 8. Of that time I reckon that you have about 35 minutes for your own prayers. In the hour from 12 to 1 you have about 40. Now after Matins, the more I see and hear of you all, the more I see that it is desirable to make that very short. Say then that you then have a quarter of an hour, and no more. That makes an hour and an half. Now, after thinking a great deal over the matter, it seems to me that the best way of supplying the wanting half-hour will be to have it given separately on your time-tables for a daily visit to the Blessed Sacrament. It is well you should sometimes be alone when you pray, and then, my Sisters, is the time you shall take for self-examination. If we are able to do this, we may hope for God's blessing even more abundantly; and if you steadily keep to the two daily hours, and the four hours once a fortnight,* I shall be pretty tolerably satisfied.

^{*}The then form of periodical Retreat.

THE BEGUINES' RULE FOR PRIVATE PRAYER.

1864.

I want to see you all, without exception, eager after more time for prayer. Of course an active Sisterhood cannot have the time which the most relaxed Sisterhood among cloistered ones would think necessary. Yet when one finds among Béguines — so to speak, the most worldly Order, the constant saying, "Four hours of private prayer is the breath of the Order," you know, each of you, how far you could say that, or rather how it condemns us.

THE PRAYERS FOR ABSENT SISTERS.

1857.

Now, then, as you know, three times a day you are bound to say the Lord's Prayer, in the way of intercession for your absent Sisters at the hour when the Holy Ghost, Who is the Inspirer and Author of all prayer, first came down upon His Church: at the hour when the most wonderful intercession ever breathed was offered, "Father, forgive them": and at the hour of that most precious Death, which was in itself the prevailing Intercession for the whole world.

Dearest Sisters, this I look to you for, this I have a right to look to you for; this they who are separated from us have a claim for, at your hands, that these hours are never forgotten. They, then, are employed in the same way; praying for each other, and praying for you; and oh that again and again it may be said, "So the prayers of them both came up before the Majesty of God."

And in what words better than in His own Prayer, the very first word of which announces, as it were, that it is to be offered for others as well as for ourselves, "Our Father"; that Prayer which so naturally and wonderfully adapts itself to every need that ever was or ever can be? It is but a short task that you are set to do, dear Sisters; see that it be an earnest one.

DUTY TO THE PRIEST.

1857.

Standing in the relation we do to each other, oh how much you fail in your duty to yourselves, as well as to me, if you do not constantly and earnestly pray for me! How can you expect that God will enable me to help you, unless, to the very utmost of your ability, you help me? Never a fitter time to ask that or anything else than when you kneel in the presence of the Lamb, slain from the foundation of the world. These mornings, so spent,* are indeed much to be *During Exposition.

INTERCESSORY PRAYER, A SOLEMN DUTY.

1864.

And, my Sisters – now I am speaking to those who have not directly to do with the teaching and bringing up of our children – I should like to know (or rather, I should like to you to ask yourselves) how much you pray for them.

"But it is not so much our business." Yes, but it is exactly as much. That is one dear use of a House like this. There is no such thing – to use a technical term – as a Limited Company here. Your are each answerable, not only for your own sins and shortcomings, but to a certain extent for those of all your Sisters. Had you, each of you, prayed more for them, they would have fallen less Had they, each of them, prayed more for you, you would have fallen less. Every one of you is answerable to a certain extent (mind, I include myself most fully) when any of our children go wrong, just as we all should be here at home, if one of our Sisters, in nursing at a distance from us, broke down through her own fault. It was not one whom we should desire to imitate, was it. who asked that question, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

PRAYER FOR THOSE IN SIN.

1863.

There is one thing, my Sisters, for remissness in which I think we are all to blame (at least, I know that I am): our praying for those who never pray for themselves. We have the Memorial of penitent sinners in our Day Hours. Yes; but what for impenitent sinners? And this I wish to do: the Sarum books have an office for such – those whom we know to be going on in the world without any one fear - those, among whom none of you have to work, at least, not usually, but whom other Sisterhoods have to take in hand as their principal, in some cases as their one, labour. As I said, that Celebration I should like that we should throw our whole hearts into, once a week, during this Lent. For see again; how all the parables of our Lord wherein, as in the marvellous 13th Chapter of S. Matthew, the difficulty, as well as the happiness, of the better choice is alluded to, teach us the misery that, from the outpouring of the grace of the Holy Ghost, must be the portion of those who will not receive it.

Retreats.

DAYS OF RETREAT.

Lent, 1857.

Now of all the means of sanctification, my dear Sisters, which you have, there are three which seem to me by far the greatest, three for which you will some day have to render the most terrible account. Two you would name at once: Holy Communion, you would say, and Confession; and so it is. The third you might not perhaps name so decidedly; but I should at once say, your weekly day of retirement.* There must be a kind of impression made, if we really are in earnest, by hour after houf of prayer, or self-examination, or meditation, which cannot, in the same degree, be made by half-an-hour, let it be spent as earnestly as you will. I think that your days spent here, or in your own rooms, are days in which pre-eminently, you ought to be sanctifying yourselves. Then you surely must feel, either that your present life must be a most miserable sham

*During that Lent, each Sister was in the practice of taking an afternoon or half a day, as the case might be, for retreat, weekly, on the day of her confession.

and unreality, or a most blessed earnest. In those afternoons you have time for God, such as you could not have in the world. Here at those seasons you have nothing to do, but as heartily, as earnestly, as lovingly, as entirely, to give yourselves to your Lord, as your failty and infirmity will allow you; and the knowledge that that season of intercourse with God must be followed by the pain and humiliation of confession to man, — dearest Sisters, that must make self-examination more real; a better touchstone of that better inner life which needs such cherishing and such fostering.

OUR FIRST RETREAT.

Lent, 1863.

Be very sure of this. You cannot go through it, and remain what you were before. If you are not earnestly trying, and, in the grace of the Holy Ghost, resolved, to be better, to be more real, far more in earnest, far more painstaking, far more forbearing with each other: then you will certainly come out of it sadly the worse, for such a means of grace so neglected and squandered.

Try to realize to yourselves that it is not only a spiritual exercise, but a very great intellectual strain on the mind. Even in that point of view only you need to ask for strength. You, perhaps, more than many other Sisters, not (for there is no love, nor humility either, in making you out worse than you are) that I believe you to be less really trying to serve God than the average of Sisterhoods, but because the particular nature of your work gives you less time for continual prayer than is the case in many Religious Houses, and it will therefore come as a more unaccustomed effort.

And you know that, in order to be able to exert all your mental powers, you must not attempt to fast. That is not what you are then called to do; and if you did it, so far from assisting in subduing the flesh to the spirit, it would be more likely to influence you the other way. Now I dwell on this all the more before the time comes, because you cannot then be reminded of what your duty is:

— it must be all mapped out and, by God's grace, resolved upon, before. For the same reason you must not diminish your usual portion of sleep: or do anything which can weary or exhaust you:

— and the hour of recreation must be complete freedom from work or continued thought . . .

Whatever work it (your ordinary work) may be, you must put it altogether out of your mind. If you are to take it with you into Retreat, you had better stay out with it from Retreat. I need hardly, my Sisters, remind you, that there must be absolute, unbroken, silence for the whole time, day and night, meal-time and recreation.

If for any reason whatever, — if because you feel that on any particular subject I cannot clearly understand you — or if I do fail to meet your needs — then, this once, I earnestly ask it of you, go to our Priest who is to give you the Retreat.

OF RETREATS.

1863.

In purging out the old leaven, how does a Retreat especially help?

In the first place, when, as here, you have so often, as one of the Saints says, to leave Christ for Christ's work, it is well that for two or three days He and His work should be the same. That you should be cut off from physical toils, from worldly cares; from rising early, and so late taking rest, and eating the bread of carefulness - yes, and also from the not knowing what entire gap in the means of grace you now have, the very next hour may occasion. "Now, by God's mercy, these three days are mine; mine to devote to Him, not now in His poor servants, not now in His children, but in *Himself* entirely; mine, not now for the outside work, but for the inner communion; not to labour with Martha, but to sit at those pierced Feet, like Mary." It is the rest, the

true Sabbath. And that, the great blessing. Then, the next thing; troubles and temptations and difficulties, which in the ordinary course of a hardworking life you have not had time (I mean *consecutive* time) to conquer or to solve, here you have.

Any Retreat of any Sisterhood must be a most anxious time for the Priest, and, in their degree, for all its members. It is a kind of adding up their accounts into one sum: striking out all that which, though good in itself, was not done well because it was done from lower motives; adding in that which, though it might seem a failure, so far as external success goes, in the act of doing was no failure, but a dear success in the sight of God.

But in this Retreat we have something else to take into consideration: its being the first. I warn you beforehand that you will find it hard, very hard work. The continual meditation, the constant stretch of attention would be hard anyhow: and I tell you this further. Of course Satan will, if he possibly can, try to lead your thoughts away, when you would have them your dear Lord's; to coax them, if it so may be; if not, to force them.

Do I not know how, when a woman gives herself up wholly to God's service, she becomes the especial mark of the Devil, if not to overcome, to teaze? And I believe this, that the freer from temptation before, the more Satan rejoices in *any* aiming it against her now.

It is marvellous, the analogy between temporal and spiritual warfare. You know, or may have heard, of the trial now going on at Chatham, of different kinds of guns. With reference to those, I heard some short time since this sentence: "And you know, of course, the whiter the mark, the more likely to be aimed at." And at once — at that very once — I thought of my Sisters. Surely the whiter and purer the soul, the more, and that especially in any more special season of prayer, the more likely to be aimed at. And than came the answer, "But not the easier" — I give you the exact words — "But not the easier to be smashed, though." "Oh, of course not."

The preparation, first and last, must come from Him. You each of you know, my Sisters, how far you are resolving to gain it from Him, by — to use that dear expression — the suppliant omnipotency of prayer. It is not too much to say, that as you employ this Retreat, so your whole year will be affected. It is not too much to say, that these preparatory days will have a great effect on how that Retreat is spent. You have two more. Now, what of this? This morning in that dear Litany — now ask yourselves, each of you, what

I am going to ask you all — did any one of you keep that retreat in mind during the whole of those suffrages? Was there any one who did not in the whole course of the Litany, think once of it? And so I might go through the whole of the day; or rather, though I cannot, yet you may and you must. Now, let it have been to-day as it may have been, there are yet two days more.

This I wish you could see (only the different times and places where such Retreats have been held involve so many different languages, so many different books): how the Priests of every different age and in every different nation, endeavoured to prepare their children for that, through which you are now about to pass. Listen to what one of the greatest medaeval teachers of the German Church says, John Tauler: "These wait all upon Thee, and Thou givest them their meat in due season.' These now before Thee, these now who seek to be nearest to Thee, these who hope for that nearness to Thee among the hundred and forty and four thousand, these wait all (all, because, as not one grace in any one heart can be without Thee, so neither can any one of that whole band be knit together with the rest, unless Thy Holy Spirit of union binds them together), that Thou mayest give them their meat in due season. And when is that due season? When, but now, O God of all plenteousness, Who will open the doors of heaven, Who will cause men to eat angels' food, for He sends them meat enough; Who will open the stony rock that the waters may gush forth? This, O Lord, is Thy due season, because it is our true need. Here is the barren and dry land, here the waste howling wilderness; here the hard and hopeless rock. For this we ask; for the Corn, the strength of the mighty; for the Wine that blossometh into virgins; for the streams of water that shall follow us as they did Israel of old, till, passing over Jordan, we enter the land, no longer of corn and of running waters, but of milk and honey."

AFTER A RETREAT.

1864.

I suppose no one can tell without the experience, the very peculiar feeling a Priest has in seeing his work in other hands, and how it brings before him the time when so it will be, not for a few days, but, so far as earthly work is concerned, for ever. Never think, my own dear Sisters, that because I so earnestly wished you (and, if God spares us all, shall again) to belong for the time, to the Priest who so dearly and kindly came among us, that I could (I need not be afraid or ashamed to say, even here, what great Saints have said), that I could therefore,

even had I wished, forget the end that, so far as regards us, must some day be. I could not forget that day when the last words I shall ever say to all or to each of you must be said. Poor words I know they are here, poor words I know they are there, except the last words, which are said, not by me, but by our dear Lord; and God grant, and this I do say most earnestly, that whoever may come after me may, I will not say love you more, but a thousand thousand times better lead you on to Him, to Whom to be led (ah me! not necessarily to Whom to lead) is life everlasting.

Lent.

BEGINNING LENT.

1862.

And so, my Sisters, we have entered on the great Fast. I hope, all with the same earnestness; whether with exactly the same kind of feelings or not, matters comparatively little. Some more eagerly, perhaps, as a soldier might feel at the commencement of a battle; others more reluctantly, as a labourer might do at the beginning of a long and hard day's work. That is a question, as much as anything, of temperament. The question of grace is, that the soldier should persevere in the battle to the end, that the labourer should go on with his task till the sun sets.

"Ye approach this day to battle against your enemies." True, so we do every day and all day long, but at this time in a more especial manner; and moreover the aggression is now on our part, rather than on theirs. They attack us over and over again; now then, in God's name, let us gird ourselves up to attack them. And first, make up our minds which of them all it is against whom you will bend your chief strength this Lent.

Whatever temptation has given you the greatest trouble, now, by the help of the Holy Ghost, is your time for revenge.

Even that very feeling which I have no doubt we have all had in past Lents, "I wish it were over," has some great thing in it. And what is that? Why surely, it proves that we are more or less determined to do our duty in it while it lasts; otherwise what trouble or pain would it give us? I have sometimes been almost surprised at the very strong expressions which mediaeval writers use regarding this weariness; and it shows how honestly they spoke out, and how hard they tried against all self-deception. Therefore we need never trouble ourselves if such thoughts press into our minds. Only let us resolve, the more we find the season a cross to be taken up, the more faithfully and ungrudgingly to take it up, even as He Who has now gone into the wilderness to be with the wild beasts, and to Whom the Angels will not minister for six long weeks yet.

BEHOLD, WE GO UP TO JERUSALEM.

Lent, 1862.

But for you, your dress, your cross, your ring, your very house all say for you, "Behold, we go up." Is it a greater privilege or a greater danger, that you may so dishonour? Who can tell? But

this I know, between the hopes of the one; - "I can do so much, if by the grace of the Holy Ghost, I choose; I may cause such terrible scandal, if by the malice of Satan or my own carnal will and frailty, I fail." - between these two things, to what an amount of effort, to what a degree of holiness, ought not every Sister to be led? Every time that in a strange place a head is turned to look at you as you pass by, it ought to be a warning to you of the fearful power such a profession as yours gives to Satan, if he once tempts any of you to a serious fall. And that, one is almost certain, never can happen, unless you have been allowing yourselves in little falls; unless you have gone a little to this side and a little to that side, contentedly leaving the bloodstained track of the Feet which went up to Calvary at a greater or less distance.

Now that we may go up to Jerusalem during this Great Fast, what more shall we do here that at customary times, if God will help us? First, there will be your weekly confessions; and though it would be a grief, it would be a matter of shame, if out of your number of Sisters* there were not some each week that had not even a venial sin to confess; still the fact of coming helps,

*The number, of professed and novices, was 14, of whom two or three were for the time settled at Soho.

and there is the time that you have to yourselves on the day of your confession. Remember that you are to come and ask for this time, not waiting to have it offered you.

Then, I thought of exposing the Blessed Sacrament every Thursday evening as on Sunday.* If it seems that you are to short of hands for this, with all you have to do, remember that she whose turn it is to confess that day, might easily have part of her time then.† And as you will thus have more time for prayer, on that day you shall, if you like it, after Sexts have a Sermon.

And then, on the Wednesday and Friday, after saying the Gradual or Penitential Psalms after Nones, I think you might take some twenty minutes or half an hour in the Oratory, and about that I will speak to each of you.

And so I will on another subject, on which, however, I should like to say a few words now. I have often had occasion to remind you that it is the duty of those who need all their physical strength for God, not to do more than, in the way of fasting, they feel they are fully equal to bear. But now at the entrance of Lent, I think I ought to

*At that time, Exposition lasted only till noon on Sundays and Saints' Days.

†This refers to the Retreat on days of Confession.

remind you that as much as you can do, you are bound to do. In some of you it would be wrong perhaps to do anything in the way of abstaining from food. But then I cannot see how they are to hold themselves excused from doing anything in any way. I know the peculiar difficulties here: most of you not very strong, and yet liable to have your strength called for: - all, whether stronger or not, absolutely forbidden to fast while you are out; and I might add others. But the duty, under whatever form, remains the same, and the weakest can do this; can determine not to allow herself any unnecessary self-indulgence in food. Here and now, at all events, I can only lay the matter on each of your consciences: you are not to do one inch beyond what you ought to do; but as much as you can do, I say it to you at the last opportunity I shall have before we begin Lent, your own hearts tell you, you are bound to do. I speak the more strongly now, because I think I can call you all to witness, that I have never urged you when unwilling, and have sometimes held you back, when willing.

LENT DUTIES.

"We which live are alway delivered unto death." See, dearest Sisters, how that which is your life, your supernatural life, which nothing

but Almightiness could give you, your inner life, shut out and hidden from the eye of the world, your – yes, I may say it with all boldness – your Bridal life, which unites you to the heavenly Bridegroom, is based on death - has its very source and spring in the crucifixion, the slow and painful destruction of every thought, desire, imagination, wish, that is not His! See how every day you ought to be mortifying that original and worse nature: how you ought, and that with no sparing hand, to be not only keeping it under, but adding another blow, inflicting another wound, which will ultimately lead to the destruction of the whole body of sin! I have before now told you, how great a help many of those who have run in the same race with yourselves, but whose eyes now see the King in His beauty, have found this - at least as a practice in Lent, if not during their whole course: between every two Hours – I mean the Church's Hours – to exercise some real and palpable act of self-denial: and to see how seldom they can fail during the whole of the season. I know from experience, dearest Sisters, if this be done for the love, and in the remembrance of the God Whom we follow, what a help this is: I know also, if carried out in earnest, how difficult it is. Not even on Sisters would I press it more strongly than to

say that I should be very glad if all of you would, for this Lent, try it: and I think I might promise you a plentiful Easter harvest if you do. Only remember three things. If you do it, you should do it thoroughly: what you do in the way of selfdenial need indeed be no great thing; but still it ought to be something about which there is no manner of doubt that it is painful. Then it ought to be done most ungrudgingly and most cheerfully: there must never be such a thought as, "How tiresome this is!" - or, "This habit is always getting in the way!" And last, but not least, whatever it is, it should be something that concerns yourself alone, not a self-denial which must necessarily involve another – as the giving up a pleasure for yourself which would also be a pleasure for one of your Sisters.

But remember: if this giving up things lawful even for you and innocent in themselves, oh how much more the mortification of every thought or wish that borders on being unlawful! oh how much more the doing bravely and at once every duty, however painful; the taking up instantly, and without wishing to procrastinate, every Cross ordained for you!

Always delivered unto death! but why? For Jesus' sake. Ah! this it is which turns the bitter cup into honey! To suffer for Him, and with Him!

Ought we not to long for such suffering, to prize it, to hug it, when it comes? Think of those dear Hands pierced through with those great and cruel nails; think of the agony of the crushed nerves and divided muscles; and shall we not at once crucify our actions to the same Cross? However pleasant, shall they not be at once put an end to, if they are not His? However painful, shall they not at once be set about, if they are His?

Think of those Feet, that the happy penitent had been privileged, but six days before, to kiss, those Feet that had walked the water, those Feet that even then were trampling down the enemies of our salvation, the tyrants of the human race - and of the exquisite agony they endured, when the iron broke through them and riveted them to the Cross. What, shall not our goings out and comings in be delivered to the same Crucifixion? What! shall we not hasten cheerfully, eagerly, joyfully, wherever He would have us, though it were into the valley of the Shadow of Death itself, though it were to any suffering, any distress? And then think of the loving Heart, pierced by the spear, and resolve that the chief and queen of all our powers, namely, our affections, shall not fix on aught but Him and that which is His! "We which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake.

"Thus it is" - so I would say for myself; so I know I may say for you - "thus it is, O Lord Jesus, that we would desire to be crucified with Thee! Thus it is that these Thy dear servants desire to die daily, yea, rather to live for ever! Give them grace to take up the Cross, not as the Cyrenian, but with all their heart, and soul, and strength! Give them grace to unite themselves with all the fervour of their deep love to Thee, their crucified King. Give them grace to cry out with Thy blessed Apostle, 'O deam Cross, which dost receive thy beauty from the dying embers of my Lord, so long desired, so ardently loved, so unremittingly sought, take me, take me to thyself: that He by thee may receive me, Who by thee redeemed me.' They desire not to be careful, O Lord Jesus - I desire not to be careful for them - what is to be their next cross: only, if it be heavier, endue them with more strength: if the cup be more bitter, mingle in it more of the honeycomb of Thy love. Thou Thyself didst triumph on the Cross; make the Cross the place of their victory. Thou on the Cross didst betroth to Thee Thy Bride; let the Cross, in like manner, be the place of their betrothal to Thee Whom their soul loveth."

THE SCOURGE OF SMALL CORDS *Quinquagesima*, 1865.

I give you all credit for this: that this Lent you mean to try your strength in self-denial. Well, first of all remember that obedience is the highest form of self-denial - is, indeed, only another form of that charity of which that most lovely Epistle of this week tells us. But then, remember, and I ought not to mind speaking to you about what the world would call such very little things - (it was a scourge of small cords) - you may make up your minds to do this or that in the way of physical self-denial: well and good. But, let a Sister (or any one else, but a Sister more) fast to any extent she is allowed or able, it is no true fast if she allows herself to be discontented if the food she takes is not, in itself, or is not cooked, to her taste.

Ah! my own Sisters, what I think I am most afraid for many of you is this; that you should think that work, hard work, in your Sister's life, could excuse you from what ought to be the little duties (and yet I am only speaking with the world, when I call them little) of any Christian life.

But now look at something else. These little troubles, worries, jealousies, do they come by chance? Does not He Who loves you better than YOU LOVE YOURSELVES allow them to be your trial? "When He had made a scourge of small cords." And then — every such worry, every such teazing little matter, ought to be a little (but in the end not a little) step towards that better Home. Ah me! if Satan, instead of packing up the lost Amens in the Sisterhood, had got together the lost tempers about trifles, it must have been a most wonderful Religious House, if he had not found his gain!

Rules.

THE THREE GREATEST RULES.

1857.

If I had to sum up the three greatest and most necessary rules for your education in His service, they would not be far to seek. The first would be, to think nothing little in it; the second, to strive against all discouragement as the most dangerous of all temptations; the third, never to be weary of beginning over again. The misery of allowing ourselves to be disheartened we all know; but we scarcely think enough about its sin. Dearest Sisters, we have not time to be discouraged. Satan will not cease his attacks while we are mourning over a fall. God's work will not stand still for our leisure while we are trying to animate ourselves to undertake it. This is one of the many blessings of that Blessed Sacrament of Penitence: that it enables us so much more quickly to rise from a fall. We yield to temptation we know it; we grieve for it: we go through the sad details of our fall in that night's selfexamination, - and what then? Are we always to be going over the same ground again and again, always harping on the same circumstances? Surely not; lay them by till your next confession, and do not let them hinder you or distress you in the meanwhile. We lay our burden aside for a while; not that we would forget it — not that we think lightly of it — but that we may the more effectually carry it to the foot of the Cross, and lay it in the Lord's tomb. Oh, dear Sisters, believe me, that there is nothing which, from the very beginning of a Sister's life, you have need to cultivate, more than that most blessed grace of hope!

And the third thing I mentioned springs directly from that: the constantly beginning again, as if we had never done anything before. Each recurring duty, as if we had never hitherto attempted it at all. Above all, each new day, commence it as if it were a new life. This is one of the chief rules, that all the masters of spiritual life have given us; and, depend upon it, none can be more helpful.

OBSERVANCE OF MINOR RULES.

1861.

I know, dear Sisters, how little, how trifling, how teazing any set of rules will often seem. But try to put it to your own consciences whether, when you were best keeping those, you were not also, in all respects, leading the highest life. I

never like to say much to you about these things, lest you should think I was making more of them than they are worth, lest it should seem like the tithing of mint and anise and cummin. But yet I know that the longer God gives you grace to lead this life, the more you will see that this kind of obedience ought to be pressed upon you; may be little enough in itself, but is not little in its effects. And I am sure that while you knowingly and wilfully allow yourselves to be in the habit of neglecting any one rule, be it the veriest trifle imaginable, you cannot be leading that life to which your very vocation calls you; you cannot be the true and dear Sisters that I pray I may always see you.

Now, to speak of one or two of our alterations. You will see, in the first place, that it does not say, Rise at 6. there is no reason why you should be compelled to do so. You know what you have to do: — to rise time enough to say those two or three collects before you begin to dress, and to be in the Oratory by 7. There, besides the Litany, you have a measured quarter of an hour before Celebration, and, after it, till 8.

Now I was talking of your rules, and of the necessity of keeping them, not for their own worth, but because, without the habit of perpetual obedience, your Christian lives cannot be sustained. And you should be glad that it is so. Because here you have a real tangible proof, each of you, whether you are trying more and more to serve God. Did you break this rule by omission, and that by commission, and then did your conscience accuse you of it, only to be stifled? or did another remind you of it, only to irritate you? - or have you spoken angrily of impatiently, or unnecessarily repeated what could make mischief? Well then, "Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous." In those cases you are not knowing that Name, which to know is life eternal. It is a perpetual criterion, a touchstone which you cannot put away from you. When a Religious House has stood for many years, and seen several generations of Sisters, its rules may, and sometimes do, become so completely acted on as matters of course, that they form no great proof of the love that each Sister bears to her Lord. But it must be years before that will be the case with any of you. And certainly, in your place, I should exult that I have a thing by which I could continually satisfy myself that I was trying to follow the Man of Sorrows, the obedient Child of Nazareth. And the more contrary to flesh and blood, the more one would feel disposed to rejoice at a proof that one was not deceiving one's self; not following cunningly devised fables.

RULES FOR THE STUDY OF THE BIBLE.

1858.

- Of Holy Scripture. And I am not sorry to be called to speak to you of that. Thus much I know I may say of all of us: that we wish to understand it. Here in this Oratory we study it with the help of Antiphons and Versicles and Responses; and for my part there is seldom a day, I think I may say never a day, in which some fresh light is not thrown upon it — in which I do not catch the meaning of some passage as I never caught it before.

Now the first thing, my Sisters, I want to ask you, is a question for each of your own consciences; how much you study Holy Scripture for yourselves. Take one ordinary day — at least such a day as ought to be. Now how much do you hear of it in the Oratory, exclusive of the Psalms, the Chapter we read in Class, and the fourteen or

fifteen verses which we read at Matins? Now with respect to the latter, I hope that you endeavour, with all your power, to interpret it by the light of the Vesicle and Response that succeed. That is a marvellous key to unlock the hidden meaning. These Advent Antiphons, how they explain Isaiah! how what would seem at first bare and lifeless and destitute of any especial signification, by their means *blossoms* into meaning!

Nevertheless, this ought not to be enough for you. You know that every day you ought to set apart some further time for the study of the Scriptures. There is a mistake into which we are not at all unlikely to fall, that, because we hear so much that is foolish, so much that is almost profane, talked by Protestants, about reading the Bible, therefore we should lay no stress on reading it at all. Now you, my Sisters, are doubly called on to do so; both for your own profit, and because you may any day be called to teach others. Try now to make Holy Scripture more and more your study; for surely, to us, who so believe in its fulness of meaning, so it ought to be.

And let us see how we may especially study it. I have already spoken to you more than once of meditation upon it: trying to set the miracle, or parable, or history, or whatever else it may be, before you; to bring it up vividly before your own minds; to see it as it really was; to see this person, or house, or mountain, in some defined local position with respect to that — to the right or to the left, behind or before. It is surprising how much this will help you to realize that history in a higher way; to throw yourself into prayer as regards it; to make yourself, so to speak, a very part of it. But having spoken of that means before, I will not go over it again.

Another excellent way of studying Holy Scripture, is, by the Church's favourite method of bracketing together a sentence from the Old and sentence from the New; as you so often find done for you in your Versicles and Responses; but nowhere more strikingly than in those for Corpus Christi.

But this above all, in the histories of the Old Testament, it is that I want you to see, not Gideon, or Samson, or Barak, or Jephthah, or David, but our Lord. Depend upon it, we cannot do this too much. Those Saints of primitive and mediaeval ages, who might truly say, "Lord, what love have I unto Thy law: all the day long is my study in it," — have left us indeed an example of this. All the stations of the children of

Israel in the wilderness, all the genealogies of our Lord, both according to St. Matthew and St. Luke, give to them richness of spiritual meaning.

Now, we know, sects of all possible kinds claim to teach Holy Scripture, and accuse us of being ignorant of it. I should rejoice, I should be filled with thankfulness, if my Sisters prove themselves rooted and grounded in it. If we talk of it less than others, let us know it more; let it be our honeycomb, our living water, our hidden gem: and whether for yourselves, my Sisters, or for the poor little children whom you may have to teach, this, in Scripture, must be your resolution: "I determined to know nothing save Christ, and Him crucified."

OF CONFIRMED SISTERS.

1858.

- The other change consists simply in the addition of one or two rules which we had always acted upon, but which were not written down; so that for the future nothing might be merely implied; that whatever was the rule of a Sister, might be set down there; - and whatever was not set down there, however, good, however much to be desired, however praiseworthy, might not be a rule binding under pain of sin.

Now these have reference to the Confirmed Sisters. What a Confirmed Sister, or Choir Sister, or Consecrated Sister, or by whatever other name you like to call her, is, we have not to settle for ourselves. It implies two things: (1) One who has taken a vow of perpetual chastity, or the very term *confirmed* is a folly: for how, or to what is she confirmed who might go back to the world, who might even marry at the end of a given time? And (2) One who has been chosen by others as their Sister; for no one can make herself a Sister in the spiritual, any more than in the natural order of things.

But then, at the beginning, we were in the position of all new orders. It was necessary to assume that some were Confirmed Sisters, just as it always has been necessary in the history of the Church, that those who have commenced a religious order were obliged to have a certain number of companions constituted of themselves, to whom they might graft on others. S. Francis began with one; S. Dominic with three; Geert Groot with two; S. Ignatius with twelve. Following their example, we assumed that the Mother, and the two Sisters who joined us first, should, after they had taken the necessary vow, be Confirmed Sisters. To these we added a fourth; and those were the nucleus of what I hope

is to be the great body: the acorn of a flourishing oak. In all that have come or may come after them, there is no reason why we should not observe our rule.

All this, I say, was not in our power to do or not to do: the way was chalked out for us, we had only to walk in it. One thing, however, remained to be settled; and that was the time which it should be necessary for one to remain in the state of a Sister Probationer before she should, all circumstances concurring with it, be a Confirmed Sister. I thought, for one, that we had all agreed from the very beginning on this point, that it was to be two years. That seems to be the most ordinary time, not only in English Sisterhoods, but also abroad.

ELECTION OF SUPERIOR.

1861.

This remember, first, how much you all have to pray that we may so live in a continual state of prayer with respect to this, that when we come to say the *Veni Creator* on the day of election, it may not be a solitary intention, but the coping stone of a whole building of intercession. Next, that you who will actually have to decide the post by your votes are bound to give them without any one single thought but this: Who is the best

fitted for the place? If you must grieve, offend, hurt (or if you think so) well; so it must be; it is sacrilege to give such a vote influenced by any such reason. Next, that whether present or absent, a Sister is bound to acquiesce in the choice of the majority, fall it on whom it may; on herself, or whom else. I have shewn more than one of you the collection of all the Statutes of Religious Houses from the time of S. Benedict till the last century; not one but has that rule above others: to obey a fairly made election as the voice of God Himself.

1864.

As you will answer it hereafter, you are bound, without any motive but one, to give that vote, as for the next three years you desire to see the work to which you have devoted yourself prosper, or not prosper. You have no more right to treat this as a thing that you may do or leave undone, as you fancy, than you would have, being sent out to nurse, to do your best, or to do nothing, as might happen to fall in with your own wish . . .

As God has so marvellously helped us hitherto, as He has increased our numbers in a proportion which I never should have dared to look for, as (because I hate false modesty) He has enabled you to do much that helps forward the general cause of Religious Houses; above all, as you will have to answer hereafter for every Absolution you have received in that poor little room, much more, for every time you have been counted worthy of the Body that was broken, and the Blood that was shed for you on Calvary; I ask you — but that is nothing — He expects you to give your decision next Thursday, for His Love, and for His Love only.

A WINDING-UP AFTER SINKING DOWN.

1859.

This Sisterhood, like all others, at some times needs winding-up. I have spoken to you, laying open all my heart. I have blamed you without any kind of concealment. And now I entreat you to believe this. You have the power at this moment of doing more for God, if you choose to do it, than any Sisterhood in the English Church. I care not a straw what is said abroad of them or of you. I would entreat each of you to be firm in this respect: never when you are out from us, to listen to anything which strangers may say either for or against this Sisterhood. S. Margaret's is, or should be, a part of yourselves: and as you would consider it an insult if one, without authority, praised or blamed you to your face, so with regard to that. But the thing remains certain. If God gives you grace now to make an

effort, and begin again: to struggle at keeping rules, to yearn and pant after holiness, to let not a word enter your conversation, which Saints would not speak: dearest Sisters, a glorious future, glorious, I mean, in the sight of God, is before you. Think, my own Sisters, of the times in which we live. Think how He needs – how the God of all strength needs your help: what privileges He has given you: what power He has put into our hands: how He has given us money, success, favour: and shall we not give Him all our hearts? Will you not each say for herself: "These rules of silence and the like, if in themselves worth nothing, are yet, because they are rules, the very heart's blood of my spiritual life. Whether I talk or do not talk after Matins is in itself a trifle: being a rule, it is, whether I will dishonour my Lord, or keep His laws: whether I will stand to my vow, or break it."

CHAPTER.

And that brings me to another point: the Chapter. Never, since this Sisterhood began, have I been asked anything that gave me such comfort, that seemed to strengthen my hands so much, that so much proved their earnestness who set it forward as when it was proposed that those who thus agreed to it should daily, in the presence of each other, acknowledge their faults

against their common rule. I have no words to express my joy, nor my thankfulness that God should have put this into their hearts.

RULES FOR SISTERS VISITING THEIR OWN HOMES.

Two of you, at least, are about for a time, to be, comparatively speaking, in the world, and to rest. Do not think that I would, even if I could, alter your rule in this respect. Only remember what S. Bernard says: "Never yet went Sister to her natural home, but she returned worse from it to her spiritual." At all events that shews the danger: and forewarned ought to be forearmed. What I am always so anxious for it, that you should make very few rules indeed about your life at home - and, having made them, keep them through fire and water. These things, for example, nothing but illness ought to prevent you from: your first morning and last evening prayers: a certain time for prayer, including our Litany, in the forenoon of every day; the intercessory Lord's Prayer for the Hours; and not less than twenty minutes for prayer and selfexamination at night. Add to that, Spiritual Communion on Sundays and Festivals. That, I do say, is the least; but I also say, and not less, that I would not have you absolutely resolve on more. So even this may be made a time of love, may it not? For remember that never can the text be better fulfilled — "They took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus; — than in such a season. "When she spent a few days with us, it seemed as if a breeze from the eternal summer has passed over us." That was said of one whom I once knew, of your own sex and situation, nearly as young as the youngest of you, who now is before the throne of God and the Lamb!

Sin, Temptation, and Matchfulness.

LISTLESSNESS = SLOTH.

There is every reason why we should try more against that easy, half way, of doing things; whatsoever our hands find to do, doing it with as little trouble as we can, getting through it, and that all. For remember, all this comes under the head of that mortal sin of listlessness, which stands on a level with the other six. You think it hard thus to be kept at the utmost stretch. You think it vexatious that what was a sufficient victory in times past is scarcely, is perhaps not, a victory now. Is that hard? that? What are you reaching to? What are you stretching out after? Is it the highest place, the brightest crown, the dearest acceptation? Be it so; but then: is it not to be the hardest, and lowest, and meanest, and (speaking after the manner of men) worst of all your work here?

JEALOUSY

1858

What is it, then, that has given me more uneasiness this year than anything else? What is it that has sometimes grieved me to the heart when I have been talking with you? What is it

that mixes itself up like poison with your best and holiest actions, comes with you into this very Oratory, aye, kneels with you in the very presence of your Lord and God? . . . It is no new temptation. Every Sisterhood, from the beginning of the monastic system, has been tempted by it — some to a far greater extent than you. It has spotted the white linen of the righteousness of Saints: it has turned the gold to silver, it has mixed the wine with water: and that you should escape it altogether, is more than I had any right to expect. Well, the name of this evil — you could tell it me as well as I you — is jealousy.

of you solemnly vowed, and that at one of the most solemn moments of your lives, to obseve two Rules among others. The one: Never to speak evil of any Sister. The other: Never to mention your own subjects of complaint but in the right quarter, and, more especially, not out of the House. Now, look back and see — or rather let your Chapter tell — have you observed that rule of not speaking evil of a Sister? Every time that you have not, you proved false to your vow, untrue to your pledge, aye, and faithless to Him to Whom you made that pledge, to Whom you are betrethed. Think as little of the vow as you choose — how does He regard such conduct? Is

it not in the light of perjury? Does that seem a harsh word? Well, then, will you characterize it by a lighter? A vow is tantamount to an oath: and every unkind word spoken against any Sister most certainly, most clearly, infringes that vow. You vowed to keep the Rules of this House: that is one of them; you knew it to be one; you frequently heard it read; it was frequently brought before you in Chapter. And if any of you have complained of a Sister out of the House, the sin is sadder, the guilt is heavier yet.

Now, if you would but all resolve, with God's help, to begin this Advent with one resolution: never, under any possible circumstances, to speak any evil — even though it might be true — of a Sister to any one, in the House or out of it! True: this would not destroy the root of the evil; but to destroy the fruit is not only much in itself, but is the highway to destroy the stock ... With any sin which partly shows itself in words, resolve that the words shall not be spoken, and the sin itself will soon be crushed.

... The remedy, first and last ... is divine ... Dear Sisters, how can you allow lips, thus hallowed, ever to utter one syllable of unkindness? lips that have not merely, like that blessed penitent, kissed His Feet, but received Himself?

With the impress of that touch on them, shall they ever again speak one word contrary to His Love? He that was oppressed and afflicted, yet He opened not His Mouth, touches yours: — the Immaculate Paschal Lamb, that as a sheep before His shearers, was dumb: He, Whom you desire to kiss you with the kisses of His lips: — and then what must those lips be that are responsive to such a kiss?

PETTY OFFENCES.

1865.

I wish you would all remember that, if it must needs be that such offences come, as it takes two persons to make a quarrel, so it takes two persons to make an offence. If a man carelessly leaves something in my way that might throw me down, and I avoid it, it can scarcely, in common speech, be called a stumbling-block . . . The word or action is not to be excused. Granted. But then: is the taking offence to be excused either? This is the true thing: this is the loving thing: (of course, if one, the other; for real truth and real love must go together.) . . . Instead of brooding over it, instead of thinking, "Well, if she can do that, she can't be very much in earnest": rather think thus, "I neither remember it at all, much more will I remember that, at such a time she did so and so, which perhaps I could not have done myself: that, at such a time, she bore so and so, which I should not have found it easy to bear."

To this Immaculate Lamb, you are bound by the golden tie of bridal love. But what if you indulge in any tempers which are not His, which clearly and manifestly break what He would have? I think you none of you lay to heart what such a sin is. Becuase it is so great, therefore no doubt Satan employs it as his favourite system of attack against Religious Houses. But the moment any one of you shall find herself saying, "I know my temper is ruffled, and I do not mean at present to conquer it: the offence will go off in time, and then, well and good: but I will not attempt to triumph over it now" - do you know how fearful a condition that is for you? What! take such feelings into the Presence of the Blessed Sacrament! What! the Cross on, and a temper which abhors and mocks the Cross within the breast!

PERMITTED SIN.

No amount of external work, no plenitude of outward success, can make up for the least allowed failure in your own holiness: for the least pet sin permitted to lurk in your fancy.

It has been said (and we remember the wonderful analogy between the work of the God of Nature and those of the God of Grace) that every bodily sickness has its counterpart in spiritual disease. Even heathen philosophers saw this truth. One of the greatest of the Latin poets tells us that avarice and the dropsy are same sickness: one, of the body; one, of the soul. Therefore, in a Sisterhood that has much to do with nursing, surely it is more inexcusable than it would be in others, not to attend to sicknesses of the soul. You talk and hear of fevers of all kinds, and all the long list of diseases, contagious and not contagious, to which Adam's sin has subjected us. God forbid you should fear any of them. But, even more, God forbid that you should not fear those diseases of the soul, of which they are but the (comparatively harmless) types.

And one of the most dangerous is this dimness of sight. My Sisters, remember this. You break some (what the world would call) trifling law in your Rule. It is not a mortal sin. "The just man falleth seven times a day, and riseth again." But if, remembering it, you do not confess it next day in Chapter, you make the fault worse a hundred times. If you wish your eyes to become dim, I know scarcely a more effectual way.

GRUMBLING.

Now what grieves me so: so, more than I have words to express, is this — that you do not all of you keep David's rule about your tongues. I think thus: in two especial ways. By speaking against each other in particular; or against St. Margaret's in general.

Against each other in particular. About that what can I remind you, but what S. Francis de Sales says? — so common, so universal are the faults of any one Sisterhood to all Sisterhoods.

This — "If you only knew, what I can never tell you, how you sometimes blame one another, in and for the very things for which, if you knew all, you would be the first to praise the same Sister, how grieved, how ashamed you would be, One only knows."

Ah me! How exactly they would be your words! – but that is not the chief fault.

The chief fault is, in some of you, the speaking against your Sisterhood. Now this may be in two ways.

Believe me – the hardships and inconveniences the very necessity of this present house lays upon you, I know, I believe, with my whole

heart and soul. While they are unavoidable, unavoidable by any human power, thay are sent us by God, and, so felt, they might be each a little jewel in the crown which you hope to receive. But not if murmured against, not if received as a hardship, not if held up against because you must, instead of joyfully received because you will, bear them.

But then, the second and worst way is to speak against this or that rule, this or that laxity, this or that negligence. To speak, I mean, away from here, or to strangers: you know how, to me, or to the others whose work such matters are, you not only may, but ought to speak. And this you must remember: of all Sisterhoods that ever were, this, by its very nature, must be liable to rapid changes in individual work: liable also to changes, from the almost impossibility of any formal prayer, to the complete rest from any active work. The more difficult this is - what then? This then: the more it needs the especial grace of God. It is not a thing to be mourned and repined at: "It makes me so irregular; this week I have this and that to do: the next I have a totally different work given me." So it is: so it must be: so is the great difficulty. Ah, my Sisters, but if the great difficulty, in the sight of the Lord, the great merit also. There can be no difficulty presented to a Sister but has its two sides. "This I cannot do," and it may be very possible – physically she may not, as they say, have it in her: morally, she has it not in her yet. Or else, determining in that dear Lord's strength, Who Himself undertook no single work, to persevere in her spearate works, to conquer by that very perseverance.

Anyhow this is certain: that a Confirmed Sister here, if she finds the work to go against her, must remember that this can only mean one of two things. Either she has not the will towards it, that she once had, or she has not the power for it which she, and we too, once hoped she possessed.

And so, to those who are as yet Novices, I cannot say anything out of my own head so well as a Portuguese Priest — if not a Saint, yet not far short of one — said in a sermon to a Sisterhood at Oporto, whose vocation it was to engage in as many different works of charity, and with the difficulties belonging to those changes, as you, my Sisters, now.

I will give it to you very nearly in his own words. "Consider this mystery. It is your desire, I hope, — to imitate Christ. To imitate Him? But, I pray you, when chiefly, through all His most

holy life? I ask you, the Prioress, I ask you, the Sisters, that have any rank in this Religious House? You do not answer? Then I answer for you: In His Passion. And what do all those changes which He endured on that last night, the night wherein He was betrayed, signify, but this (as my sweet Bernard testifies) that His servants also must be changed with Him, and changed for Him, to the end they may obtain that glorious Country whereof it is written, 'and we shall be changed?' The change of His vest, from His own to the purple, from the purple to the white, from the white, as they say, to the purple once more to His own garments - and yet all that, one work, and yet all for our sakes. I might also speak of the change from the bitter cold of that night wherein was His Agony, wherein He stood in the cold, while Peter warmed himself over the fire. to the heat of that next forenoon, when, bearing His Cross, He fell and fainted under the weight of it. But it is enough. He, the same yesterday, to-day and for ever, in His love for you; in the expression of that love varying a thousandfold; and what He, so after you own poor fashion, my Sisters, you."

UNKIND WORDS AND THOUGHTS.

1859.

Above all things, resolve against those which always have been, and I suppose always will be, the besetting of sins of Sisterhoods; unkind thoughts, unguarded words. Both sad indeed; but the former, trebly so. It is sometimes more than I well know how to bear, to hear or see the unkind fancy that will rankle in one Sister's mind about another. Ah! it is no slight sin. This, or this, or this, to whom you allow yourself to feel ungently, of whom you perhaps permit yourself to speak harshly: do I mean to say that she is perfect? No. But this I mean: that the King, even at this moment, loves her dearly; that the King, even at this moment, desires her beauty: (you may not be able to see it, but He does;) that you are indulging thoughts of bitterness towards one whom He deems worthy of thoughts of the dearest love.

pattern in this matter. I could kneel to each of you, oh how willingly! — if I could thereby persuade you to give up every shade, every shadow of a shade, of unkind feeling towards any Sister. Grant that you are not deceiving yourselves: grant that you see faults in her: grant that your

whole heart is set on seeing the Sisterhood perfect: and that, therefore, you feel those faults: - but then think of the Name of Jesus. It was our sins that brought out His love. So let it be with you. If you see faults, then love the more. This is one sense of that saying of S. Peter's, that charity shall cover the multitude of sins. There have been those who have gone through life without ever uttering one unkind word: nay. there are one or two of you from whom I may safely say that I never heard one, or had any reason to believe in an unkind thought. Why not all? Why not the exception the rule? Dearest Sisters, what a Paradise this place would at once become, if in one fortnight not a single Confession mentioned a single thought of unkindness!

And what I feel strongly myself, that I want you also to see. Namely, that this is the exact Sisterhood of all others which must have the strongest temptations. The rapid change from complete isolation to a Sister's life, from weeks without a service to days full of services, makes everything more difficult. A simply ascetic Sisterhood is comparatively easy. Where as today, so is to-morrow: where there is no change save that of the Church seasons, where the rule that holds for that week, holds for this week also.

But it is not so with you: and the consequence is that you must expect more difficulties, that you need more grace — but, mind you, that also the crown will be the brighter. The enemy has more advantage in sowing tares; we then must be the more diligent in preventing him when we can, and in plucking them up when we cannot.

Yes: and this we must endeavour, more to resemble that Jerusalem which is built as a city in unity with itself. That is the highest and sweetest praise that belongs to it: it was the Lord's last prayer for us when He was on earth: it is the very crowning happiness of Heaven: "That they all may be one." If it were not so difficult, why should our dear Lord have made it the especial prayer – His last prayer? True, it is difficult in Sisterhoods; out of Sisterhoods it is impossible. It has been tried: and people cannot, who are not a natural family, live together as you do.

Now I can say nothing different from that which S. Paul said. "Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love." See what an expression that is: "Fulfil ye my joy." As if, beyond this, there were nothing; as if, this gained, even Apostolic love could go no further.

CARELESS WORDS.

1859.

And now the other fault: careless words. By what power, or what name, can you do this? Still by that Name, the Name of Him Who spake as never man spake. And now notice this. It is not as if all the danger lay on one side. There is a possibility of two extremes. There is the possibility of levity; by which I mean that light irreverent way of talking which would not be fitting any Christian woman: then, there is the possibility of words which, though not to be blamed in people people living in the world, are not for Sisters – and that more especially applies to what might be called gossiping conversation: and then, there is conversation that, however fit between yourselves, is not fit in the presence of strangers, or even of our children. You have need to pray, with respect to all these: "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, and keep the door of my lips." I cannot but believe that, were you each as anxious for the others' progress as you all ought to be, you would invent some method among yourselves of each checking the other when you heard or thought you heard, anything of this kind? Never tell me it is not possible: it ought to be possible. It ought to be possible to give the advice kindly: and to take it, even if you thought it undeserved, without being annoyed. "Am I my brother's keeper?" You know who said that. Yes, you are your Sisters' keeper: each the keeper of all: and so you will find in that great day of account.

But then remember there is an opposite extreme; and that is, such gravity and silence as to be moroseness. And notice this in our Lord. We know how He was a pattern against anything approaching an idle work; but He was by no means silent or ascetic. All "gave Him witness, and marvelled at the gracious words which proceedeth out of His mouth." The Son of Man came eating and drinking." That is, He did not shut Himself up in Himself. He was fond (I speak after the manner of men), He was fond of conversation: and anything but grave and silent. Here too is your pattern. Not only that those lips of your should never utter anything unmeet, but that, like His, they should utter "gracious words." How is that to be? What tongs from the Altar will lay a coal upon your lips, and so purify and hallow them? Ah! there is a better position than that! "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth!" Let those lips themselves purify yours!

I have spoken very plainly to you, my Sisters, and you will bear with me; you know my one wish: that this place should be the habitation of Saints. By what power, and by what Name? That power, which can overthrow all difficulties: that power which I see here, daily, I hope, increasingly.

RESPONSIBILITY OF A SISTER'S LIFE.

1863.

Is it not so that the very same lips which have used the word we, one half hour, thereby acknowledging all the obligations which a Sister's life imposes, will, the next half hour, speak some teazing word, use some angry expression, perhaps not keep exactly to the truth, perhaps give way to disobedience or in how many other ways act contrary to your great rule, "Thou shalt open my lips, O Lord, and my mouth shall shew forth Thy praise?" You see; there it is. Every time, speaking of yourselves as a community, you use the word we, you are passing judgment on everything you do unworthy of a Sister.

It is in fact naming the Name of Christ, and you know what S. Paul says regarding that. It is naming it by implication, because you mean if you mean anything, "we, Christ's especial servants."

Why, my Sisters, you none of you can get up in the morning without going through (to use the word in the large vague sense in which the earlier Church, and no one more than S. Augustine, delighted to use it) two Sacraments of His service. Are not your own hands condemning you, if, when you put on those dresses, you do not resolve that, as they mark you out for Him, so by His grace, His you really will be that day? Do they not condemn you if you put that cross round your neck, and never try to remember that thereby you promise to crucify that day your pet sin, whatever it is? Could there be a more terrible aggravation of terror to a careless bad Sister, than to have to appear before her Judge in the dress which professed her to be His, and the cross by which she had pretended to keep His sufferings before her?

TEMPTATION CONSÉQUENT ON ENTRANCE INTO RELIGIOUS LIFE.

1862.

Our Lord has almost always been pleased that your entrance into the Religious Life should be preceded or followed, and that within a very short time, by some trial or temptation which you never had before.

TEMPTATIONS IN THE SISTERHOOD.

1863.

And now — one thing more. It is said by our dear Lord, "A man's foes shall be they of his own household." So shall a Christian's temptations always. Acquit yourselves here well, my Sisters, here in the common-room, here in your mutual conversation, above all, here in the Orphanage: and then indeed, go out to work in itself harder, to fatigue, danger, death, if so it is to be; and what follows?" "Whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's."

OF TEMPTATION TO NEGLECT CONFESSION. 1860.

This I know by my own experience, this all the masters of spiritual life tell us, that as Confession is regular and earnest, so is the advance of those that make it steady and happy. And only think — what else can one expect, when we remember what a tremendous and marvellous gift that of the forgiveness of sins by mortal man is? Is it likely that our Lord, Who, to procure it for us, shed out of His most Precious Side both Water and Blood, would allow us to neglect that

which cost Him so much, without our feeling the loss in every step of our Christian lives? And herein is a temptation which we shall all do well to be on our guard against. I mean that, when it will and must happen in a Sisterhood like this that Confession becomes for a time impossible, one learns to do without it; thinks one does not miss it; knows that one is working for God, and He blessing that work. And then, in returning home, one's own natural disinclination to grapple with sin in a hand-to-hand manner, and the devices of the great enemy of all Confession, would lead us again to put it off and put it off. And notice this, all of you: I have often observed it in myself; I have often seen it in you. So sure as we have fixed a time for Confession, Satan either causes some difficulty or engagement to start up; or, if he cannot do that, then he tries to tempt us into some other sin, which almost unfits us for going to that Fountain for uncleanness at all.

... Our hindrances and drawbacks are no proof of our being wrong — nay, rather a sure sign that we are right. Would Satan care to hinder your Confessions, unless he trembled at your making them? and why should he tremble at your making them, but that he knows that his kingdom is thus

shaken? So let us take courage, and shake it still more; this kind of temptation is a proof, not of his strength, but of his weakness.

Take those two together: "Peace I leave you, My peace I give unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

And the other: "They have healed the hurt of the daughter of My people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace."

And then this holy time itself comes to remind us, that He (God of God though He were, by Whom, the Word, through a word, the worlds were made,) did not heal the hurts of His poor church slightly. He stretched out His arms to embrace her, - true: but not till His hands were nailed to the glorious Wood: . . . It was not healing her hurt slightly, the vouchsafing to abide, as at this time, for nine long months in the womb of the Virgin; to be born in the stable, the poor inn of the poor town rejecting Him; to take that winter journey when Herod sought the young Child to destroy Him; to wander despised and rejected; to be called a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners; to have this most precious gift of which we have been speaking, called blasphemy; to have His miracles ascribed to Beelzebub; finally to be betrayed by His Apostle, forsaken by all, to be sold for the slave's price; to be scourged, crowned with thorns, to be reckoned among the transgressors, and to be made a spectacle to the world, and to angels, and to men.

If then it cost Him all this agony to heal the hurt of the daughter of His people, can we hope to heal it without any pain?

WATCHFULNESS AND READINESS FOR TRIBULATION.

1858.

To the very end of your lives* you pledge yourselves to be His and His only; His in life, His in death. You have so long been thus bound, that I am less anxious as to your wishing to draw back. Only this remember: that, if you are not strengthening the golden chain of love, you are shewing it more, avowing it more openly, standing forth more boldly in your resolutions. Let me repeat it to you once more, that, henceforth, ever to draw back from a Sister's life is sacrilege: sacrilege in the highest degree: in-asmuch as the Doctors of the Church have always taught that sacrilege of the person is worse than sacrilege of place.

*To Professed Sisters, before a renewal of vows.

It is a charge indeed! so to watch your own words and deeds, that not the slightest shadow of blame can be attached to them by those that are waiting to find fault. You, who are now going out from us, do you not know how you will be watched? How a hundred eyes will be upon you? How any careless word, any the least levity, any the least temper, will be set down and scored up against you? No; not against you, but against your Lord. I would not for all the world mean that the enemies of the truth here - in this place should know of such a thing as the wish for preeminence among you. Oh how bitterly they would laugh and scoff - not so much at you, as at your King! Oh how witty they would be about pride under a religious dress, and ambition within the breast on which a cross hung! Yet that going out is only a type of what your life must always be. Who has such need to pray for the grace of watchfulness - daily, hourly, minutely watchfulness - not to dishouour the Bridegroom of the Virgins, not to give the enemies of the Lord occasion to blaspheme?

THE POWER OF THE CROSS.

1858.

And now, what can you do? My dearest Sisters, two of you weak women, without earthly friends, without worldly influence, without money,

without the power of offering any kind of rewards or promises, are going out to battle with Satan in hundreds of families lying in wickedness. Oh what madness in the eyes of the world! Behold, "that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall." "What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned?"

You cannot tell the fulness of confidence I have in you, if only you go with that love, with that faith that Sisters ought to go forth with. Here, while I celebrate at this Altar, I shall never forget you; here, I think I may promise in their name, your Sisters will never forget you. Only fix your eyes on Him "that endureth such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." Only look to this Vine, as the Jews in the wilderness to the brazen serpent: only hang all the cares and troubles, which you are sure to have, on Him, and those very cares and troubles themselves will blossom and fructify like Aaron's dry rod; themselves sapless and withered, they shall blossom abundantly: the beauty of Carmel shall be added unto them, the excellency of Sharon.

For, my Sisters, this is the great truth that lies under all our representations of the Cross. We do not paint or sculpture it the mere bare two pieces of wood that it was. No! it buds and blossoms in delicate floriation: stone and marble have exquisite leaflets, silver and brass have loveliness of fruitage: - leaf, flower, fruit, all do honour to the Tree of Beauty, the Tree of Light! We naturally shrink from a plain Cross; and that, because in all aesthetic beauty there is deep emblematic truth. And so with your Crosses: let them, be what they may, bring forth their own flowers and their own fruit. The more opposition, the greater difficulty, the worse struggle – well! then the more glorious accomplishment – then the nobler result.

Instruction.

RESPONSIBILITY OF NURSING SISTERS.

1862.

Two days ago, my Sisters, I set to work to copy in a clear order the dates and places of the different times you have each of you been out nursing; and for some time I went on as I might do at any other task. But gradually, as I saw time after time of your ministration to the sick recorded, as I saw death after death among your patients put down, year following year bringing its new efforts and carrying off its new victims; - when I thought how every hour of your work in those cottages has to give in its own history to God; - how many an one to whom you have ministered has long since given in his last reckoning, a reckoning which must have been so tremendously influenced by you; - when I felt that words which you did speak may have been the turning point of the dying man's salvation, and shall be to your everlasting joy in that day, - or again, that words which you might have spoken, but were too shy or listless to speak, will plead terribly against you then; - I thought that little book one of the most solemn records that I ever saw.

You will all of you, my Sisters, have to do, either with those who are dead in trespasses and sins, or with those who, as children, have very little idea of the spiritual life. Now, if you mean to do them any good, you must put heart to heart, and soul to soul.

It is all very well in its way, reading to them, catechising them, hearing their verses. These things are excellent, and they are duties; but they cannot excite the love of God. You stand, if not in the place of Priests, yet in the place of God's ambassadors, to those to whom you are sent; and there is no greater sin in the sight of God, than to shrink back because you are shy or reserved in speaking as a loving Christian woman to those who profess themselves Christians.

WORDS IN SEASON.

1859.

My Sisters, you know how I have pressed this again and again on you, to make the most of your opportunities of speaking when you are out; — of putting in that word in due season which is so good . . . Because that omitted word, oh what consequences it might have led to! Nothing ought to weigh so heavily on your conscience as this. The Bride to be shy of speaking concerning the Bridegroom!

1861.

You see how we take it for granted of you. What do we say daily of you while you are away from home? "So they two went on together." That which is my greatest comfort for all of you believing it true, believing that He Who has said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," is with you now among the poor as once He was in the poor cottages of Galilee or Jewry.

But if it were not so, could there be a sadder condemnation of that unhappy Sister; — could there be a bitterer satire on her weakness than that we should thus speak of her union with Christ, whereas, in very truth, she was trying to go on by herself?

TEACHING THE POOR.

1864.

Now, my Sisters, here is the lesson for you among the poor. Never think that those who believe, for example, that they are doing a good work by sitting down and reading a chapter of the Bible (of which, very likely, they understand not one sentence) on a Sunday afternoon, get no gain thereby. Among many dear sayings of his, I know not of one dearer, than that of S. Francis

de Sales, when a poor old ignorant woman pressed forward to obtain a place within hearing of the pulpit, as the Saint was about to preach a Latin sermon. "But she cannot understand a word," said the official who pointed out to the Bishop her place. "Then perhaps," replied S. Francis, "while I am preaching to the rest of the congregation, the Holy Ghost Himself, for her faith's sake, may be teaching her."

And so, although undoubtedly I would, if I could, change such a prayer as "Matthew, Mark," etc., into something better; yet, believe me, that the being told that such a prayer was altogether absurd, and the having teaching of the kind pressed upon them, has often before now given such a shock to the pure simple faith of the very ignorant, as no amount of better theological teaching could make up to them.

STUDY NEEDFUL FOR TEACHING.

You know that, in your ministrations to the poor, I want to see you not merely nurses. Some little pains I have had the opportunity of taking with you in studying Holy Scripture; would to God it had been more! but more, by His grace, it shall be. Called at this very moment as some of you are, to teach daily, it is necessary to be daily learning. For my part, I should never ven-

ture to take a sermon in hand for you, unless I had studied for that sermon first; and so it must be with all of us. Do not, therefore, think me, dear Sisters, encroaching on your time, unnecessarily pressing you to work; see only my desire that you may be as well prepared as possible to teach those glad tidings of salvation which in your heart of hearts you feel.

PREPARATION FOR CONFIRMATION.

Any one of you concerned directly or indirectly in preparing our children for Confirmation, is sorely neglecting her duty if she does not especially pray for those children; and so are those who have no immediate connection with them, unless they pray for the Sisters who have. Remember how often Confirmation is the turning point of a young girl's life. Remember also how uncertain it is whether the grace of this Sacrament, like that of Baptism, revives; whether, if unworthily received, and that unworthy reception afterwards repented of, the grace is, so to speak, unlocked: or whether, as with respect to each unworthy Communion, or unworthy Confession, if once lost, that particular grace is lost for ever. And these things ought to make you all, all, without one exception, I will not say anxious - but, to have a deep sense of your responsibility: you, who have only to pray for those dear children; and you who have, in addition to praying, to work with them.

Suffering and Tending.

REST.

1859.

You are never to be ashamed of needing that rest which your Celestial Husband both needed and took: even so you are to be doing His work . . . your relaxation can only be as His, can only be thus.

OUT, AND AT HOME.

1860.

For my own part, whenever I visit any one of you thus engaged: whenever I see, and that only through a glass and darkly, what you have to bear, I can only feel — "Behold, the Lord's arm is not shortened, that it cannot save, neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear." To me it is perfectly wonderful. One reads of such things in the history of the Religious Houses of other times; but even then, not without strong expressions on the writer's part of wonder at God's grace. And when I remember that it is I whom God has employed to bring to pass such a work, truly it does make me tremble.

"Who will hearken unto you in this matter? But as his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff: they shall part alike. And it was so from that day forward, that he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel unto this day."* You, remaining at home, have an equal right to the spoil with those that go out to war. How? That the sacrifice which they send up, and which our great High Priest mingles with His own, and offers on that golden Altar, you share in; you have as much a right to it as they; you have and will have as great a reward from it as they. Yes, this is so indeed; but on certain conditions.

Firstly, — Why did not those two hundred go over the brook? Because they would not? No: Because they could not. (But if it were not so: if you were merely detained at home because other duties were given you here, and you took those duties because they were given you, it would be the same thing.) But now, to speak of illness. — All ascetic writers say with one voice that sisters must always expect much of it. Why? For the old reason: the old teaching of S. Paul, "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth." You profess to love Him more than others do; well: then it follows

*1 Sam. xxx.

that He loves you more than He loves others. And then come your conquent trials — sickness first and chief; and then come the difficulties proceeding out of these trials.

Now, one of those difficulties is, the amount of fatigue which you are able to bear in coming into the Oratory. If you tell me in that most holy tribunal, of your own free accord, that you are tempted to permit bodily weakness to keep you back from Him Whom you ought to love best, then, of course, I speak to you of the difficulty, counsel you about it, pray with you about it. But, when you do not confess it, I never suspect you of it; I could not. "The love of Christ constraineth us." If I see any place vacant, God knows I pray for its occupant from my heart, not as unwilling, but as unable to come. Oh, how bitterly ought that miserable Sister to be ashamed (I do not believe there is such an one, God knows, but if there were, oh how bitterly ought that miserable Sister to be ashamed whom her Lord sees to be neglecting Him, because she is idle and selfindulgent, while her Priest is interceding for her, because she is incapable and prevented! I rather am apt to think that you are sometimes worshipping Him here in this Oratory, when you ought to be taking the rest which is to fit you hereafter for His service.

For that will be a conflict of duties; only remember that it is not peculiar to you at home. Out too, it will occur. Has any Sister ever been out, without feeling anxious lest she should have neglected, in her care for her patient, visible and external prayer? Answer, you that have tried for yourselves. Kneeling down? Out of the question? A set time for devotion? Out of the question. You could only have the lifting up of the heart; the arrow, like Joash's, of the Lord's deliverance, sent up at any odd moment to Heaven. Time did not admit of more. I know it. But I know also of that feeling: "At such a time I had so many hours' sleep. I might have knelt in prayer. I did not. I lay down at once. Is that living in the spirit of prayer?" Yes; a thousand times, I say, yes, it may be. She that works, the proverb says, prays. So you see, the difficulty is the same.

And then again, notice: these soldiers at home were watching by the stuff. Others were winning new conquests. And oh, that it might be so with you! They, at a distance, prospering in a new work, you, establishing and confirming the old. You know the thing would be impossible that all should together be out, and engaged in the active service of God. There would be no golden chain to bind together, past, present, and future, as there is now, if at intervals the whole of you were

engaged in active business, and the daily Hours were dropped; if there were gaps and intervals in their employment; if, when you came back again here, the "work of God," as they called it in primitive times, the work of God in the Oratory, had to be taken up afresh; the fire on the Altar re-kindled instead of never going out. No, believe me, your work here in keeping up these services is as needful as that of your Sisters at a distance.

FILLING UP THAT WHICH REMAINS.

1862.

In the first place, remember this; there is no more solemn, no more wonderful doctrine of the Church than this: that though, first and last, every hope in this world, every strength in battle, every comfort in pain, every reward in the next world, comes from Calvary alone, yet our dear Lord (Who, as He would be made in all things like unto His brethren, so He would in all things have them like unto Him), has left a certain amount of suffering to be filled up by His Church before the end can be. S. Paul says so. "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you: and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ, for His Body's sake, which is the Church." That is: no pain, borne for God's love, is borne in vain.

Some one must have borne it. God gives it you . . . That it is which so ennobles all suffering. The stamp of Calvary on it; and as that was only and wholly for others, so our little sufferings are not quite entirely for ourselves, but are helping others too. Who would have dared ever to hope that this might be so, unless the Holy Ghost had revealed it? Say then, any of you, my Sisters, who are thrown in places of more than ordinary suffering: "It may be that the Lord will look upon my affliction"; and offer it, as a poor, very little present, the two mites which make a farthing, in union with those sufferings of the Passion: offer it to our dear Lord's glory; and, if you will, for any dear one in distress, for any troubled one in temptation, for the Sisterhood, for the conversion of any particular sinner: offer it, and it will be accepted.

But then, it is not the suffering alone. The impenitent suffered as much as the penitent thief. It is, first of all, the holiness in yourselves.

THE KING'S STAMP.

1865.

"Arise, shine, for thy light is come." My Sisters, is not this the most encouraging of all encouraging things, to see the stamp of our King on every suffering we are called to pass through? Pure suf-

ferings, first; where there is no possibility of sin: hunger, and we think of that wilderness; thirst, and we think of Jacob's well, and hardly dare to think of Calvary; weariness, and we think of "they took Him even as He was," when He slpt in the ship. And temptations too; else why should the three temptations under which the first Adam fell, and which include all that any can suffer, have been the very three which the Second Adam overcame? "To make the Captain of our salvation perfect through suffering."

Well, then, I want you to see this. That every suffering, here or away from here, only repeats these words — "Arise, shine, for thy light is come." But, much more, every temptation here, or away from here, does so likewise.

See this: every one of you would allow, and rejoice in allowing, that hard — if you like, terrible — work done for that dear Lord's sake, outside yourself, it matters not what, merely gave you the call, "Arise, shine, for thy light is come." Then what is the difference between that and temptations within yourselves? It matters not one straw what they are. When you pray, "Lead us not into temptation," you ask what He, Who knoweth our frame, has told you to ask; and, so far as is good for you, He will hear. But He hears it more

gloriously, if, permitting you to be tempted, He gives you the victory. Only be sure of one thing. Do not let that petition be so said, ever, by any of you, that Satan might do with it, what he did with the thoughtless *Amens* in another Religious House. To pray carelessly for a vital thing is worse than not praying for it at all; and no doubt as a warning against that careless praying, St. Augustine said that it was expedient that a man should sometimes fall.

OF NOISOME DISEASES.

1858.

Now, my Sisters, when any of you are called to any loathsome disease: to minister where the very sight and atmosphere of the sufferer is a grievous trial, then think of the Transfiguration.

RECKLESSNESS.

1864.

One fault of several of you I will speak of now: it is only being instant in season. It is the — what shall I call it? — recklessness — with which you do not take sufficient precaution against the spread of infection. I trust it is not done to shew how little you care about it; I know that none of you are guilty of that meanness. But it is pure carelessness. Only remember that if, through that

carelessness, others should lose their lives, it would be a dreadful punishment; but the sin, for it is a sin, would not be greater; and if, by the like, any of you should lose your own, you would not die as a Martyr, but as a character of whom pretty frequent mentions is made in the Book of Proverbs; as Abner did not die. Now do let that be mended.

PREPARING FOR DEATH.*

Never too much can I tell you to remember this: that the direct act of having taught, or tried to teach, so many others to die, will be, at your own death, either to your great help and consolation, or to your unspeakable condemnation. In one respect, you will be then less alone than most of Christ's servants. The looking to Him as He went down deeper and deeper into the waters, so that the floods ran over Him, the looking to them who suffered in His Name, and for His sake, this you have in common with all Christians; in common? and yet it ought to be more; or what means the sevenfold commemoration of the seven steps of our Lord's Passion? What means the Martyrology which day by day shews

*This and the two extracts following are from a Good Friday sermon on our Lord's loneliness, dictated during Dr. Neale's last illness.

COMFORT FOR THE DYING.

Now, then, when any of you are standing by a death-bed, look on it in this point of view. All things in which it resembles the bed, the hard bed of the Cross, are most surely given for the comfort of the sufferer, if only he will consider the Poor and Needy stretched on that Cross. But see, if perchance, the unlikeness between the two may not, in its way, be the source of even greater comfort.

But first let us go still yet further and yet deeper to learn what His loneliness means. Not only, nor chiefly, that meeting death in a new way, as a new thing, as a thing abominable to God in that it is so closely connected with sin; as a thing, in and by itself, most terrible to the most perfect nature. But remember, the time had been, and not so many hours before, when the Son of God had said to His disciples: "Ye shall be scattered every one to his own, and shall leave me alone;" — had said that indeed, but then also, had added, "And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me." Now that comfort was to be no longer, those words of self-consolation were changed into the great and exceeding bitter cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

And here then is the comfort of the unlikeness between the departure of our Lord's most blessed soul and that of those to whom you may have to minister. To Him that could not be said, which can be and is said to them: "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you; but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings." Here it is then: every separate act of suffering, if it be rightly borne, comes stamped with the mark of the King's mint, and thereby fitted to be cast into the King's treasury. It is no strange thing, whether it be sickness, or pain, or death itself, that can happen to us. And not only strange, because the Captain

of our salvation has gone before us in bearing it, but also because so many myriads of His servants, the great multitude which no man can number, have also set us the example of following in His steps. That which on Calvary was a wild and trackless way, across an unknown region, has now fulfilled that which Isaiah, nearly a thousand years before, prophesied of it. "A highway shall be there, and a way; and it shall be called the way of holiness." Why, you yourselves, when the time shall come, why, they to whom you are ministering, and to whom it has come, have but still to keep on saying, as through all your lives, "We will go by the King's highway." Then always bear this in mind, that to that loneliness you owe the blessed company in whose footsteps, in whose companionship, you shall go up: each in turn treading that road, and teaching and setting forth more about it; even as in God's good time others shall follow you, their predecessors, as you have followed your own.

OUR LORD'S SYMPATHY.

If your patients tell you — as I, and I suppose every one else, have known before now (and this more especially in the case of women) — "This pain, this suffering, this feeling, our Lord could not, in and by itself, have known, because the

thing would be physically impossible," answer boldly: that He did. Not more miraculous that He endured each individual suffering in His people, than that He bore each individual sin. Believe, in the fulness of the meaning of S. Paul: "In all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, - that in all things" (not only in temptation or victory, but in pain also) "He might have the pre-eminence." And remember that it is your parts and duties, the Holy Spirit helping you, and His own deep, dear sympathy making all your bed in your sickness, so to shew your thankfulness for that sympathy - by endeavouring to act up to it, to be found not utterly unworthy of it – that you may also have your part in that glorious work: in making the Captain of your salvation perfect through suffering.

There is a story told of some Abbess or Prioress in France, in the 17th century, who was visiting the death-bed of one of her Sisters. This nun, it seems, had an earnest longing for sympathy; human, if it might be; anyhow, that of our Lord. "And you think that in this, or that, or the other suffering, He is not able, of His own knowledge as Man, to sympathize with you?" She said it was so. "Put down then, what those things are, first; then try to think over His life, and then set down whatever that is, concerning which you cannot see that you must be felt for." She tried, and then it was next time, "O Mother, I can find nothing!"

Self-Dedication and Earnestness.

GUILD OF S. MICHAEL.

Yes, this Guild, long years and years ago, was a favourite hope of mine; none of my own devising — for there are hundreds such through the Western Church — but the first, so far as I know, that has been established in the English Church. And it is a matter of thankfulness to me, that I never can forget, that it should have been established by the Sisters of S. Margaret's.

DEDICATION OF DIVERS TALENTS.

1857.

God, in accepting your self-dedication to Him, undoubtedly will give you grace that shall direct every action to His glory. But also, undoubtedly, it is by the powers or talent that each of you have by nature, that His grace will principally work; that you must expect it to work; that you must look for being made the instrument of especial good. This it is which so blesses, and transfigures knowledge of any kind: nay, and such things as a pleasing manner and general tact. Dear Sisters, of these also it may be said — "The Lord hath need of them."

SINGING.

1859.

I have often told you that there is nothing little in a Sisterhood. Little faults are no longer little when they are committed by those who are what you are. While S. John lay on the bosom of the Lord, could there be such a thing for him as a venial fault? I trow not. Perfect holiness, or mortal sin.

Therefore it is very sad if, in this Oratory, you do not exert yourselves to the utmost to make our services what they ought to be. More especially sad for those who have voices for other things, but none here; voices for their own pleasure, but none for Him Who ought to be dearer to them than the life itself. And most sad of all, when He vouchsafes in His own dear Presence to come among you, and you offer Him no salutation whatever. What could you do less, if the whole faith of the Eucharist were an idle dream?

Now, dear Sisters, do not let me have to speak about this any more. You will not be able to be silent if your Lord ever gives you a portion among the hundred and forty and four thousand: why wish to be so now? But you will, I know, lay this to heart: and not sadden me, and dishonour my Master and your Bridegroom, by silence in His service again.

I do firmly believe their service in Heaven is very like ours on earth. We know that the Temple was built by God's design, and after the pattern of heavenly things. Music we know they have:

— the Temple music was from the pattern of that, as ours from the Temple; and surely if it were only for the remotest possibility that our tones are some faint shadowings out of the celestial harmonies, and that when we come to the other side, we shall but find their transfiguration, is not that a reason for clinging to them with all our strength?

LITTLE THINGS BEFORE GREAT ONES.

As it has been well said, you wish to do great things. Of course you do; as Sisters, you ought. Then either you can do little things, or you can not: if you can not, the wish after the greater, as you know very well, is it much more than building castles in the air? If you can, and do not (and I think some, whether here or not, have occasion to think of this), how can you expect that higher grace for greater difficulties?

BLEMISH NOT THY GOOD DEEDS.

1863.

I have always told you how to stand, to a certain extent, in the same condition as Priests. And therefore, what you have received, you are to give; and as you have received it, so to give it. You cannot deny the grace. But in giving what you can give to others, are all of you perfectly doing your best? I will tell you where that law, even in the Old Testament, is set down most clearly. "My son, blemish not thy good deeds, neither use uncomfortable words when thou givest anything." Now, my Sisters, I leave that to some of you to think over - whether, and especially with respect to what the world would call your smaller, your more every-day duties here, you have done them without blemishing them.

Doing one's Best.

1862.

"Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully." And so it follows, because such an one pitches his idea of work low, because he will not "go up to labour at Ai," that his execution must of necessity seem so much better to him than it is. He cannot help deceiving himself. And I do

say, that any of you who is conscious to herself, that she is tempted to think, "so the work is done, it does not much matter how," — ought this Lent to be very particular in her self-examination about that; because it is just the very hardest thing to detect in ourselves.

SELF-DEVOTION THE ESPECIAL GRACE OF THIS COMMUNITY.

1863.

As each true servant of our dear Lord has his or her especial grace, so each Community. And your is self-devotion.

WAITING NOT WASTE.

1858.

Oh how much preparation it takes to do God's work! Never think, dear Sisters, that you can rush out upon it unprepared by patient days and weeks and months of waiting. It is such a temptation; it has been from the beginning such a temptation, to think that time lost which is spent in getting ready. Future work is really often performed here. Here you are laying up the strength for it; here you are trying to submit yourselves better to your Lord's dear yoke; here by prayers and by obedience you are endeavouring to gain that holiness in yourselves, without which ex-

ternal success is utterly worthless. It is not, who can do the most: who can extend God's work the furthest; but, who can do that work the best: who can most thoroughly sanctify herself in carrying on those labours for His sake.

"WILT THOU GO WITH THIS MAN?"

1861.

The question may still be asked with each year. My Sisters, you none of you know to what pain, to what temptation, to what difficulty, to what trials, the following Him may lead you. "Wilt thou go?" If it is to some painful, troublesome task, to some one of His poor, like Lazarus: wilt thou go? If it is to do some work here thoroughly, some neglected duty, some matter that your own nature would shuffle through; wilt thou go? If it be to conquer some little, very little, very darling, very pet temptation; "Oh, it is not worth while to confess such a sin as that"; wilt thou go? If it is to get rid of what is no sin in itself, but only becomes a sin because of your rule; wilt thou go?

And then, my Sisters, I must say how much I thank God for your improvement in Chapter. It has done my heart good to see how, when the question is asked, none of you have risen from your knees. I suppose you can hardly judge the

anxiety with which I ask that question. You little know the pang it gives me as I see one first, perhaps then another, rise from her place and come forward — and I say, "Ah me! these Sisters of mine, why, thus far, cannot they be perfect?"

PERSEVERANCE.

1863.

Now, my Sisters, this is the lesson for you. In the first place, how, whatever you are commanded or invited to do, you must do to the uttermost; next, how a mistake, in idly or listlessly or carelessly not putting your whole energy - (and do you think that you could all, as in the sight of God, plead "not guilty" to what I now say? (into what you have to do, may, so far as human means are concerned, make the whole difference of a child's or a patient's future life. Joash smote three times. He is assured, that had he smitten six, Syria would have been destroyed. So you. You take pains with a child up to a certain extent. "Now I think I have done all I need." You have to minister not only to the bodily, but to the spiritual wants of a patient; you smite thrice and then you stop. Just learn from this story, how that once more, only that once more - after a long series of trial, that very poor little once more - might have made all the difference.

HELPING ONE ANOTHER.

I do not think that you do help each other nearly so much as you might do. I do not think, speaking generally, of course, that you give each other credit for the earnestness that is in you. The faults you cannot help seeing: but the better inward life, you cannot see. Only remember this: that as each of you would say of herself, "I know that my Sisters must see in me such and such a fault, and yet, thank God, I know also that I am trying - ah me! not my best, but still hard," so you are bound to believe, at least, so - of such an one, or such an one, whose faults or weaknesses or omissions of duty seem so strange. Or put it in this way. Taking this Sisterhood, as a whole, I believe there is scarcely one of you who has not esprit de corps enough not to fear its comparison in the work it does, with any other: nay, sometimes I could wish to hear a little more credit given to others. The love and trust you have to the body, why not to each member of it?

UNREALITY.

Lent, 1861.

The very mere idea that any of you might be playing at Sisters is too fearful. The external life of a Saint: the internal heart of a Judas; a cross

ornamenting a breast that never beats with love of the Cross-bearer: a ring — now or looked forward to — a ring pledging conjugal fidelity, and other lords have access to your hearts. Such things have been, O how often! such things — we can hardly imagine otherwise — must be again before the consummation of all things! Such miserable guilt for the present; such horrible punishment for the future.

One moment's carelessness, in one prayer, may be the turning-point which is the beginning of the decline. A little less devotion this week in the ordinary time: a little shorter devotion next: more wandering thoughts - more dislike to enquire how much you are conscious of loving the Lord of Love: greater occupation in the routine of external life: growing indifference about the inner, Sister's, life: fewer temptations; chilliness, coldness, dimness, darkness, and then that fearful state of unshaken and untroubled apathy. And this is one reason why S. James says: "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation." Why should Satan tempt you, unless you were successful in your Christian warfare? If he lets you alone, it is because he does not wish to alarm you: - you are safe as you are.

WEARING THE CROSS.

As long then as the day lasts, so long, dearest Sisters, you must not hope, you must not even wish for a release. The cross will still hang over your heart when that heart has ceased to beat. Just as now, when the evening of the day is come, you take off that cross, and lay it aside, but never before - so indeed, in a far higher and nobler sense, when the evening, the true evening, that evening-time when it shall be light, shall have drawn nigh, but not before, you will lay it aside for ever. It will have done its work. it will have crucified the old man, and utterly abolished the whole body of sin: it will have transformed you into His image, it will have subdued every thought to His love, it will have merited the Crown. "I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness." Henceforth, farewell to the Cross! Henceforth, no more penitential tears, henceforth no more bitter confessions, henceforth no more struggles. "Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labour until the evening." Are not these the thoughts with which, dear Sisters, you should every night lie down to sleep? When you put off the cross, ought you not to pray thus, or in this sort: "Grant, Lord, that I never desire to lay aside Thy Cross till the evening of my life; that Thou Who didst Thyself endure it to the end mayest then bestow on me the Crown." When you put it round your neck in the morning, ought you not to say, "Grant, Lord, that this day and all the days of my life, the Cross that hangs on my heart may be carried in my heart?" God give you grace not to say it only, but to do it.

WHAT A SISTER'S LIFE IS NOT.

1857.

You can never plead that, in undertaking a Sister's life, you were led to undertake it in ignorance, allowed to think it anything else than a total change of position, duties, responsibilities, privileges. You were never allowed to thin that your present life was merely a better and more convenient way of doing God the same kind of service which you might have done Him in the world; the same thing, only with more time, more help, more earnestness. No: so far as you are concerned, old things, you know, were to pass away; all things were to become new; you had contracted new engagements, you were bound by fresh promises; you were to be judged by a higher standard; you would need greater helps.

The Blessed Sacrament.*

PSALMS LXIII. AND LXVII.

1857.

I think that there could be no better habit for all of you than, with reference to this, to say, while dressing, those two Psalms taken together, which we do say at Lauds every night: the 63rd and 67th. For see how they speak of it. "O God, Thou art my God," that is, "Even so, even under the form of Bread and Wine, even thus vouchsafing to come among us again, as once in Thine own form when Thou didst walk upon earth, Thou art my God: others may question, others may deride others may blaspheme: but we know and are persuaded that Thou art the Christ, the Saviour of the world. 'It shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us.' 'Early will I seek Thee.' " And the earliness of the day, dearest Sisters, should but be the type of your obeying in everything at the first call; in pressing forward at the very soonest opportunity. I need not go through the Psalm for you: you can do it for yourselves. Every one of you, dearest Sisters, will receive this Bread

and Wine of Immortality to-morrow: do now as I have told you, and try to throw yourselves into the true spirit of those Psalms; to realise, "Thus have I looked for Thee in holiness": to endeavour to say, "'As long as I live will I magnify Thee on this manner,' vowed especially to Thee, and separated from all things else": to think of your daily banquet and to say, "My soul shall be satisfied, even as it were with marrow and fatness": to say, as I hope you will be able to say, "Have I not thought upon Thee when I was waking?" to promise that, so far as you are concerned, "the King," your King, your Beloved, "shall rejoice in God" because in you He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied: and then, in the next Psalm, to unite yourselves with the Communion of the Saints, fed with the same Bread, united in the same Body, while you say, "Let the people praise Thee, O God, let all the people praise Thee."

CHRISTMAS MIDNIGHT CELEBRATION.

1858.

Altogether, one seems then to realise better than at any other time, what our separation from the world is — how we are pledged to God. The external midnight separation, the silence and chillnes without, the beauty within, all lead one

^{*}Much more on this subject is to be found in "Sermons on the Blessed Sacrament."

to see that it is indeed the little flock, to whom it is the Father's good pleasure to give the kingdom.

DAILY VISITS.

1857.

If now for the future the King of Glory can more frequently tabernacle among you, pray for yourselves, dearest Sisters, that you may be more and more fitted to be so much in His Presence. Now, scarcely an hour either day or night, that this little Oratory will not be His Court: scarcely an hour at which it will not diffuse its blessings all around it, if only your hearts are pure and holy to receive them. And, henceforth, I hope that each of you will no more think of omitting her Visit to the Blessed Sacrament, than she would her daily prayers. Here, daily, you must shut the door of your heart on every thing else, to be alone with the Beloved: here, daily, you must try, long, strive, yearn, after that nearness to Him which His Sacramental Presence can give His people even here. Truly now it may be said to you, "O taste and see how gracious the Lord is!" Surely, if your own dear King vouchsafes thus to arm you in those still and holy hours, what is it but that He expects you to fight valiantly the battles of the Lord when you are thrown out into the world! Happy Sister, who can give herself to Him with such perfect self-negation here, and can devote herself for Him with such perfect courage there!

VISITS TO THE BLESSED SACRAMENT.

1857.

You know you can never come forth from that Visit to the Blessed Sacrament as you entered. That hour is a telling hour in your lives. If then you allow your thoughts to wander, if then you acquiesce in your affections growing cold, if then your words indeed go up, but your heart of hearts is not with them — believe me, dear Sisters, that is then fulfilled which is written in Isaiah, "The Angels of peace shall weep bitterly."

EFFECT OF THE PRESENCE OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT.

1859.

I will now, dear Sisters, continue to you the Treatise of S. Thomas,* which we began last Sunday.

I can never too much impress on you that it requires all your thought, all your attention, to follow it.

*The Treatise of S. Thomas Aquinas "On the Venerable Sacrament of the Altar," which Dr. Neale had then begun to translate for the Sisters.

But then, you have — and you ought to thank God for it — this advantage:

The hearing of those words – that clearest of teaching, from the Angelic Doctor, in the Presence of the Blessed Sacrament itself.

We scarcely think sufficiently of this.

We know how having our dear Lord in His own Body here with us, ought to, I hope does, quicken our love for Him — ought to, I hope does, strengthen our confidence in Him.

But we scarcely realise how many advantages which we cannot exactly describe, which we cannot fully understand, His mere Presence, in and by itself, without any regard had to what our feelings are, brings this Oratory.

How it chases evil spirits: how it, without our knowing why, brings sweet and dear thoughts into our minds of that world in which He now is.

How, in a thousand ways, temptations are chased, sorrows are lessened, love is strengthened, because the same Body that was taken of Mary, that sat by the wellside with the woman of Samaria, that raised Jairus' daughter, is here.

Through God's great goodness, my life has included many and many an hour of deep happiness.

But, on looking back, I know that no series of hours that it includes are for one moment to be compared with the Sunday evenings that I have spoken to you here.

For that reason, no doubt, chiefly: that to have Him present with us "Whom the heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain," is a blessing which, as the Psalmist speaks, if not of the Lord's Body, at least of His Blood, "maketh glad the heart of man." To hear of that Body when It is before us, that is the true way of learning those mysteries, into which no man was ever privileged to look more deeply than the Angelic Doctor.

And I can easily conceive that, at first sight, his very simplicity may make it seem as if he had no depth of meaning. But the more you think over what he says, the more you will marvel at that wonderful knowledge of Scripture which concentrates all the written teaching of the Holy Ghost on any one given point at once.

They tell a story of one of the greatest of mediaeval writers, Hugh of S. Victor, that when in extreme old age, he was on his death-bed, it was not thought fit to give him the Viaticum on account of constant sickness. At length, wearied by his repeated requests, and yet not liking to expose the Blessed Sacrament to danger, his friends brought him an unconsecrated Host, as if it had been our Lord's Body. But it had no sooner entered his room than he at once rejected it, and instinctively, as it were, knew the deceit that had been practised on him.

I often think of that story when we have that Blessed Sacrament exposed here: how there must, as it were, an unseen influence go forth from It: as, of old time, the mere hem of the Lord's garment could make the sick whole. You then, who are called to do more, to bear more than others, at all events you can draw more close than others to the very Source of life and strength. All things that you do, or have done, at a distance from this place, are only the rays, as it were, the effluence, so to speak, of that Blessed Sacrament: surrounded, Itself, not as the painters represent It, with a golden glory, but with a halo of works of love. All, first and last, comes from that Sacrament: to the dear Lord, now concealed in that Sacrament, but hereafter to be seen eye to eye and face to face, without any symbol or riddle or type, we can only apply that which David said of old, in doing any good work for His sake: "All things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee."

RESPONSIBILITY.

This only I desire to remind you: what is the gratitude you owe to God for the privilege you enjoy of receiving It as you do? We are, all of us, too apt to forget this glorious privilege, what it is. Perhaps the best way of realising it is to remember what we should have thought of the happiness of those who had it, before we had it ourselves. Dearest Sisters, on the whole I am well satisfied with your efforts; I see the strength of the Blessed Sacrament in what you do for God. But can I say, can you, any of you, say, that altogether you are living and conversing, treating each other as those should, obedient, gentle, loving, as those should be who receive the Immaculate Lamb almost daily? Judge yourselves by that rule. "This day, the Son of God has touched me, dwelt in me, mingled Himself with me. To-morrow He will do the same thing. When I come to-morrow to receive Him, when I stretch out my hand to receive His Body, can I say that that hand has, since it touched Him last, done nothing to offend Him? When that Body touches my lips, can I say these lips, since He touched them last, have spoken no idle word?" I do not wish to put a difficulty in your way of receiving Him, as I should in any Sisterhood but this; I mean, where the Sisters were, from year's end to year's end, always in the Oratory, and able to communicate. It is not so with you. Some of you, by to-morrow night, may be fifty miles off, and never see the Blessed Sacrament again for a month. Therefore you not only may, but ought to feed upon It while you can.

But then, O my Sisters, how carefully! Think of these three things which you may say: —

"I call myself the Lamb's Bride.

"When at home, I receive His Body and Blood daily.

"Any day, I might be called to go forth to almost certain death; and some day in probability, my Superiors, in telling me to go to this or that place, will pronounce, though they know it not, my death-warrant."

And ought you not, my Sisters, to be Saints? If, hereafter, you do not approach at least to that title, how can you hope to be saved at all?

God grant me so to speak, you so to hear, that you may be my hope, and joy and crown of rejoicing: if it shall please God that I attain the lowest place in the Kingdom of Heaven, that you may be my glory and my joy!

