ANDOVER-HARVARD LIBRARY
AH 3UE4 Z

Harvard Depository
Brittle Book

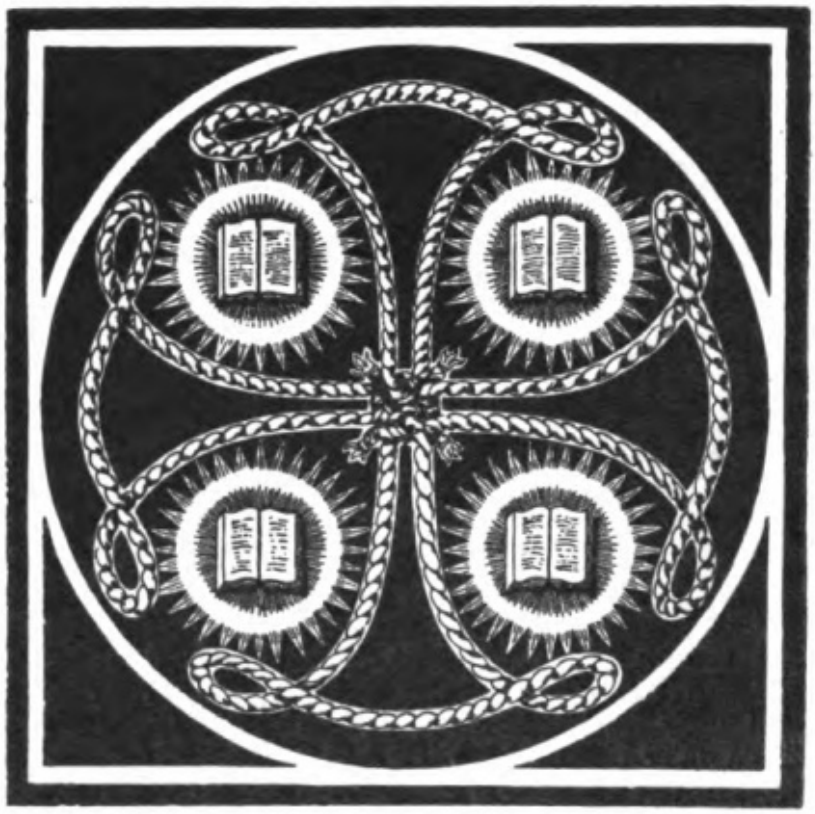
SELECTIONS FROM FENELON

606.2
F33.2
1879

WISDOM SERIES

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

606.2 F33.2 1879



NON DE·ERRORE·NEQUE IN·DOLO

JAMES·HARDY·ROPES

ANDOVER
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

THE GIFT OF

ALICE · LOWELL · ROPES

1933

ANDOVER–HARVARD
THEOLOGICAL LIBRARY

Digitized by Google

Original from
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Digitized by Google

Original from
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Harriet L. Popes

The gift of

M. W. Filston.

Digitized by Google

Original from
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Digitized by Google

Original from
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Selections

FROM

FÉNELON.

BOSTON:
Roberts Brothers.
1879.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

ANDOVER-HARVARD
THEOLOGICAL LIBRARY
CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

Copyright, 1879,
BY ROBERTS BROTHERS.

UNIVERSITY PRESS:
JOHN WILSON AND SON, CAMBRIDGE.

Digitized by Google
Original from
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

PREFACE.

THIS little volume of selections from Fénelon is based chiefly on a recent translation by Mrs. H. L. Sidney Lear, published by Rivingtons, London, in two volumes; one of spiritual letters to men, the other to women. I found on comparing this translation with the French, that, although generally faithful, and very easy and felicitous, it did not follow the original so closely as I should desire, and therefore I have altered it freely in order to express the thoughts of Fénelon as nearly as possible in his own words, and not in a paraphrase. I am also largely indebted to Mrs. Follen's translation, which I have altered, whenever necessary, for the same reason. For a portion of the "Christian Counsels" which follow the Letters, I must express my thanks to Mr. George P. Bradford,

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

who has kindly allowed me to make use of a small volume of selections from Fénelon, anonymously published by him many years ago. The brief memoir of Fénelon is condensed from a Life of the Archbishop by the English translator above-mentioned, with connecting sentences and paragraphs occasionally supplied from the Memoir by Mrs. Follen.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

CONTENTS.

PAGE

MEMOIR OF FÉNELON xi

Spiritual Letters to Women.

I. TO THE DUCHESSE DE BEAUVILLIERS.
ON MEDITATION AND PRAYER . . 1

II. TO THE COMTESSE DE GRAMONT.
THE NEED OF DEVOTION IN A WORLDLY LIFE 5

III. TO BEAR ANNOYANCES PATIENTLY . 5

IV. ON KEEPING SILENCE 9

V. ON SILENCE AND RECOLLECTION . . 10

VI. EXHORTATION TO SIMPLICITY AND A CHILDLIKE SPIRIT 12

VII. TO AVOID DISDAINFUL MANNERS . . 13

VIII. ACCEPTANCE OF GOD'S WILL . . . 14

IX. PEACE AMID TRIAL 14

X. NOT TO DELAY SEEKING PERFECTION. 15

XI. TO RESERVE TIME FOR DEVOTION . 18

XII. SUPPORT UNDER DIFFICULTY . . . 19

XIII. TO AVOID RESTLESS ANXIETY ABOUT THE FUTURE 20

XIV. TO ACQUIRE THE HABIT OF RECOLLECTION 22

XV. SELF-RENUNCIATION THE ONLY WAY TO PEACE 25

Digitized by Google

Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

		Page
XVI.	To the Comtesse de Montberon. Exhortation to Entire Trust in God	27
XVII.	To avoid Restless Activity in the Service of God . . .	28
XVIII.	Advice concerning Prayer . .	30
XIX.	On leaving All to Providence.	31
XX.	Upon bearing with Ourselves as we bear with Others . .	33
XXI.	To avoid Forebodings, and live by Faith	35
XXII.	To calm the Imagination . .	37
XXIII.	Not to be discouraged by our Imperfections	39
XXIV.	Not to listen to the Imagination	40
XXV.	On the Privation of Sensible Sweetness.	40
XXVI.	Faith in the midst of Crosses	41
XXVII.	To see our Faults in Peace, in the Spirit of Love	42
XXVIII.	To avoid Eager Planning . .	43
XXIX.	To prefer Love and Humility to Learning	44
XXX.	To use well the Present Moment	45
XXXI.	To bear Affronts with Humility and in Silence . . .	46
XXXII.	On calmly enduring the Irregularities of Others . . .	47
XXXIII.	The Necessity and Benefit of Suffering	49
XXXIV.	Need of calming our Natural Activity	50
XXXV.	Forbearance to Others . . .	51
XXXVI.	One's Disposition cannot be altered at once	52
XXXVII.	Upon carrying the Spirit of Prayer into all our Actions	54

Digitized by Google

Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

		Page
XXXVIII.	Over-Eagerness	55
XXXIX.	On dwelling in the Presence of God	56
XL.	To gain the Spirit of Recollection	57
XLI.	How to live in Peace with Others	58
XLII.	To labor more for Inward than Outward Perfection	59
XLIII.	To combine Exactness with Freedom	63
XLIV.	Prayer effectual for Everything	65
XLV.	Forbearance with the Faults of Others	67
XLVI.	Daily Crosses	68
XLVII.	The Will more important than the Feelings	69
XLVIII.	How to accept all God's Dealings thankfully	70
XLIX.	Self-Consciousness	71
L.	On the Sources of Peace	73
LI.	Entire Self-Surrender	74
LII.	On bearing with Others	75
LIII.	Gentleness and Humility	77
LIV.	On Crosses	78
LV.	How to govern wisely	79
LVI.	On Indecision and Weakness	80

Letters to Men.

LVII.	Happiness found in the Service of God	81
LVIII.	To One irresolute in his Conversion	83
LIX.	To follow God's Leading	84

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

		Page
LX.	On Self-Confidence	86
LXI.	On Candor and Humility . .	87
LXII.	Rules for a Soul newly turned to God	88
LXIII.	Advice concerning the Inner and Outer Life	91
LXIV.	Surrender to God during Inward Vicissitudes	95
LXV.	Peace in Suffering	97
LXVI.	We must endure the Faults of Others	99
LXVII.	Resignation to the Will of God	100
LXVIII.	To the Duc de Chevreuse. On the Difficulties of a Busy Life	101
LXIX.	To preserve the Spirit of Prayer in Business . . .	105
LXX.	The Will of God should be our All	106
LXXI.	On Prayer and Self-Surrender	107
LXXII.	On Distractions	108
LXXIII.	How to bear Crosses	110
LXXIV.	God proportions our Sufferings to our Strength . .	111
LXXV.	Indulgence for the Faults of Others	112
LXXVI.	Patience with the Infirmities of Others	113
LXXVII.	Anxiety concerning the Future	114
LXXVIII.	How to deal wisely with the Faults of Others . .	115
LXXIX.	To the Duke of Burgundy. That the Love of God should be our only Rule and End	118

Digitized by Google

Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Christian Counsels.

		Page
LXXX.	On the Employment of Time	121
LXXXI.	On the Amusements that belong to our Condition .	124
LXXXII.	The Burden of Prosperity	127
LXXXIII.	To suffer in Silence . .	129
LXXXIV.	On Christian Perfection .	130
LXXXV.	On the Presence of God .	133
LXXXVI.	On Conformity to the Will of God	138
LXXXVII.	On Inward Peace	141
LXXXVIII.	On Prayer	143
LXXXIX.	On Self-Denial	146
XC.	On Temptations	147
XCI.	On Depression	149
XCII.	On Wandering Thoughts and Depression	150
XCIII.	Upon Daily Faults	156
XCIV.	On Fidelity in Small Matters	159
XCV.	On Detachment from Self	163
XCVI.	On the Practice of Self-Renunciation	165
XCVII.	On Piety	166
XCVIII.	On Simplicity	173

Reflections and Meditations.

XCIX.	On True Devotion	178
C.	On Patience in Suffering .	179
CI.	On Submission and Conformity to the Will of God.	180
CII.	On the Faults of Others .	182
CIII.	On the one Thing Necessary	183

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

		Page
CIV.	On our Daily Bread	185
CV.	On the Peace of the Soul . .	186
CVI.	On the Depths of the Mercy of God	187
CVII.	On the Right Employment of Time	189
CVIII.	On Love of our Neighbor . . .	190
CIX.	On Trust in God	191
CX.	"Teach us to pray"	192
CXI.	"What wilt Thou have me to Do?"	193

Digitized by Google

Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Memoir of Fénelon.

FRANÇOIS DE SALIGNAC DE LA MOTHE FÉNELON was born Aug. 6, 1651, at the Château de Fénelon, about three miles from Sarlat, in Perigord. He was a delicate child, of a fragile and sensitive temperament, and the idol of his old father, who kept him at home till he was twelve years old, giving him "a simple Christian education, devoid of anything remarkable, and probably all the better for that," as one of his biographers remarks. However, the foundation of Fénelon's future exquisite style and finished classical acquirements seems to have been laid in the course of this simple home education; for, after being a short time at the College of Cahors, his uncle, the Marquis Antoine de Fénelon, found him so advanced in his education as to make a removal to Paris desirable. Apparently, the father of Fénelon must have died about this time, as henceforth we hear nothing of him,

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

but find the Marquis taking the part of father towards his nephew, whom he removed to the Collége du Plessis. There François speedily distinguished himself as a scholar, and also as possessing the gift of eloquence, for which he became so conspicuous later. Like Bossuet, he was put forward at fifteen to preach to an admiring audience; and very soon his personal attractions, captivating manner, and advanced scholarship made the Marquis de Fénelon anxious lest his young nephew should be spoiled by the flattery and adoration of the world. He was soon removed to the seminary of Saint Sulpice, then governed by the saintly Tronson, who thenceforward was always Fénelon's dearest friend and counsellor.

The Congregation of Saint Sulpice had at this time a large missionary establishment in Canada, to which sundry students from the seminary had gone; and it seems that François desired to follow in their steps, and become a missionary. His uncle, the Bishop of Sarlat, was much opposed to the step, and, though disappointed, François returned to Saint Sulpice, and devoted himself perseveringly to study, until he was ordained. After

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

receiving holy orders, he continued to work in the parish of Saint Sulpice, attached to the Congregation founded by M. Olier, — a good school for parochial work and for apostolic self-denial, where he became acquainted with the needs and sufferings of the poor, the sick, and the sinful. In 1675 he desired to become a missionary to Greece, but he relinquished the project, probably out of consideration for his uncle.

The next thing that we hear of him is his appointment by the Archbishop of Paris as Superior of the community called the *Nouvelles Catholiques*. This community had been founded in 1634, as a protection for women converted from Protestantism, and as a means of propagating Church teaching among those yet unconverted. For ten years he devoted himself to his work in connection with this community, to study, and to the society of the few learned and pious friends with whom he chiefly lived. Foremost among these was his uncle, the Marquis, who, however, died Oct. 8, 1683, and it was as the loss of a father to Fénelon. The Duc de Beauvilliers was another intimate friend, and it was at the request of the Duchesse, who was the mother of eight

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

daughters, that the Abbé Fénelon (who had by this time become a spiritual guide as well as a dear friend in the family) wrote his first book, which has been so celebrated ever since, — the *Traité de l'Education des Filles*.

In October, 1685, Louis XIV. revoked the Edict of Nantes, and the religious troubles which disturbed France in consequence are a matter of history. Bossuet suggested the Abbé de Fénelon as a suitable missionary for the districts of Poitou and Saintonge, where great confusion and irritation prevailed, and where only a tender, judicious hand could hope to guide the reins. In consequence of this suggestion, the king sent for Fénelon, and, after a conference of some length, appointed him to the work, not without a stipulation on the part of the latter that the troops, together with all that savored of military terrorism, should be dismissed before he entered upon what should be solely a work of peace and mercy. The people of those provinces, which had so long been the scene of religious strife and war, were at first amazed to see men of high birth and position leave the court and capital to come among them. They supposed that, at all events, such men would be

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

luxurious and haughty, according to the descriptions they were wont to hear, from their ministers, of the great Babylon and its denizens; and when, on the contrary, they saw in the missionaries nothing but lowly, self-denying, simple-mannered priests, whose real aim seemed the welfare, temporal as well as spiritual, of those they lived among, prejudices began to melt away. Those who were not converted by him were charmed with his character; and, while they refused to yield to his pathetic exhortations, they never refused him their esteem and their admiration, and, we may even say, their love and confidence.

The reputation which Fénelon acquired by his exertions in Poitou, made him an object of public attention, and it was not long after, in August, 1689, that he was appointed preceptor to the Duke of Burgundy, the grandson of the king, and heir apparent to the kingdom. This he owed to the friendship and esteem of the Duc de Beauvilliers, who had been appointed by the king to be the governor to the young prince, and who immediately named Fénelon for his preceptor.

Fénelon was at this time thirty-eight, and the unanimous testimony of all who have men-

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

tioned him in contemporaneous writings sets him before us as a singularly gifted and attractive man. The Duc de Saint Simon, himself too entirely a man of the world really to understand any one who was not actuated by a worldly spirit, and whose satirical, misanthropical character colors all his impressions, gives a most fascinating description of Fénelon, although he so far misinterprets the great Archbishop's life as to say, that "no man ever possessed so inveterate a desire to please every one, from the prince to the peasant; and no man ever pursued that desire with a more steady, continuous, universal persistence; neither did any one ever succeed more entirely." To the last sentence we may cordially assent; but those who will patiently follow the course of Fénelon's life will be ready to say, that, if he possessed so strong a desire to please, it was certainly held in very wondrous control by a stronger conscience, which led him to say and do things most unacceptable to the highest quarters when duty interfered. In one sense it was true, for probably few ever lived whose hearts more abounded in love for all men, and in the consequent burning desire to pour out love and kindness upon them.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Saint Simon gives a graphic description of Fénelon's appearance: — "This prelate was a tall, thin man, well made, pale, with a large nose, eyes whence fire and talent streamed as from a torrent, and a physiognomy the like of which I have never seen in any other man, and which, once seen, one could never forget. It combined everything, and the greatest contradictions produced no want of harmony. It united seriousness and gayety, gravity and courtesy, the man of learning, the bishop, and the *grand seigneur;* the prevailing characteristics, as in everything about him, being refinement, intellect, gracefulness, modesty, and, above all, *noblesse*. It was difficult to take one's eyes off him. All his portraits are speaking, and yet none of them have caught the exquisite harmony which struck one in the original, or the exceeding delicacy of every feature. His manners corresponded to his appearance, his perfect ease was infectious to others, and his conversation was stamped with the grace and good taste which are only acquired by habitual intercourse with the best society and the great world. He possessed a natural eloquence, graceful and finished, and a most insinuating, yet noble and appropriate

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

courtesy ; an easy, clear, agreeable utterance ; a wonderful power of explaining the hardest matters in a lucid, distinct manner. Add to all this, that he was a man who never sought to seem cleverer than those with whom he conversed, who brought himself insensibly to their level, putting them at their ease, and inthralling them so, that one could neither leave him, nor mistrust him, nor help seeking him again."

A not less attractive portrait is given us by a very different stamp of man, the Chancellor D'Aguesseau, who, in his *Mémoires sur les Affaires de l'Eglise de France*, says : "The Abbé de Fénelon was one of those rare men who are destined to create an epoch in their times, and to do honor as much to humanity by their virtues as to letters by their exceeding talent, — easy, brilliant, characterized by a fertile, graceful, dominant imagination, which yet never made its domination felt. His eloquence was rather winning than vehement, and he reigned as much through the charm he had in society as by the superiority of his talents ; always bringing himself to the level of others, and never arguing, seeming, on the contrary, to yield to others at the very time

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

he was convincing them. His lips poured forth graciousness, and he seemed to handle the weightiest matters with perfect ease, while the veriest trifles assumed dignity beneath his hand, and he could have brought forth flowers from amid thorns. His whole bearing was marked with a noble singularity, and an indescribable and sublime simplicity gave a sort of prophet-like stamp to his character: the fresh, though unaffected, way in which he expressed himself made many people fancy that he knew everything by inspiration. It seemed almost as if he had invented rather than acquired the sciences. He was always original, always creative, imitating no one, and himself wholly inimitable."

His mind, dead to vanity, was in conversation entirely given up to the person with whom he conversed. Men of every profession, proficients in every branch of knowledge, were at ease in his company. He directed every one first to the subject he best understood, and then he disappeared at once, thus giving them an opportunity to produce out of their own stock the materials they were most able to furnish.

The Abbé Galet, who was continually with

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

him, and therefore saw him under all circumstances, says: "I never knew him to speak brusquely to any one, nor to the best of my knowledge did a harsh or contemptuous word ever escape him."

And De Ramsai writes: "He had the faculty of putting himself on a level with all minds, never seeming to feel cleverer than those with whom he was talking, but rather bringing out their powers by an unconscious graceful setting aside of his own. I have seen him adapt himself within a short space of time to all classes, — associating with the great, and using their style, without any loss of episcopal dignity, and then turning to the lowly and young, like a kind father teaching his children. There was no effort or affectation in his readiness to turn from one to the other; it seemed as though his mind naturally embraced all varieties."

The character of the little Duke of Burgundy, who was seven years old when Fénelon took charge of him, is described as violent and difficult to manage. "Monseigneur was born with a disposition which made one tremble," Saint Simon wrote, while the Duke was still living. "He was so passionate, that he

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

would break the clocks when they struck the hour which summoned him to some unwelcome duty, and fly into the wildest rage with the rain which hindered some pleasure. Resistance made him perfectly furious. I have often been a witness to this in his early childhood. Moreover, a strong inclination attracted him to whatever was forbidden to body or mind. His satirical power was all the more biting that it was clever and pungent, and he seized promptly on the ridiculous side of things. He gave himself up to all that pleased him with violent passion, and with an amount of pride and *hauteur* past description; he was dangerously quick in penetrating both things and people, in seeing the weak side, and in reasoning more powerfully and deeply than his masters. But, on the other hand, as soon as the storm of passion was over, reason would return and get the upper hand; he would see his faults, and acknowledge them, sometimes so regretfully as almost to renew the storm. His mind was lively, quick, penetrating, resolute to meet difficulties; literally speaking, transcendent in every way. The marvel is, that in so short a time devotion and grace should have made an

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

altogether new being of him, and changed so many redoubtable faults into the entirely opposite virtues." Besides the above description of Saint Simon's, he tells us in various places that the Duke was intensely obstinate, desperately fond of good eating, of hunting, of music, and of games, at which it was dangerous to play with him, as he could not endure to be beaten; that he was disposed to be cruel, and that he looked upon the rest of mankind as an inferior race, with which he had nothing in common. Even his brothers, who were supposed to be brought up on precisely the same footing as himself, he considered as merely a sort of link between him and the ordinary human race.

The child's literary education was not the burdensome side of Fénelon's preceptorship, though he spared no pains in that. The real struggle was with his fiery temperament. Patience and gentleness, together with firmness, were the only means of meeting these attacks of fury, which had probably been altogether mismanaged hitherto in nursery government. When one of the evil moods seized upon him, it was an understood thing in the household that every one relapsed into an unwonted

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

silence ; — nobody spoke to him if he could help it ; his attendants waited upon him with averted eyes, as though reluctant to witness his degradation through passion. He was treated with the sort of humiliating compassion which might be shown to a madman ; his books and appliances for study were put aside as useless to one in such a state, and he was left to his own reflections. Gradually these would bring the passionate but generous child to a better mind ; and then, full of penitence, he would come and throw himself, in the fullest affection and trust, mixed with childish remorse, upon the never-failing patience and goodness of the preceptor, whom he almost worshipped to his dying day, — suffering more real pain from that which he was conscious of having caused to one whom he loved far better than he could possibly have loved his father, than from the severest punishment that could have been inflicted. Gradually he learned to assist those who strove to conquer his faults by his own efforts.

It was during these years that Fénelon wrote his *Dialogues des Morts*, and his *Télémaque*.

Those were days in which disinterestedness

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

was rare, and men were not the less esteemed because they strove to profit themselves and their families to the utmost in whatever position they filled. Consequently, it is the more remarkable that not only did Fénelon make to himself a rule, which he steadily kept, never to ask anything on his own behalf, or that of his family or friends, but that he actually continued in a state of extremely straitened means for more than five years after entering upon his honorable position about the royal children. It was not till 1694 that the king seems to have remembered or discovered how badly his grandson's preceptor was provided for. In that year, at last, he gave Fénelon the Abbey of St. Valéry.

Meanwhile the world's honors and admiration fell thick upon the Abbé, who was a universal favorite among all who knew him. He was chosen as a member of the French Academy in 1693. In 1695, he was elevated to the dignity of Archbishop of Cambrai. He showed his disinterestedness by immediately resigning the Abbey of St. Valéry. Louis at first refused to receive his resignation, but Fénelon insisted, saying the resources of the archbishopric of Cambrai were such as to make it an infringe-

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

ment of canonical law to hold any other preferment with it.

A short time before his nomination to the archbishopric, his acquaintance began with Madame Guyon, which was the cause of his unhappy controversy with his friend Bossuet. The doctrine of disinterested love, or that God is to be loved for His own perfections, without any view to future rewards or punishments, appears to have been the radical point of controversy. Those who supposed that they had attained this habitual state of divine love were called Quietists, from the perfect freedom from hope or fear that it produced. They thought that God was to be worshipped in the entire silence and stillness of the soul, in a perfect renunciation of self to Him.

Fénelon, who was one of four ecclesiastics appointed to examine this doctrine of Madame Guyon, could find nothing in it to condemn, and he even defended her as far as he could against her persecutors, who thus were made enemies to himself. When he was accused of holding doctrines contrary to the true faith, and was called upon to make his defence by a declaration of his true sentiments, he published his *Explication des Maximes des*

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Saints sur la Vie Intérieure. Bossuet, who was entirely opposed to Fénelon upon the doctrine of disinterested love to God, used this book as a weapon against him; he accused Fénelon to the king of fanaticism. As Louis in his heart had never liked a man whose whole life and character were a tacit reproach upon his own, he readily believed all that was said against him. Fénelon was forbidden to remain in Paris, and soon after the king, with his own hand, struck out his name as preceptor of the Duke of Burgundy.

The controversy, which was carried on with great warmth by Bossuet, and supported on the part of Fénelon with great ability, but with unfailing meekness, was finally submitted to the Pope and his Cardinals. The Pontiff disapproved of some propositions which were advanced by Fénelon, and the Archbishop acquiesced. The Pope is said to have made a remark respecting the controversy, which could not have been very pleasing to the opponents of Fénelon. "Fénelon," he said, "was in fault for too great love of God; and his enemies were in fault for too little love of their neighbor." The enemies of Fénelon finally succeeded in obtaining the condemna-

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

tion of his book, *Les Maximes*. It was with great reluctance that the Pope yielded at last to their importunity; and, in the manner in which he issued the decree, he showed the greatest tenderness and respect for Fénelon.

The Comte de Fénelon, brother of the Archbishop, heard the tidings first in Paris, and started off instantly for Cambrai, thinking that to receive them through a kindly channel would at least lighten their weight; and he arrived on the festival of the Annunciation, just as the Archbishop was about to preach in the cathedral. Fénelon was but human, and it is not possible but that he must have felt the blow; nevertheless, with his usual marvellous sweetness and freedom from self-consciousness, he was not disconcerted, as most men would have been, but merely paused a brief while in order to arrange his thoughts, and then, throwing aside his intended sermon on the special festival they were keeping, he preached on the duty of absolute submission to authority. The news of his trouble was already whispered about among the congregation, which was riveted by the noble simplicity and calm dignity of the Archbishop, and the eyes of most overflowed with tears of admira-

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

tion and respect as they listened to his heart-felt words. He immediately prepared his public declaration of submission to the decree of the Pope. It was simple, entire, and without any reserve. The submission of Fénelon was neither a respectful silence nor a measure of policy, nor any compromise with truth, but, as he himself said to a friend, "an inward act of obedience, rendered to God alone, according to the principles of Catholicism. I regarded," says Fénelon, "the decision of my superiors as an echo of the Supreme Will; I forgot all the passions, prejudices, and disputes which preceded my condemnation; I heard God speak to me as he did to Job; I accepted my condemnation in its most extensive sense." He very justly discriminated between the meaning he intended to convey in his book and the actual sense of the text, of which he considered the Pope the infallible judge. While he still solemnly asserted that it had never been his intention to advocate those errors for which his book was condemned, the Pope's condemnation was sufficient to convince him that these errors were there expressed.

Fénelon seems not to have regarded his

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

banishment to his diocese as any calamity, except from a fear that it might lessen his usefulness; he loved the country and rural pleasures. In the course of his walks, he would often join the peasants, sit down with them on the grass, talk with them, and console them. He visited them in their cottages, seated himself at table with them, and partook of their humble meals. By such kindness and familiarity he won their affections, and gained access to their minds. Long after his death, the old people who had had the happiness of seeing him on these occasions spoke of him with the most tender reverence. "There," they would say, "is the chair in which our good Archbishop used to sit in the midst of us; we shall see him no more"; — and then their tears would flow. He devoted himself to the duties and responsibilities of his diocese, which he worked with the power of a man of vast capacity and the simple industry of an humble priest. "Everything about and around him," says Saint Simon, "was in the most perfect order. His mornings were devoted to diocesan business. By reason of his powerful talent and penetration, combined with daily attention to whatever claimed his eye, this was a

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

comparatively short and easy task. That ended, he received all that sought him, then said mass in his chapel. That done, he dined or breakfasted with his guests, who were always numerous, eating but little himself, yet lingering at table for the sake of others, while charming them by the ease, the variety, the cheerfulness of his conversation. He then used to retire to his study, and work there for some hours, which were lengthened if the weather was bad, or if he had no external duties to perform. On leaving his study, he would go to pay needful visits, or take a country walk. He spent the evening with whoever was in his house, supping with the military or other great people who might arrive. He ate even less than at dinner, and he always went to bed before midnight." His wardrobe was always very scanty, and he would use none but the simplest materials. He ate very little, and only the plainest food. He gave but a short time to sleep, and his working hours began early, so that he had already done nearly a day's work before saying mass.

Comparatively few of his sermons remain to us in full written form; his usual method of preparing them seems to have been to

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

make a "*plan*." This was most carefully worked out, usually occupying three or four pages of print, and leaving all but the skeleton to be filled up in preaching. While carrying on all this laborious and steadfast pastoral work, Fénelon likewise found time for an enormous correspondence, sometimes to a considerable extent concerning ecclesiastical affairs, partly literary, but in the main spiritual. Perhaps his spiritual letters are the most perfect things of their kind anywhere to be found, and multitudes who never have read and never will read any of his published works have found infinite solace and benefit in the wise, tender, thoughtful letters which poured from his ready pen on behalf of all who sought comfort and guidance from one of the most sympathizing and ablest friends and directors that ever lived.

Situated as he was on the very border-land of France and Flanders, surrounded by hostile armies and belligerents of all nations, Fénelon's position was one requiring tact and discretion; and the surest proof that he exercised both is to be found in the fact that from first to last he won the respect and veneration of friend and foe. All distinctions of religion

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

and sect, all feelings of hatred and jealousy that divided the nations, seemed to disappear in the presence of Fénelon. Military escorts were offered him for his personal security; but these he declined, and traversed the countries desolated by war to visit his flock, trusting in the protection of God. In these visits, his way was marked by alms and benefactions. He brought together into his palace the wretched inhabitants of the country whom the war had driven from their homes, and took care of them, and fed them at his own table. Seeing one day that one of these peasants ate nothing, he asked him the reason of his abstinence. "Alas! my lord," said the poor man, "in making my escape from my cottage, I had not time to bring off my cow, which was the support of my family. The enemy will drive her away, and I shall never find another so good." Fénelon, availing himself of his privilege of safe-conduct, immediately set out, accompanied by a single servant, and drove the cow back himself to the peasant.

Another anecdote, showing his tenderness to the poor, is thus related of him. A literary man, whose library was destroyed by fire, is

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

deservedly admired for saying, "I should have profited but little by my books, if they had not taught me how to bear the loss of them." The remark of Fénelon, who lost his in a similar way, is still more simple and touching: "I would much rather they were burnt than the cottage of a poor peasant."

One of the curates of his diocese complained to him that he was unable to put a stop to dances on the feast days. "Let us abstain from amusement ourselves," said Fénelon to him, "but let us permit these poor people to dance. Why prevent them from forgetting for a moment their poverty and wretchedness?" He bestowed devoted care, also, upon the sick and wounded who were frequently brought to Cambrai. His kindness and humanity to the sufferers in the war endeared him to the whole nation. His charity embraced the rich and the poor, his friends and his enemies. His polite attentions extended to prisoners of war, as well as to his own countrymen.

Fénelon showed his magnanimity as well as his charity during the war. He was then an exile in his own diocese, and in disgrace with the king; but the enemy had been his pro-

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

tectors and friends; and while all France was suffering from famine, his magazines were filled with grain. He distributed it among the soldiers of his unjust master, and refused to receive any pay for it, saying, "The king owes me nothing, and in times of calamity it is my duty, as a citizen and a bishop, to give back to the state what I have received from it." It was thus he avenged himself for his disgrace.

Thus passed Fénelon's life till the melancholy death of the Duke of Burgundy, in 1712. His death was a sad blight upon the fairest hopes of the nation. Fénelon's highest wishes seemed to be realized in him; the eyes and hopes of all were upon him. The Duc de Beauvilliers, to whom Fénelon was deeply attached, died in 1714. This was a heavy trial, and a profound grief to the Archbishop. He only survived his friend four months. His health had been feeble for some years; a severe shock, received from the upsetting of his carriage, induced a fever, which began Jan. 1, 1715, and which caused his death at the end of a week. In his last sickness, he displayed the most admirable fortitude and submission. There was the same sweetness

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

of temper, composure of mind, love for his fellow-creatures, and confidence in God, which had distinguished his whole life. During the last two days and nights he was continually asking those around to repeat the special passages of Holy Scripture which were most adapted to his state. "Say those divine words again!" he often exclaimed; and then he would try to repeat them himself with a failing voice, while his eyes and whole countenance were lighted up with the bright expression of faith and love which the sacred words inspired. He passed gently away at a quarter past five on the early morning of Jan. 7, 1715, at the age of sixty-three. So ended a life of unchanging love and union with God.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Digitized by Google

Original from
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Selections from Fénelon.

SPIRITUAL LETTERS.

I.

To the Duchesse de Beauvilliers.

ON MEDITATION AND PRAYER.

READ over the subject of your meditation, either in the Bible or whatever book you may be using. Pause, after a verse or two, to follow out such reflections as God may suggest. Consider how Jesus Christ practised the truth or the precept which he is teaching you; how those faithful souls whom you yourself know are practising it; how the world neglects it; how you have departed from it, and why. Then lay your shame before God, prostrating yourself before him in the solitude of your closet. Then reflect upon the occasions which cause you to commit these faults, and the best means of avoiding

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

and remedying them; what the Lord justly requires of you, that you may keep from such falls, and repair the past; pray Him to fill your heart with all that He would see in it; ask Him to strengthen the determination to improve, which He has given you; trust in His goodness, and in His solemn promises never to forsake us in time of need; and rest in the hope that He will finish the good work which He has begun in you.

In order to make this plain to you, I will give you an illustration of my meaning. Suppose the subject of your meditation to be the first words of the seventeenth chapter of St. John, which I was studying just before I began to write to you: Jesus Christ, addressing his Father, and saying, "I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do."

Consider what is meant by glorifying God on the earth. Jesus Christ explains it clearly in the words, "I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do." So that to glorify God we must know and perform that which He gives us to do. Every one has his own work, and every one follows it out, but not always that work which God has given him to

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

do. All the work which I undertake from vanity, from a desire to get on in the world, from temper, fancy, taste, self-will, or human respect, is not that which God has given me to do, and consequently none of this can glorify Him; all such is the work of the world, the flesh, or the Devil.

The work which God has given me to do is to amend whatever is amiss in my natural disposition, — that is what He would have me do; correct my faults, sanctify my thoughts and desires, become more patient, more meek and lowly of heart. This, Madame, is your work; and to bring up your family solely for Him, to train it in indifference to the world, in gentleness, patience, modesty, and a real love of God. Examine whether you are doing this, and how you are doing it.

Consider what the saints have done, and are still setting before you as an example every day. The work which God gave them to do was often much harder than that which He gives you. They had fewer means and helps towards accomplishing it than you have; they were as weak, and subject to as many difficulties and hindrances, yet they achieved their end.

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

I speak and act on behalf of the Devil whenever I say or do that which is prompted by any evil temper; I set forward his work, and overthrow that of the Lord within me, the work which He has begun by giving me a will and wish to do better. Gentleness is Thy work, my God, and it is the work Thou hast given me to do. I cannot glorify Thee, save by striving after and fulfilling it in myself.

O God, am I called to put up with being badly served? I will do so gladly, if only I can thereby serve Thee well. My work is not to be well served, but to serve Thee well, to be gentle and patient under all that disturbs me.

There are a thousand like matters in daily life, which I cannot enumerate here, but which you can see for yourself how to deal with, so as to seek in prayer for strength from God to amend what is amiss, and confirm what is good. Everything which we see in the world can serve to keep us in the presence of God.

Do not trust to your good intentions if they are barren and without result. Labor bravely to become gentle and humble of heart. If something is done amiss which only affects

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

you personally, and what is due to yourself, bear it without saying anything. If any hasty word has escaped you, after inward humiliation for it, make amends by speaking kindly, and doing some little act of kindness, if possible, to those whom you have treated rudely. Never forget how God has dealt and does deal with you continually, how gently and patiently. Let that be your example; learn from Him how to deal with others.

Do not be disheartened by your falls. Inasmuch as they clearly point out your weak places, they ought to make you more humble, and more diligent in self-watchfulness, and in constant recourse to God as a means of preservation.

II.

*To the Comtesse de Gramont.**

THE NEED OF DEVOTION IN A WORLDLY LIFE.

Oct. 2, 1689.

IT seems to me, Madame, that you have two things to do, — one with respect to your engagements, the other with respect

* The following fifteen letters are all addressed to the same lady.

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

to yourself. The first consists in the care you should take to redeem some brief time from the world for reading and prayer. Try to rescue half an hour morning and evening. You must learn, too, to make good use of chance moments, — when waiting for some one, when going from place to place, or when in society, where to be a good listener is all that is required. One raises one's heart for an instant to God, and renews one's strength for further duties. The less time one has, the more important it is to husband it. If you wait till you have regular and convenient hours at your disposal to fill with substantial duties, you run the risk of waiting too long, especially in your kind of life; you must seize every chance moment. It is not in piety as in temporal affairs. The latter require free and regular seasons of continuous application; but piety has no need of such consecutive labor; in a moment you can recall the presence of God, love Him, adore Him, offer Him what you do or what you suffer, and calm before Him all the agitation of your heart. Take then, Madame, half an hour in the morning, and another half-hour in the afternoon, to repair the inroads which the world makes; and,

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

in the course of the day, make use of such thoughts as touch you most, to renew yourself in the presence of God.

The other duty which you owe to yourself is not to be discouraged, either by experience of your weakness, or by disgust at the agitated life which you lead. The only point is, to be faithful, patient, and peaceful under the crosses of your present condition, which you have not chosen, and which God has appointed according to His purposes.

As to faults, they are harder to bear with; but they will turn to good, if we make use of them to humble ourselves, without slackening in the endeavor to correct ourselves. Discouragement would remedy nothing; it would simply be the despair of wounded self-love.

III.

TO BEAR ANNOYANCES PATIENTLY.

As to daily matters which appertain to your duties, or to providential arrangements, although they may be inconvenient or distracting, you have only to endure them in peace. Behind each importunate intruder,

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

learn to see God governing all, and training you in self-denial alike through a troublesome acquaintance as through good examples. The intruder whom God sends us serves to thwart our will, upset our plans, to make us crave more earnestly for silence and recollection, to teach us to sit loose to our own arrangements, our rest, our ease, our taste ; to bend our will to that of others, to humble ourselves when impatience overcomes us under these annoyances, and to kindle in our hearts a greater thirst for God, even while He seems to be forsaking us because we are so disturbed.

Whatever comes from God's hand bears good fruit. Often those things which make you sigh after solitude are more profitable for your humiliation and self-denial than the most utter solitude would be. Let us go on as God leads us from day to day, making good use of every moment, without looking beyond it. Sometimes an exciting book, a fervent meditation, or a striking conversation, would gratify your taste, and make you feel satisfied and full of yourself, would persuade you that you were far advanced, and, while giving you fine thoughts about crosses, would only render you more haughty, and make you more sen-

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

sitive to those crosses which you would find in your path on coming from your religious exercises. Keep then to this simple rule: seek nothing dissipating, but bear in peace all that God sends you, against your will, to disturb you. What a delusion! we seek God afar off, in projects perhaps altogether unattainable, and we do not consider that we possess Him now in the midst of confusion, by the exercise of simple faith, provided we bear humbly and bravely the annoyances which come from others, and our own imperfections.

IV.

ON KEEPING SILENCE.

BE sure that humility, frequent silence and recollection, will do you more good than any amount of anxiety and self-chosen austerities. Silence is, above all, important for you. Even when you cannot withdraw from society, you might often practise silence, and let others take the lead in conversation. There is no way by which you can so effectually subdue your haughty, disdainful, contemptuous spirit, as by bridling it with silence.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Keep a strict watch upon your tongue. The presence of God, which restrains your words, will likewise keep all your thoughts and wishes in check. But this work must be accomplished gradually. Be patient with yourself, as well as with others.

V.

ON SILENCE AND RECOLLECTION.

I THINK, Madame, that you should try hard now to practise silence, so far as general courtesy will permit. Silence promotes the presence of God, prevents many harsh and proud words, and suppresses many dangers in the way of ridiculing or harshly judging our neighbor. Silence humbles the mind, and gradually weans it from the world; it makes a kind of solitude in the heart like that which you desire: it will supply all that you need under your present difficulties. If you retrenched all useless talk, you would have many available moments even in the midst of society, where you are obliged to stay against your will. You wish for freedom for prayer; while God, who knows what you

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

need better than you do, surrounds you with restraints and hampering claims. The hindrances which beset you in the order of God's Providence will profit you more than the sweetness of self-chosen prayer. You know very well that retirement is not essential to the love of God. When He gives you time, you must take it and profit by it; but meanwhile abide in faith, satisfied that what He gives you is best. Often lift up your heart to Him, without making any outward sign; talk only when it is necessary; and bear patiently with what crosses you. You have more need of self-denial than of light. If you are faithful in keeping silence when it is not necessary to speak, God will preserve you from evil when it is right for you to talk.

Your portion is to love, to be silent, to suffer, to sacrifice your inclinations, in order to fulfil the will of God, by moulding yourself to that of others. Happy indeed you are thus to bear a cross laid on you by God's own hands, in the order of His Providence. The discipline which we choose for ourselves does not destroy our self-love like that which God assigns us Himself each day. All we have to do is to give ourselves up to God day by day,

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

without looking further. He carries us in His arms as a loving mother carries her child. Let us believe, hope, love, with all the simplicity of children. In every need let us look with love and trust to our Heavenly Father.

VI.

EXHORTATION TO SIMPLICITY AND A CHILDLIKE SPIRIT.

NO one ever needed inward nourishment, silence, reflection, separation from the world, mistrust of self and inclination, more than you. You cannot practise too rigid a fast from the charms of worldly talk. You must be lowly, become as a little child, seeking only swaddling-clothes and pap, and even then you will be a naughty child !

Talk when you are alone ; you cannot talk too much then, for it will be to God alone that you will tell your troubles, your needs, and your longings. But in society you can hardly talk too little. It must not be a cold, disdainful silence, however, but rather a silence full of deference to others. I should be delighted to have you speak only to praise,

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

approve, sympathize, comply; but I am sure that if you speak in this manner only, you will say very little, and that conversation will seem tame to you. Constrain yourself then to say little, to speak simply and modestly, to give the precedence to other speakers, and to preserve recollection even in conversation.

VII.

TO AVOID DISDAINFUL MANNERS.

EVERYTHING like a proud or disdainful manner, all that savors of ridicule or censoriousness, indicates a soul full of itself, unconscious of its own faults, a prey to fastidiousness, and finding pleasure in the troubles of others. Nothing ought to humble us more than this sort of pride; so easily wounded, contemptuous, disdainful, haughty, jealous of its own rights, and always unforgiving towards the defects of others. One is very imperfect, when one is so impatient with the imperfections of others. Pray, read, humble your spirit by a taste for simple things. Seek your strength in silence.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

VIII.

ACCEPTANCE OF GOD'S WILL.

BEAR all the annoyances of your present condition, which is full of inconveniences and discomfort, in a penitential spirit; these are the penances God assigns you, and far more useful than what you may choose for yourself. The best state to be in is that in which God's hand holds you; do not look beyond it, and think only of accepting everything from moment to moment, in the spirit of self-denial and self-renunciation. But this acquiescence should be full of trust in God, who loves you more the less He spares you.

IX.

PEACE AMID TRIAL.

THE peace which you find in submission, without any change in outward matters, is a great gift. By it God trains you to bear trial without despondency; although your shrinking weak nature is depressed, your inner mind is upheld. Such a peace is all

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

the purer that it is somewhat bare and dry. Happy they who are ready to accept everything; who never say, It is too much; who depend, not on themselves, but upon the Almighty; who ask only such measure of consolation as God wills to give them, and who live by His will alone!

X.

NOT TO DELAY SEEKING PERFECTION.

WE ought to become holy in the state in which Providence has placed us, without making projects of goodness in the future; and we need the greatest faithfulness to God in the smallest things.

Most people spend the best part of their life in knowing and regretting their habits, in intending to change them, in making rules for some future time which they hope to have, but which often is not given to them, and thereby losing the time which they ought to employ in performing good deeds and working out their salvation.

You should treat such ideas as a very dangerous temptation. Our salvation is the work

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

of every day and every moment of our life. There is no time more fit for it than that which God mercifully grants us now; because we have time to-day, and perhaps we shall not have it to-morrow. That state of life to which God has called us is safe for us, if we fulfil all our duties therein.

The more you meet with dangers in your present state of life, the more you must keep watch over yourself, that you yield not to them. Keeping watch over self means listening to God; abiding always in His presence, being recollected, not voluntarily seeking dissipation or distractions among the things of this world; it means, as far as possible, loving retirement, good books, and prayer; it means what David calls "pouring out your heart before God;" finding Him within you, seeking Him earnestly, loving Him above all else, and avoiding all that we know to be displeasing to Him.

Accustom yourself to frequently adore His holy will, by humbly submitting your own to His orders and His Providence. Let us do what we know He requires of us, and as soon as we know His will, let us not spare ourselves, but be very faithful to Him. Such faithfulness ought not merely to lead us to do great

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

things for His service and for our salvation, but whatever our hand finds to do, and which belongs to our state of life. The smallest things become great when God requires them of us; they are small only in themselves; they are always great when they are done for God, and when they serve to unite us with Him eternally.

It seems to me that a soul which sincerely desires to belong to God never looks to see whether a thing is small or great; it is enough for it to know that He for whose love it is done is infinitely great, and that it is His due to have all creation solely devoted to His glory, which can only be by fulfilling His will.

Bear this continual burden in peace, and you will not fail to advance in the narrow way. One suffers, one is surrounded by contrarieties, one is even deprived of spiritual consolations; but one is free, because one wishes all that one has, and would not wish to be delivered from it. One bears one's own weakness, and one prefers it to the most attractive conditions, because it is God's choice. The great thing is to suffer without being discouraged.

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

XI.

TO RESERVE TIME FOR DEVOTION.

YOU greatly need certain free hours in which you could recollect yourself. Try to steal some, and be sure that these little parings of your days will be your best treasures. Above all, save your morning, and defend it as one defends a besieged city; make vigorous sallies upon intruders; clear the trenches, and then shut yourself up within your citadel. Even the afternoon is too long a period to let pass without taking breath.

Recollection is the only cure for your haughtiness, the sharpness of your contemptuous criticism, the sallies of your imagination, your impatience with those who serve you, your love of pleasure, and all your other faults. This is an excellent remedy, but it needs to be frequently renewed.

If you have not much time at your disposal, do not fail to profit by the smallest portions of time which remain to you. We do not need much time in order to love God, to renew ourselves in His presence, to lift up our hearts towards Him, to worship Him in the

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

depths of our hearts, to offer Him what we do and what we suffer. This is the true Kingdom of God within us, which nothing can disturb.

XII.

SUPPORT UNDER DIFFICULTY.

YOU need not doubt, Madame, as to what is your support under your difficulties. God is using them to detach you from yourself, and from the comfortable side of life. Recollection and fervor would do much less to lower your pride, and crucify your over-indulged senses.

Let your own choice incline always to reading, prayer, solitude, and silence. Be firm; deny yourself, especially at night, to prepare for yourself a more uninterrupted morning; but when Providence brings you unavoidable hindrances, do not be disturbed. Wheresoever God may lead you, there you will find Himself, in the most harassing business as in the most tranquil prayer.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

XIII.

TO AVOID RESTLESS ANXIETY ABOUT THE FUTURE.

THE crosses which we make for ourselves by a restless anxiety as to the future, are not crosses which come from God. We tempt Him by our false wisdom, wishing to forestall His arrangements, and struggling to supplement His Providence by our own providence. The fruit of our wisdom is always bitter, and God suffers it to be so that we may be discomfited when we forsake His Fatherly guidance. The future is not yet ours; perhaps it never will be. If it comes, it may come wholly different from what we have foreseen. Let us shut our eyes then to that which God hides from us, and keeps in reserve in the treasures of His deep counsels. Let us worship without seeing; let us be silent; let us abide in peace.

The crosses of the present moment always bring their grace, and consequently their comfort with them; we see in them the hand of God, which makes itself felt. But the crosses of anxious foreboding are seen out of the dis-

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

pensation of God; we see them without grace to bear them; we see them indeed through a faithless spirit which banishes grace. So, everything in them is bitter and unendurable; all seems dark and helpless. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof," said Jesus Christ; the evil of each day becomes good when we leave it to God. Who are we that we should ask Him, "Why doest Thou thus?" It is the Lord, and that is enough; it is the Lord, let Him do as seemeth Him good. Let us throw self aside; no more self-interest, and then God's will, unfolding every moment in everything, will console us also every moment for all that He shall do around us, or within us, for our discipline.

What! shall we be disheartened when it is the hand of God which is hastening to perform His work? It is what we are every day wishing that He should do; but when He begins to do it we are troubled, our cowardice and impatience hinder Him.

"May the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your heart and mind in Christ Jesus." Cut away every root of bitterness, and cast aside whatever troubles the peace and simple trust of the children of God.

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Let us turn to our Father in all our misfortunes; let us sink into that tender bosom, where nothing can fail us; let us rejoice in hope, and, far from the world and the flesh, let us taste the pure joy of the Holy Spirit. May our faith be unmoved in the midst of tempests; and may we ever hold firmly to these great words of the Apostle: "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose."

XIV.

TO ACQUIRE THE HABIT OF RECOLLECTION.

I THINK that you should try, without any painful effort, to occupy yourself with God as often as a longing for recollection, and regret that you cannot practise it, touch your heart. You must not wait for disengaged hours, when you can close your door and see nobody. The moment in which we crave after recollection is that in which we may practise it. Immediately turn your heart to God, simply, familiarly, and trustfully. All the most interrupted seasons are good, not only when you are out driving, but also when you

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

are dressing, having your hair arranged, even when you are eating, and when others are talking. Useless and tiresome details in conversation instead of fatiguing you will relieve you, by giving you intervals for recollection; instead of exciting your ridicule, they will give you freedom to collect your thoughts; and thus all things turn to good for those who seek God.

Another very important rule is to abstain from any fault whenever you perceive that you are about to commit it, and to bear courageously the humiliation involved if you only discover it when committed. If you perceive it before committing it, beware of resisting the Spirit of God, who is warning you inwardly, and whose voice you might stifle. Let everything in you yield to Him the moment He makes Himself felt. Faults of haste or frailty are nothing in comparison with those which close the ear to the secret voice of the Holy Spirit, which is beginning to speak in the depths of the soul.

As to faults which are not perceived till after they are committed, disquiet and the vexation of self-love will never make amends; on the contrary, this vexation is only the im-

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

patience of pride at the sight of what is upsetting to it. So the only way to deal with such faults is to humble yourself in peace. I say in peace, because one does not humble one's self when one takes humiliation with vexation and reluctance. You ought to condemn your fault without seeking to soften it by any excuse, and to see yourself before God in this state of confusion without being irritated at yourself and disheartened, but profiting in peace by your humiliation for your fault.

Often all that we offer to God is not that which He wills. What He desires most of us is what we are least willing to give Him, and what we dread to have Him ask of us. It is Isaac, the only son, the well-beloved, that He commands us to resign; all the rest is nothing in His sight, and He lets it be painful and fruitless, because His blessing is not upon the labor of a divided soul; it is His will that we should yield everything to Him; and, short of this, there is no repose. If you would prosper, and have God's blessing on your work, withhold nothing, cut to the quick, burn, spare nothing, and the God of peace will be with you. What consolation, what

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

liberty, what strength, what enlargement of heart, what growth in grace, when there is nothing left between God and the soul, and when we have offered everything to Him to the uttermost, without hesitation !

XV.

SELF-RENUNCIATION THE ONLY WAY TO PEACE.

So long as we dwell within ourselves, we shall be a prey to the opposition, the malignity, the injustice of men. Our temper brings us into collision with other tempers; our passions clash with those of our neighbors; our wishes are so many tender places open to the shafts of those around; our pride, which is incompatible with our neighbors', rises like the waves of a stormy sea; — everything rouses, attacks, rebuffs us. We are exposed on all sides by reason of the sensitiveness of our passions and the jealousy of our pride. No peace is to be looked for within when one lives at the mercy of a crowd of greedy and insatiable desires, and when we can never satisfy this "*me*" which is so keen and so touchy as to whatever concerns it.

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Hence in our intercourse with others we are like invalids who have been long confined to the bed, who cannot be touched anywhere without pain. A sickly self-love, full of pity for itself, cannot be touched without screaming. Touch it with the end of your finger, and it thinks itself flayed alive. Then add to this sensitiveness the roughness of other people, full of imperfections unknown to themselves, their disgust at our defects (at least as great as ours toward theirs), and you find all the children of Adam tormenting one another; half of mankind made unhappy by the other half, and rendering them miserable in their turn.

The only remedy is to come out of one's self in order to find peace. We must renounce ourselves, and lose all self-interest, that we may no longer have anything to lose, to fear, or to contrive. Then we shall enjoy the true peace reserved for "men of good will;" that is, for those who have no longer any will but God's, which becomes theirs. Then men will not be able to harm us; they can no longer attack us through our hopes or our fears; then we are willing to accept everything, and we refuse nothing.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

We may be worried, inconvenienced, distressed; but God causes it, and that is enough. We love the Hand which smites; we find peace in all these troubles, — happy peace, which follows us even to the cross! We wish what we have; we wish nothing of what we have not. The more perfect is our self-surrender, the more perfect is our peace.

XVI.

*To the Comtesse de Montberon.**

EXHORTATION TO ENTIRE TRUST IN GOD.

YOUR piety is a little too restless and uneasy. Do not distrust God; provided you do not fail Him, He will not fail you, but will give you such help as you need to serve Him. Believe God faithful in His promises, and He will give to you according to the measure of your faith. If you were forsaken in an inaccessible desert, manna would fall there from Heaven for you alone, and abundant waters would gush from the rocks. Fear

* The following letters, to No. XXX., are all addressed to this lady.

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

nothing then but to fail God, and you must not fear even that so far as to be distressed about it. Bear with yourself, then, as we bear with our neighbor without flattering him in his imperfections. Put aside all your mental and spiritual fastidiousness which you are disposed to display towards God as well as to men. There is a great deal of refined selfishness and complacency in all that. Be simple with Him who loves to communicate Himself to simple souls. "Blessed are the poor in spirit," — who have taken the vow of spiritual poverty, who live from day to day by continual alms, and by absolute self-surrender to Providence.

XVII.

TO AVOID RESTLESS ACTIVITY IN THE SERVICE OF GOD.

YOU are not mistaken, Madame, in believing that it is not enough merely to change the object of eagerness, and that there is a restless eagerness which needs moderating, even in God's service, and the correction of our own faults. This thought may be of great use in calming without relaxing your energy.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

The eagerness with which you set about the best things mars them, and throws you into an excitement which is all the more opposed to the peacefulness of the Spirit of God, because you strive to control it, and hide it within you, out of mere worldly courtesy. A little simplicity would enable you to exercise the same virtue with less effort.

As to dress, it seems to me that you ought to consider M. de Montberon's tastes and wishes; it is for him to decide upon these little proprieties. If he inclines to economy in these matters, you should retrench as far as he thinks desirable, in order to pay his debts. If he wishes you to keep up a certain external style, do whatever he seems to desire, simply to please him, and nothing beyond to indulge your own tastes. If he has no preference, and leaves you entirely to your own judgment in this matter, I think that a medium course would be the best self-denial for you. You are inclined to extremes; entire magnificence alone can satisfy your fastidiousness and pride. A severe simplicity is another refinement of self-love; then we renounce grandeur in a striking manner. The middle course is insupportable to pride. It makes you seem wanting

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

in taste, and causes you to feel commonplace. I am told that you formerly dressed like the Sisters of a Community; this was too much in appearance, and too little in reality. Moderation in dress will cost you much more in the bottom of your heart; but your unfailing rule should be perfect openness with M. de Montberon, and unhesitating compliance with whatever you see pleases him best.

XVIII.

ADVICE CONCERNING PRAYER.

AS for prayer, use it not merely at appointed times, but further, in the invals between your other occupations, as far as you feel able and desirous for it; but be careful to husband your strength, bodily and mental, and stop whenever you feel weary. Always begin with the most weighty points which have struck you when reading. Follow the leading of your heart so as to sustain yourself with the loving Presence of God. Cling closely to this adorable Friend; dwell in Him with an unbounded trust, and say to Him all that the simplicity of love shall inspire in you. After

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

having spoken to Him out of the abundance of your heart, listen to Him inwardly, silencing your fastidious and restless spirit. As to distractions, they will die away of themselves if you never encourage them voluntarily, if you, from choice, always dwell in love, if you are not distracted by the fear of distractions, and if, when you find your imagination wandering, you recall it quietly and without vexation to your devotions.

Follow trustfully the attraction God gives you towards His infinite perfection. Love Him as you would wish to be loved; it is not giving Him too much; this measure is not excessive. Love Him according to the ideas which He gives you of the greatest love.

Speak and act without so much circumspection. If you are absorbed in God, you will be less eager to please men, but you will please them more.

XIX.

ON LEAVING ALL TO PROVIDENCE.

NOTHING is so trying to nature as suspense between a faint hope and a

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

mighty fear; but we must live in faith concerning the extent of our trials, as in all else. Our sensitiveness often tempts us to believe that our trials are beyond our strength; but we know neither the strength of our heart nor the trials of God. Only He who knows the whole — both our hearts, which He Himself has made, with all their secret folds of which we are ignorant, and the extent of the trials which He gives us — knows how to proportion these two things. Let us then leave all to Him, and be content to suffer without listening to ourselves. What we believe impossible is so only to our softness and cowardice; what we think overwhelming overwhelms only pride and self-love, which cannot be too much crushed.

As to prayer, Madame, fear nothing. There is no illusion in following God's leading, in abiding in His presence, absorbed in wonder and love, provided this absorption never gives us the foolish idea that we are far advanced; provided it does not prevent us from feeling our weaknesses, our imperfections, and our need of amendment; provided it leads us to neglect none of our duties, external or internal; provided we remain sincere, humble, simple, and docile to those set over us. Do

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

not hesitate then; accept God's gift; open your heart to Him; get strength from Him. So long as you think only of God, love Him, abide in His presence, and cleave to His will, without presumption, without neglecting any duty or relaxing in precept or counsel, without wandering from obedience and the ordinary path, you will be in no danger of delusion. Follow God's leadings.

XX.

UPON BEARING WITH OURSELVES AS WE BEAR WITH OTHERS.

PEOPLE who love themselves only through charity, as they love their neighbor, bear charitably, though without flattery, with themselves as they bear with their neighbor in his imperfections. They know what needs to be corrected in themselves as well as in others; they strive earnestly and vigorously to correct it, but they manage themselves as they would another whom they would lead to God. They set to work patiently, not exacting more than is practicable under present circumstances from themselves any more than from others,

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

and not being disheartened because they cannot become perfect in one day. They condemn unsparingly their slightest failings, they see them in all their deformity, they endure all the humiliation and sorrow involved. They neglect no means of amendment, but they are not fretful while so doing. They do not listen to the pettishness of pride and self-love, which mingle their excessive activity with the deep and quiet emotions which grace inspires in us for the correction of our faults. That sort of irritable pettishness only serves to discourage a soul, to occupy it with all the refinements of self-love, to repel it from serving God, to weary it in its way, to lead it to seek pleasures and consolations contrary to His will, to dry it up, distract, exhaust it, to prepare for it a sort of disgust and despair of being able to hold on to the end of its course. Nothing so hinders souls as these fits of inward peevishness, when one yields to them voluntarily ; but if one only endures them without clinging to them, and without causing them by the reflections of self-love, these troubles turn into true crosses, and consequently into sources of grace. They are ranked among the other trials by which God purifies and perfects us.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

We must then let this suffering pass by like a feverish attack or a headache, without doing anything to excite or prolong it.

Meantime, you must go on with your inward practices and your outward duties as far as you are free to do so. Prayer is less sweet and easy; love is less animated and tender; the presence of God is less evident and less consoling; outward duties even are fulfilled with less facility and enjoyment; but faithfulness is greater when maintained under these painful circumstances, and that is all that God requires. It is a greater force that carries a row-boat against wind and tide a quarter of a league than impels it a whole league when it has them both in its favor. We must treat these complainings of self-love as some people treat their nervous fancies. They do not listen to them, and act as if they did not feel them.

XXI.

TO AVOID FOREBODINGS, AND LIVE BY FAITH.

I HAD hoped, Madame, to find you here, and was rejoicing in that hope; but God has sent you elsewhere. The best place is

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

wherever He puts us, and any other would be undesirable, all the worse because it would please our fancy, and would be of our own choice.

Do not think about distant events. This uneasiness about the future is unwholesome for you. When God gives you help, see Him alone in it, and take it day by day, as the Israelites their manna, without ever providing a store to last from one day to another.

The life of pure faith does two things: first, it makes us see God behind all the frail agents He uses; secondly, it keeps the soul ever in a state of suspense. One is always as if in the air, without being able to touch the ground; the comfort of one moment never serves for the comfort of the following moment. We must leave to God all that depends on Him, and think only of being faithful in all that depends upon ourselves. This dependence from one moment to another, this darkness, this peace of the soul amid the uncertainty of what will happen to it each day, is a real inward and noiseless martyrdom; it is being burned by a slow fire. It is so slow and so interior that it is often nearly as much hidden from the soul which suffers it as from

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

those who do not know the state of things. When God takes away that which He has given you, He knows well how to replace it, either through other means or by Himself. When St. Paul the hermit was in a solitary desert, a raven brought him half a loaf of bread every day. If the saint had wavered in his faith, and had wished to secure another half-loaf for the following day, perhaps the raven would not have returned. Eat then in peace your half-loaf of each day, which the raven brings you. "The morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." He who feeds you to-day is the same who will feed you to-morrow.

XXII.

TO CALM THE IMAGINATION.

I BEG you to stay in bed as long as formerly, and to await sleep there when it has left you. It returns when one awaits it in peace; but, when one follows one's imagination, one banishes it more and more. I shall not have a good opinion of your inward state until you possess your soul in patience, enough

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

to sleep quietly. I require of you only calmness and docility. You will tell me that calmness of the imagination does not depend on ourselves. Pardon me, it depends very much on ourselves. When we cut off all the uneasy thoughts in which the will has a share, we greatly diminish those which are involuntary. God will watch over your imagination if you do not keep up the disturbance by your scrupulous reflections.

Abide in peace. Do not listen to your imagination, which is too lively and too full of fancies. This excessive activity consumes your body, and dries up your inward life. You are preying upon yourself uselessly. It is merely your restlessness which hinders peace and interior grace. How can you expect God to speak in that gentle and inward voice which melts the soul, when you are making so much noise with your rapid reflections. Be silent, and God will speak again.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

XXIII.

NOT TO BE DISCOURAGED BY OUR IMPERFECTIONS.

May 8, 1703.

THERE is a very subtle illusion in your troubles, in that you appear to yourself to be wholly occupied with what is due to God, and His glory alone ; but, in the depths of your heart, it is owing to yourself that you are in trouble. You wish indeed that God should be glorified, but you wish that it should be through your own perfection, and in that way you sink back into all the scruples of your self-love. The true use to make of all the imperfections which you see in yourself is neither to justify nor to condemn them (for this judging would bring back all your scruples), but to offer them to God, conforming your heart to His concerning those things which you cannot understand, and abiding in peace, because peace is according to God's order, in whatever state we may be.

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

XXIV.

NOT TO LISTEN TO THE IMAGINATION.

DISQUIETUDE is the only obstacle which I fear; I distrust nothing but yourself. Stop all your doubting and scrupulous thoughts; let them buzz in your imagination, like bees in a hive: if you excite them, they will grow angry, and will do you much harm; if you let them alone without touching them, you will suffer from nothing but the buzzing and the fear. Accustom yourself to remain in peace in the depths of your heart, in spite of your restless imagination.

XXV.

ON THE PRIVATION OF SENSIBLE SWEETNESS.

July 30, 1703.

GOD does not intend either to discourage or to spoil you. Give yourself up then to these vicissitudes which give so many shocks to the soul; which, however, by accustoming it to have no abiding condition, make it supple and plastic to receive whatever impressions

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

God is pleased to give. It is a kind of foundry for the heart. By dint of melting, all the outlines of self are lost. Pure, clear water has neither color nor form, it always takes the color and form of the vessel containing it. Be the same with God.

As to painful or humiliating reflections, whether concerning your faults or your temporal condition, treat them as the sensitiveness of self-love; pain about all these things is more humiliating than the things themselves. Put all together, the thing which afflicts you with your affliction about the thing, and carry this cross without thinking either of throwing it off or of keeping it. As soon as you bear it with this indifference about it, and this simple fidelity to God, you will have peace; and the cross will become light, in this wholly dry and simple peace.

XXVI.

FAITH IN THE MIDST OF CROSSES.

EVERYTHING is a cross: I taste nothing but bitterness. But we must bear the heaviest cross in peace; when we cannot even bear or drag it, we must abide crushed and

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

buried beneath it. I wish that God may spare you while giving you wherewith to suffer; it is our daily bread. God only knows the right proportion, and we must live by faith, in order to believe without seeing that God, in His mercy, proportions our trial to the aid that is within us, unknown to ourselves.

XXVII.

TO SEE OUR FAULTS IN PEACE, IN THE SPIRIT OF LOVE.

DO not be disquieted about your faults. Love without ceasing, and much will be forgiven you, because you will have loved much. We seek satisfactions for our self-love and visible supports instead of seeking love. We even mislead ourselves by seeking less to love than to see that we love. "We are," says St. Francis de Sales, "more occupied with love than with the beloved."

Faults perceived in peace, in the spirit of love, are immediately consumed by love itself; but faults perceived in a pettish fit of self-love disturb peace, interrupt the presence of God, and the exercise of perfect love. Vexation at

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

a fault is generally more of a fault than the fault itself. You are scrupulous about the least unfaithfulness. I judge of your fidelity by your peace, and by the freedom of your heart. The more peaceful and free your heart is, the more you will become one with God.

XXVIII.

TO AVOID EAGER PLANNING.

RESUME prayer and communion, my daughter, at whatever cost. You have withered your heart by your eagerness in wishing a certain thing without knowing whether God willed it; this is the cause of all your suffering. You have spent a great deal of time in unfaithfully forming plans which were cobwebs, — a breath of wind blows them away. You have withdrawn insensibly from God, and God has withdrawn from you. You must return to Him, and give up everything unreservedly to Him. You will have no peace except through this surrender. Let go all your plans; God will do as He pleases with them. Even if they should succeed through earthly means, God would not bless them; but, if you wholly

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

offer them up to Him as a sacrifice, He will turn everything to His own merciful purposes, whether He does what you have desired, or whether He never does it. The essential thing is to resume prayer, whatever dryness, distraction, or weariness you may find in it.

XXIX.

TO PREFER LOVE AND HUMILITY TO LEARNING.

PEOPLE cannot become perfect by dint of hearing or reading about perfection. The chief thing is not to listen to yourself, but silently to listen to God; to renounce all vanity, and apply yourself to real virtues; to talk little, and to do much, without caring to be seen. God will teach you much more than all the most experienced persons and all the most spiritual books. Do you need to be so learned in order to know how to love God and deny yourself for His love? You know much more of good than you practise. You have much less need of gaining fresh knowledge than of putting in practice that which you have already acquired.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

XXX.

TO USE WELL THE PRESENT MOMENT.

LIVE in peace, Mademoiselle, without thinking about the future. Perhaps there may not be a future for you. Even the present is not yours, and you must use it according to the will of God, to whom alone it belongs. Go on with the exterior works you have in hand, since you find them easy and attractive; keep your rule, in order to avoid dissipation and the consequences of your excessive liveliness. Above all, be faithful to the present moment, which will bring you all needful grace.

The real learning you need is stripping off self, deep recollection, silence of the whole soul before God, renunciation of intellect, a taste for lowliness, obscurity, helplessness, and self-humiliation.

Your remedy for dissipation and dryness will be to reserve for yourself regular seasons for prayer and reading; to enter into outward affairs only when it is really necessary; and to attend more to softening the harshness of your judgment, to restraining your temper,

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

and humbling your spirit, than to upholding your opinion even when it is right.

XXXI.

TO BEAR AFFRONTS WITH HUMILITY AND IN SILENCE.

WHEN God purposes to make us die to ourselves, He always touches that which is the very essence and centre of our life. Thus doth He apportion crosses. Let yourself be humbled; silence and peace under humiliation are a true benefit to the soul. One is sometimes tempted to talk humbly, and it is easy to find a thousand fine pretexts for so doing, but it is yet better to be humbly silent. Talkative humility is to be suspected; in talking, self-love relieves itself a little.

Do not be angry about what people say; let them talk, while you try to do God's will. As to the will of men, you could never come to an end of satisfying it, nor is it worth the trouble. A little silence, peace, and union with God ought to comfort you for all that men may say unjustly.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

You need all your resolution in your present position, but at the same time your quickness of temper requires checks and impediments. Possess your soul in patience. Renew yourself often in the presence of God, so as to calm yourself, to humble and adapt yourself to the little ones. Nothing is really great save lowliness, charity, distrust of self, detachment from one's own opinion and will. All stiff, harsh goodness is contrary to Jesus Christ.

XXXII.

ON CALMLY ENDURING THE IRREGULARITIES OF OTHERS.

A HEATED imagination, vehement feeling, hosts of reasons, and volleys of words, effect nothing. The right way is to act as in the presence of God, wholly divested of self, doing what we can by God's light, and being content with such success as He gives. This continual death to self is a blessed life which but few understand. A word uttered simply in this inward peace effects more, even in external affairs, than all the most eager and bustling exertions. As it

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

is the Spirit of God which then speaks, it speaks with His power and authority. It enlightens, persuades, touches, and edifies. We have said almost nothing, but we have done everything. On the contrary, when people let loose their natural excitability they talk interminably, they make a thousand subtile and superfluous reflections, they are always afraid of not saying and doing enough, they become excited, exhaust themselves, grow angry, they depart from the object, and no good is done. Your temperament has great need of these maxims; they are hardly less necessary for your body than for your soul.

Let the river flow beneath its bridges; let men be men, that is to say, weak, vain, inconstant, unjust, false, and presumptuous. Let the world still be the world; and verily you cannot hinder it. Let all follow their own bent and their own habits; you cannot form them over again; the shortest way is to let them alone and to bear with them. Accustom yourself to unreasonableness and injustice. Abide in peace in the bosom of God, who sees all these evils more clearly than you do, and who permits them. Be content with doing without excitement the little which

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

depends on you, and let all else be to you as if it were not.

XXXIII.

THE NECESSITY AND BENEFIT OF SUFFERING.

A CROSS borne simply, without the additions of an ingenious self-love, is only half a cross. Those who suffer with this loving simplicity are not only happy in spite of the cross, but they are even happy because of it; for love delights in suffering on behalf of the beloved, and the cross which likens them to their Beloved One is a consoling bond of love.

Bear the heavy burden of a very aged person who can no longer bear her own. Reason becomes weak at so great an age; goodness itself, unless very deeply rooted, seems to grow slack; temper and restlessness acquire all the strength which the mind loses, and theirs is the only activity which remains. Surely this is a good and precious cross! You must welcome it, and bear it daily, perhaps even unto death.

It is a blessing and a comfort that you have some hours of freedom to rest in peace in the

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

bosom of our Lord. That is where you must refresh yourself, and gain new strength before you begin your work again. Take care of your health, and relieve your mind by intervals of repose, of joy, and of innocent freedom. As age advances, less and less must be expected of a person who has no resources. You must expect almost nothing of her, and you must not expect too much of yourself.

XXXIV.

NEED OF CALMING OUR NATURAL ACTIVITY.

I AM afraid lest your natural activity should consume you amid the painful circumstances which surround you. You cannot take too much pains to subdue your natural temperament by prayer, and by a frequent renewal of God's presence during the day.

Let us abide in peace, fulfilling all our outward duties as well, or as little amiss, as we can, while inwardly we are absorbed by Him, who alone is worthy of all our love.

Whenever you become conscious of the impulses of your nature, throw them aside, so that grace may possess you wholly. You

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

must stop as soon as you find that nature is gaining the victory. This faithfulness does almost as much good to the body as to the soul. One neglects nothing, and yet one is not troubled, like Martha.

XXXV.

FORBEARANCE TO OTHERS.

I AM sorry for you; but suffering is needful for us. We are sent into the world only to be purified by dying to our inclinations and to all our own will. Let self die in you then: you have excellent opportunities for so doing; what a pity to let them be lost! I am convinced, as you are, that the daily rule must not be relaxed in any way; but you must deal gently with the infirmities of others. You must learn at times to slip quietly over certain little matters, while you need all your firmness in those which you believe essential.

But remember that true firmness is gentle, humble, and tranquil. Anything like sharp, haughty, and restless firmness is unworthy of God's work. We are told that Wisdom

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

"sweetly ordereth all things:" do you act in the same manner; and, if ever you are betrayed into acting harshly, humble yourself immediately without reserve. Confess that you are wrong as to manner, and in substance keep to your rule. In other respects you cannot be too obliging or too assiduous. There is no kind of reading or prayer which would make you die to yourself as much as this subjection will, provided that in your more private hours you attain sufficient recollection to learn to make a good use of this kind of servitude, and that the distraction of business does not harden your heart. In a word, recollect yourself as much as you can, and then give the rest of your time to charity, which is never weary, which endures, which forgets itself, and becomes as a little child for the love of others.

XXXVI.

ONE'S DISPOSITION CANNOT BE ALTERED AT ONCE.

DO not be alarmed because you find yourself quick, impatient, imperious, de-

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

cided; it is your natural character — you must feel it. We must bear with self without flattery, and without neglecting the means necessary to correct it. While waiting for God to deliver us from self, we need to be undeceived about it. Let us humble ourselves beneath His powerful hand; let us become supple and pliable, yielding to Him as soon as we feel any resistance of self-love. Abide in silence as much as you can; avoid deciding, withhold your opinions, your likes and dislikes. Pause, and break off your activity whenever you perceive that it is too eager. Do not let yourself follow your desires too eagerly, even for good.

What I most desire for you is a certain calmness, which comes from recollection, detachment, and love of God.

Occupy yourself as little as possible about external matters. Give at proper seasons a quiet, calm attention to those things assigned to your care by Providence; leave the rest. We do much more by quiet, tranquil labor in the presence of God, than by the greatest eagerness and over-activity of a restless nature.

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

XXXVII.

UPON CARRYING THE SPIRIT OF PRAYER INTO ALL OUR ACTIONS.

DO not be discouraged at your faults; bear with yourself in correcting them, as you would with your neighbor. Lay aside this ardor of mind which exhausts your body, and leads you to commit errors. Accustom yourself gradually to carry prayer into all your daily occupations. Speak, act, work in peace, as if you were in prayer, as indeed you ought to be.

Do everything without eagerness, in the spirit of grace. As soon as you perceive your natural impetuosity gliding in, retire quietly within, where is the kingdom of God. Listen only to the leadings of grace, then say and do nothing but what the Holy Spirit shall put in your heart.

You will find that you will become more tranquil, that your words will be fewer and more effectual, and that, with less effort, you will accomplish more good.

It is not a question of a perpetual struggle of the understanding, which would be imprac-

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

ticable, but a question of accustoming yourself to a peace in which you will easily consult your beloved Lord as to your duty. This very simple and short consultation will be more easily held than the eager and tumultuous debates which we usually hold with self, when we yield to our natural impetuosity.

When the heart is already turned towards God, we can easily form the habit of suspending the natural movements of ardent feeling, and of waiting for the moment when we can act under the impulse of God's grace.

I entreat you to try to train yourself to this dependence on the inner voice, then all your life will gradually become a prayer. You may suffer, but a peaceful suffering is only half a suffering.

XXXVIII.

OVER-EAGERNESS.

YOU must stifle your restlessness, renounce your self-will, retrench petty curiosity, your longings after success, and your eagerness to attract what gratifies self-conceit. Silence, whereby to cultivate the presence of God, is the best remedy for our troubles; it

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

is the way to deny ourselves continually in the most ordinary life.

Make good use of your period of repose by calming yourself, softening your temper, fostering charity, humbling presumption, checking impetuosity, cultivating recollection and the presence of God, together with that gentleness and consideration which are due to your neighbor. "Do this and ye shall live." God has given you a great treasure in your temperament, by making it liable to suffer a slow martyrdom every hour of the day. Things which would scarcely rouse other people touch you to the very core. Nothing either troubles or pleases you by halves. It is well that you should realize this, so as to be on your guard against your likes and dislikes.

XXXIX.

ON DWELLING IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD.

BE as regular in your seasons of prayer as if you still found comfort in them. Make use even of those times in the day when you are only partially occupied with external things, to occupy yourself inwardly

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

with God; for instance, while doing needle-work maintain a close sense of the presence of God. The thought of His presence is less easily preserved in conversation, but even then you can frequently recall a general consciousness of it, overruling your every word, and repressing all that is over-eager, all sallies of pride or contempt, all the sensitiveness of self-love.

Bear with yourself, but do not flatter yourself. Work effectually and steadily, yet calmly and without the impatience of self-love, at the correction of your faults.

XL.

TO GAIN THE SPIRIT OF RECOLLECTION.

IT seems to me that you have only two things to do, one of which is to avoid whatever dissipates and excites you, whereby you cut off the source of dangerous distractions, which dry up prayer. You cannot expect to find interior nourishment if you live only for what is exterior. Faithfulness in renouncing whatever makes you too eager and impetuous in conversation is absolutely neces-

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

sary, if you would win the spirit of recollection and prayer. No one can have a relish for God and the world at the same time; and you will carry to your hours of prayer the same spirit which you have during all the rest of the day.

After retrenching whatever superfluities dissipate your mind, you must try often to renew your strength in the presence of God, even in the midst of those occupations which are right and necessary, that you may not pursue them in a spirit of self-will.

Try to act continually by the leadings of grace and in the spirit of self-renunciation. By degrees you will come to it, by frequently checking the rapidity of your lively disposition, in order to listen to God's voice within, and to allow Him to take possession of you.

XLI.

HOW TO LIVE IN PEACE WITH OTHERS.

IN order to be satisfied even with the best people, we need to be content with little, and to bear a great deal. Even the most perfect people have many imperfections; we

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

ourselves have as great defects. Our faults combined with theirs make mutual toleration a difficult matter; but we can only "fulfil the law of Christ" by "bearing one another's burdens." There must be a mutual, loving forbearance. Frequent silence, habitual recollection, prayer, self-detachment, giving up all critical tendencies, faithfulness in putting aside all the idle imaginations of a jealous, fastidious self-love, — all these will go far to maintain peace and union. How many troubles would be avoided by this simplicity! Happy is he who neither listens to himself nor to the idle talk of others.

Be content to lead a simple life where God has placed you. Be obedient, bear your little daily crosses; you need them, and God gives them to you only out of pure mercy.

XLII.

TO LABOR MORE FOR INWARD THAN FOR OUTWARD PERFECTION.

YOU are good; you want to be better, and you are making great efforts in the details of life; but I am afraid that you are en-

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

croaching rather too much upon the inner life in order to adapt the outer life to the demands of society, and that you are not sufficiently denying the very inmost self. When we fail thoroughly to attack the internal stronghold of self-will concerning those things we love best, and reserve for ourselves most jealously, I will tell you what ensues. On the one side, great impetuosity, sharpness, and hardness of that same self-will; on the other hand, a scrupulous notion of a certain symmetry of external virtues, which resolves itself into a mere observance of regularity and propriety. Thus externally comes great restraint, and internally a very lively state of rebellion, — an altogether intolerable struggle.

Try, then, to work a little less from outside, and a little more from within. Take the strongest desires and affections which rule in your heart, and place them without condition or limits in God's hands, to be subdued and overruled. Resign to Him your natural haughtiness, your worldly wisdom, your delight in the greatness of your house, your dread of want of consideration in the world, your harsh severity against whatever is irregular.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

As for your temper, it is what I fear least for you; you know and distrust it; in spite of your resolutions it carries you away, and, in so doing, it humiliates you. Thus it will tend to correct other and more dangerous faults. I should be less grieved to see you petulant, cross, abrupt, wanting in self-command, and, as a result, thoroughly ashamed of yourself, than strictly correct and externally irreproachable, but fastidious, haughty, harsh, hard, ready to take offence, and self-sufficient.

Accustom yourself in God's sight, and through experience of your incurable weaknesses, to compassion and forbearance towards the imperfections of others. Earnest prayer will soften your heart, and make it gentle, pliable, accessible, kindly. Would you like God to be as critical and hard towards you as you often are towards your neighbor?

We sometimes indulge in certain half-concealed clingings to our grandeur, our reputation, our comforts. If we look carefully within ourselves, we shall find that there are certain limits beyond which we refuse to go in offering ourselves to Him. We hover around these reservations, making believe not to see them, for fear of self-reproach, — guarding

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

them as the apple of the eye. If any one should break down this intrenchment, we should be touched to the quick, and inexhaustible in fine reasons to justify our feelings; a convincing proof that we depend too much on such things. The more we shrink from giving up any such reserved point, the more certain it is that it needs to be given up. If we were not fast bound by it, we should not make so many efforts to persuade ourselves that we are free.

Let us not bargain with God with a view to what will cost us least and bring us in most comfort. Let us seek only self-denial and the cross. Let us love, and live by love alone. Let Love do whatsoever He will to root out self-love. Let us not be content to pray morning and evening, but let us live in prayer all day long. Let this prayer, this life of love, which means death to self, spread out from our seasons of prayer as from a centre over all that we have to do. All should become prayer, that is, a loving consciousness of God's presence, whether it be social intercourse or business. Such a course as this will insure you a profound peace.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

XLIII.

TO COMBINE EXACTNESS WITH FREEDOM.

IT seems to me desirable that you should combine great exactness with great liberty. Exactness will cause you to be faithful, and freedom will render you courageous. If you should aim at being exact without being free, you would fall into bondage and scruples; and if you should attempt to be free without being strict with yourself, you would soon yield to negligence and laxity.

It seems to me that true fidelity consists in obeying God in all things, and in following the light which points out our duty, and the grace which guides us; taking as our rule of life the intention to please God in all things, and to do always not only what is acceptable to Him, but, if possible, what is *most* acceptable; not trifling with petty distinctions between sins great and small, imperfections and faults; for, although it may be very true that there are such distinctions, they should have no weight with a soul which is determined to refuse nothing it possesses to God.

And if, besides this sincere desire always to

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

do that which is best in God's sight, you also do it with joy, are not depressed when you fail, but begin again a hundred times over, hope to the end for success, bear with yourself in your involuntary frailties as God bears, wait patiently for His appointed time of complete deliverance, and meanwhile go on quietly and according to your strength in the path before you, without losing time in looking back; always "reaching forth unto those things which are before," not dwelling unprofitably upon depressing falls and hindrances; sorrowing over them, indeed, with humility, but putting them aside to press onwards; not looking upon God as a spy watching to surprise you, or an enemy laying snares for you, but as a Father who loves, and would fain save you; full of trust in His goodness, continually invoking His mercy, and perfectly free from all vain dependence upon yourself or any other creature. Such you will find to be the path towards true liberty, and, perhaps, the secret of abiding therein. I earnestly advise you to aspire after it.

Exactness and liberty ought to keep abreast, and if one halts with you rather than the other, I think it is liberty, although I freely

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

confess that your exactitude has not yet reached the point I could desire ; still, on the whole, I believe that you need most to lean towards confidence in God, and a great enlargement of heart. Therefore I do not hesitate to say that you ought to yield wholly to the grace with which God sometimes draws you closer to Him.

Do not be afraid to lose sight of self, to fix your gaze solely on Him, and as closely as He will permit, and to plunge wholly into the ocean of His love, — too happy if you could do it so entirely as never to find yourself again. Nevertheless it is well, whenever God gives you this desire, to accept it with an act of humility, and of loving, childlike fear, which will prepare your soul for fresh gifts. This is the counsel St. Theresa gives, and I think it may safely be given to you.

XLIV.

PRAYER EFFECTUAL FOR EVERYTHING.

YOU will never take care of M.. so well as by continuing constant in prayer. Our own spirit, however wise it may seem, spoils

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

everything ; only that of God insensibly brings to an end the most difficult things. The troubles of life overpower us, its crosses overwhelm us ; we fail in patience and gentleness, or in quiet, even firmness ; and so we cannot persuade others. God alone holds human hearts in His hands ; He sustains ours, and opens that of our neighbor. Pray, then, continually and with all your heart, if you want to lead your flock safely. "Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman watcheth but in vain."

We can only win the guiding Spirit by prayer. The time which seems wasted in it is our best-spent time. You will gain more for the advancement of your outward duties by leaning in complete dependence upon the Spirit of Grace, than by any amount of restless, over-anxious toil. If your meat is to do the will of your Heavenly Father, you will often feed by seeking that will at its source.

Digitized by Google

Original from
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

XLV.

FORBEARANCE WITH THE FAULTS OF OTHERS.

I HAVE always been warmly attached to you, but now my heart is touched by knowing that you have been blamed, and that you have received remonstrance meekly. It is true that your morbid and austere disposition makes you too quick to perceive the faults of others; you are too much shocked by imperfections, and you are apt to be impatient if they are not speedily corrected. I have long wished that you had the forbearing, tolerant spirit with which M. M. adapts herself to every one's infirmities. She waits, pities, opens the heart, and exacts nothing, save what God may grant by degrees.

I have often told you that M., with all her visible imperfections, is much more advanced than some of those who are free from these defects, and are ready to find fault with her for them. It often happens that eager fault-finding, even with one's self, is but an untimely zeal, while God is carrying things on altogether differently; for sometimes He leaves people with certain unconquerable imperfec-

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

tions, in order to deprive them of all inward self-satisfaction. It would be far less trying to them to be corrected of certain involuntary failings than to feel conquered by their weaknesses. Everything in its own time. Self-reliance, even in the matter of curing one's faults, fosters a hidden conceit.

Bear with your neighbors then, and tolerate their infirmities. Sometimes your heart shrinks when you are shocked by certain faults, and you may fancy that it is a repugnance arising from grace, while perhaps it is only your natural impetuosity which causes it. I think you need more forbearance, but I also think that your faults, like those of others, must be corrected, not by force or severity, but by dint of simply yielding to God, and letting Him do as He will to enlarge your heart and render it supple. Acquiesce, without anxiously inquiring how He will do it.

XLVI.

DAILY CROSSES.

TAKE care of your health, about which I have some anxiety, from what I hear;

Digitized by Google

Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

take as much rest and relief as you can. The more you accept daily crosses as daily bread, in peace and simplicity, the less they will injure your frail, delicate health; but fore-bodings and frettings would soon kill you.

XLVII.

THE WILL MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE FEELINGS.

FEELING does not depend on yourself, and love does not depend upon feeling. Your will depends on yourself, and that is what God requires of you. Of course, action must follow upon the will, but often God does not require great things of us. To regulate your household, keep your affairs in good order, bring up your children, bear your crosses, dispense with the empty pleasures of the world, indulge your pride in nothing, repress your natural haughtiness, strive to become simple, frank, lowly, to be silent, recollected, given to the life which is hid with Christ in God; — these are the works which please God.

Refuse nothing to God, and do not go for-

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

ward prematurely in affairs where you do not as yet see His will. Each day will bring its own crosses and sacrifices; when God wills you to pass into another state of things, He will prepare you for it, unconsciously to yourself.

XLVIII.

HOW TO ACCEPT ALL GOD'S DEALINGS THANKFULLY.

DO not seek the pleasure which you find in the society of worthy people who esteem you, out of self-indulgence, but, on the other hand, do not give way to scruples about accepting such consolation when Providence sends it. God would have you take what comes, and not run after what does not come. Accept what is given you with simplicity, looking only to God, who thus upholds you in your weakness, and bear in faith the privation of whatever He takes away to teach you detachment. When you have learned thus tranquilly to accept all the variableness of others towards you, as permitted by God on purpose to mould you, you will find that what pleases you will be no disturbance to your prayers,

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

and that privations will not lead to vexation or depression.

Go on trustfully and without fear. As to your petty weaknesses, you must accustom yourself to look at them with hearty condemnation, but without impatience or depression. And, with a view to their correction, bring back your heart as often as may be through the day to the calming influences of prayer, and the familiar presence of God.

XLIX.

SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS.

I QUITE understand that all your troubles come from excessive self-consciousness, and from letting yourself be too much guided by feeling. As soon as you cease to find prayer a perceptible solace to you, you are tempted to be discouraged. Do you desire to be at peace? Try to be less occupied with yourself, and more with God.

One of the most dangerous delusions of self-love is when we grow sentimental over ourselves, are perpetually self-engrossed, and are absorbed in ourselves with a restless,

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

anxious care which troubles, withers, and disables the heart, deprives us of the consciousness of God's presence, and ends by hopelessly depressing and discouraging us. Say, with St. Paul, "Yea, I judge not mine own self;" you will watch all the better for the real correction of your faults, and the fulfilment of your duties, because of the absence of all this self-willed restlessness.

Then it will be out of love of God that you will simply and quietly repress whatever that watchful love shows you to be faulty and unworthy of the Beloved. You will work at conquering your failings without impatience or pettishness; you will humbly bear with yourself without flattering your weaknesses; you will accept reproof, and be ready to obey.

Conduct such as this tends far more to self-renunciation than yielding to all the fancies, vexation, and impatience of a self-love which is too eager for perfection.

I do not care to have you a wise, strong, and virtuous woman on a grand scale; I want everything on a small scale. Be a good little child.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

L.

ON THE SOURCES OF PEACE.

YOU want to be perfect, and to feel that you are so, and under those conditions you would be at peace. But real peace in this life must be attained with a full view of one's own imperfections, neither slurred over nor tolerated, but, on the contrary, condemned to the full extent. Then one bears the humiliation of one's frailty in peace, because there is no more clinging to self. We are troubled by our own faults more than by those of other people, not because they are our own, but because it is our duty to correct, to conquer, to renounce, to humble ourselves, in order to accomplish the will of God, even through the sacrifice of ourselves. The disposition which you need to cultivate is faithful attention to the light thrown upon your imperfections, without ever listening voluntarily to the uneasy and timid thoughts which would renew the trouble of your former scruples. Whatever comes to the soul in a simple and peaceful manner is God's light guiding it; but what comes to you through argument and

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

disquietude must be gradually put away while you turn lovingly to God.

Try not to vex yourself by forestalling the future, any more than by fretting over the past. When a real doubt arises as to your duty, try to solve it, but do not seek to raise doubts. Resign yourself to God, and do with simplicity the best you can, according to the light of the present moment.

When a sacrifice is made, do not dwell upon it; as to those which you foresee, God shows them to you afar off, that you may learn how to accept them. When you have done so, there is no more to do at present; if the actual call comes ultimately, you must then follow the light which comes with it.

LI.

ENTIRE SELF-SURRENDER.

TAKE care of your health for the sake of your family, which greatly needs you. May the courage of faith sustain you. It is a courage which is unassuming, and which does not inspire a conscious strength whereon to rely. They who have it have no

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

self-confidence, and yet they never lack in time of need; they are rich in poverty. If they unintentionally go astray, they turn it to profit by learning humility thereby. They continually return to their centre by acquiescing in all that deprives them of self-will. They surrender themselves to God, no longer dwelling in themselves, or trusting in their own strength. Then by degrees all becomes recollection, silence, dependence on grace from moment to moment, and inward life through death unto self. In this condition they no longer cling to anything they see; but they find again in God, in the closest, truest union, all that they fancied they had lost.

LII.

ON BEARING WITH OTHERS.

AS to recollection, I do not ask you to cultivate it *actively*; and, by passive recollection, I mean avoiding dissipating causes, and not encouraging your natural eagerness. Enough if you let God work in you, and do not hinder recollection by superfluous occupations which merely concern van-

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

ity or inclination. Often it is enough simply to turn aside from the natural eagerness which prompts you, and you will find yourself unconsciously returning to the influence of grace. Occupy yourself little with your neighbors' affairs; ask little, expect little of them, and do not be ready to fancy that people are wanting towards you whenever self is tempted to feel somehow affronted. Let it all pass away, and bear such annoyances as do not pass away with meekness. So doing, you will accomplish whatever you have to do quietly and without anxiety or hurry. But, to maintain such peace, you must continually cast aside whatever tends to disturb it. You must often silence yourself, in order to hearken to the Master speaking within, and teaching you all His truths.

I see by your letter that you are convinced that our friends . . . have been greatly wanting in what is due to you. It may be so, but I do not believe that it was intentional. I am not going to make excuses for them, but I think you ought to beware of the exceeding keenness with which you have felt their conduct. A sudden change in friends is painful, and it is hard to bear; one easily perceives a

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

lack of courtesy or friendship. It is natural for wounded self-love to exaggerate whatever wounds it, and I think you should distrust the opinions you may form at such a time. Indeed, I think you may go further, and believe that the malady needed a stern remedy. This total upset, your complete overwhelming, which you mention so frankly, show that your heart was very sick. The probing has been sharp, but it was needed. You may see this by the pain it has caused to your self-love.

LIII.

GENTLENESS AND HUMILITY.

YOUR remedy for wandering thoughts and want of fervor will be to set apart regular seasons for reading and prayer; to mix yourself up in outward matters only when it is necessary; and to attend more to softening the harshness of your judgment, to restraining your temper, and humbling your mind, than to upholding your opinion even when it is right; and, finally, to humble yourself whenever you find that an undue warmth concerning the affairs of others has led you to

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

forget your supreme interest, Eternity. "Learn of me," Jesus Christ says to you, "for I am meek and lowly of heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Be sure that grace, inward peace, and the blessing of the Holy Spirit will be with you, if you maintain gentleness and humility amid all your external perplexities.

LIV.

ON CROSSES.

YOU do well in leaving our friends' confidence to come and go as they will. One learns to bear what is wearisome, and sensitiveness wears off when we persevere in putting aside all brooding on self. The less we expect from our neighbor, the more kindly and helpful to every one we shall become.

The heavier your crosses are, the more careful you should be not to add to them. And you do add to them, either by making vain efforts against Providence from without, or by other no less vain struggles within. You must be motionless beneath the Cross; keep it as long as God gives it, without trying to move it

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

impatiently ; and, moreover, bear it in a lowly spirit, adding to its own weight the shame of bearing it so badly.

LV.

HOW TO GOVERN WISELY.

NO teaching is effectual without example ; no authority is endurable save in so far as it is softened by example. Begin with acting, and then you can speak. Do not indulge any failings, but bear patiently with every possible infirmity. Wait for those souls whose progress is slow ; you run the risk of disheartening them by impatience. The more vigor you need, the more gentleness and kindness you must combine with it.

Study much more how to get a knowledge of the hearts of those under your care, and to adapt yourself to their needs, than to talk fluently to them. Let them see that your heart is open to them, and let all learn by experience that they can open theirs to you with safety and comfort. Avoid every kind of harshness, and find fault, when it must be done, with kindliness and consideration. De-

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

cide slowly, but firmly. Above all, correct yourself if you would be able to correct others.

LVI.

ON INDECISION AND WEAKNESS.

GOD'S peace can only be found when all self-seeking and self-will are utterly thrown aside. When you cease to be eager for anything save the glory of God, and the fulfilment of His good pleasure, your peace will be as deep as the ocean, and flow with the strength of a flood. Nothing save holding back, the portion of an undecided heart, the hesitation of a heart which fears to give too much, can disturb or limit that peace, which is as boundless as God Himself. The indecision of your mind, which cannot be steadfast when things are settled, causes you a great deal of utterly useless trouble, and hinders you in God's ways. You do not go on, you simply go round and round in a circle of unprofitable fancies.

The moment that you think of nothing save God's will you will cease to fear, and there will be no hindrance in your way. Cast aside

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

all earthly impulses, and, so doing, you will spare yourself much inward anxiety and much outward indiscretion.

[The following twenty-four letters are addressed to men.]

LVII.

HAPPINESS FOUND IN THE SERVICE OF GOD.

I ASK of you now, sir, only one thing, which is, simply to follow the leadings of your inmost heart towards what is good, as you formerly followed those of your worldly passions towards evil.

What do we risk in serving Him? We should go on doing whatever is right and innocent as hitherto; we should have nearly the same duties to fulfil, and the same troubles to bear patiently; but, in addition, we should have the infinite consolation of loving that which is supremely worthy of our love, of toiling and suffering to please a true and perfect Friend who takes heed of everything, however small, and who rewards all a hundredfold, even in this life, by the peace with which He fills the heart. And, lastly, we must

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

add the prospect of a blessed and eternal life, in comparison with which this is nothing but a slow death.

Whatever crosses a man may bear in the Christian life, he never need lose that blessed peace of heart through which he accepts every suffering, desiring no joys which God denies. Does the world give as much? You are acquainted with it. Are men of the world always satisfied with all that they have, and content without those things which are lacking? Do they do everything from love, and with all their heart?

What do you fear? To leave that which will soon leave you, which is, indeed, already slipping away from you, which can never fill your heart, which turns to deadly weariness, and ever bears with it a melancholy void, and even a secret reproach in the depths of the conscience; in short, which is worthless even while it dazzles?

Oh! what do you fear? To find a virtue too pure to imitate, a God too good to love, an attraction which shall no longer leave you free to follow selfish desires or earthly vanities?

What do you fear? To become too hum-

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

ble, too much detached from self, too pure, too just, too reasonable, too grateful to your Father in Heaven? Oh! fear nothing so much as this unjust fear, and this foolish wisdom of the world, which hesitates between God and self, between vice and virtue, between gratitude and ingratitude, between life and death.

Do you think that the infinite God cannot fill and satisfy your heart? Distrust yourself, and all created things; they are all a mere nothing, which cannot satisfy the heart of man which was made for the love of God. But never distrust Him who is the sole good, and who mercifully fills your heart with dissatisfaction towards all other things, that it may be constrained to return to Him.

LVIII.

TO ONE IRRESOLUTE IN HIS CONVERSION.

HONESTLY, what substantial, defined difficulties have you to bring forward against the truths of religion? Nothing, but a fear of constraint and of being obliged to lead a sober and uncomfortable life; a fear

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

of being led farther than you wish in the road to perfection. It is because you are learning to value religion, to feel its due claims, and to see the sacrifices which it demands, that you fear it, and shrink from giving yourself up to it.

But permit me to tell you that you do not yet know how sweet and how lovable it is. You see what it takes away, but you do not see what it gives. You exaggerate its sacrifices without looking at its consolations. No, indeed, it leaves no void in the heart. It will lead you to do those things which you will enjoy doing, and which you will learn to prefer to all which has so long led you astray. If the world never exacted anything but what your heart could accept lovingly, would it not be a better master than it is?

LIX.

TO FOLLOW GOD'S LEADING.

THERE is a time for everything, and it is most important never to anticipate. One of the weightiest rules of the spiritual life is to abide in the present moment, without looking beyond.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

The question is not how to go fast, but well. If one of your domestics, on a journey, was always trying to get on faster, you would say to him: "Friend, you will travel fast enough, if you never stop, if you follow the road which I shall appoint, and arrive on the day which I have fixed." This is just what God says to you, and the manner in which He would have you serve Him. No will, even in the most important matters, but to follow His will. Now give all your heed to laying the foundations of the building, digging them deep by entire self-renunciation and unreserved yielding to God's orders. After that, God will raise on this foundation such a building as shall seem good to Him. Give yourself up to Him, and close your eyes. This walk of faith, such as Abraham's, knowing not whither you go, is a noble walk, and full of blessings. Then God Himself will be your guide, and will journey with you as it is said that He journeyed with the children of Israel, leading them through the Desert unto the Promised Land. How happy you will be if you allow God to take full possession of you, to work in you all that He wills, according to His own views for you, not according to your own choice!

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

LX.

ON SELF-CONFIDENCE.

WE must bear patiently with ourselves without self-flattery, submitting unceasingly to all that tends to conquer our inward likes and dislikes, that we may become more compliant with the Gospel of Grace. But this work must be done peacefully, and without anxiety; it should even be moderate, not aiming to do the whole in a day. Try to discuss little, and to do much. If we do not take care, all our life will be spent in theorizing, and we should require another life for practice. There is some risk of thinking ourselves advanced in proportion to the enlightened views concerning perfection which we hold; whereas all these fine ideas, so far from promoting self-mortification, only tend to foster the lower life in us, through self-confidence.

I advise you always to be on your guard against haughtiness, self-confidence, and over-decision in speech. Be gentle and humble in heart, that is to say, let gentleness spring from real humility; harshness and want of

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

moderation come only from pride. To grow milder we need to bcome humble in the depths of the heart. A humble heart is always kind and pliable at bottom, even when the outside is rough, owing to the sallies of a gruff and irritable temper. Watch, pray, labor, bear with yourself, without self-flattery. Let your reading and your prayers tend to enlighten you as to your faults, to correct them, and to overcome your natural disposition, in the presence of God.

LXI.

ON CANDOR AND HUMILITY.

BE kindly, without pride or imperiousness, censoriousness, disdain, fastidiousness, or any jugglery of self-love. Be true and frank in spite of yourself. Be faithful in renouncing your vanity and the sensitiveness of your self-love, as soon as God shows them to you. I pray God to make you gentle, simple, and childlike, like Jesus, who was born in a manger. Do not be clever, dogmatic, or quick to notice the faults of others, or sensitive and ready to take offence, or will-

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

ing to appear better than you are. Refrain from all inquisitiveness which excites you, and be careful never to talk unnecessarily about things which you know better than those around you.

LXII.

RULES FOR A SOUL NEWLY TURNED TO GOD.

YOUR letter is all I could wish; it tells all as to the past, and promises all for the future. As to the past, there is nothing to be done save to leave it to God with humble trust, and to seek to make amends for it by unremitting fidelity. People ask for penance for the past; but what penance can be greater and more salutary than to bear present crosses patiently? It is a true reparation for past vanities to become humble, and to be willing to be laid low by God; the severest of penances is to do God's will instead of our own, every day and every hour, in spite of repugnance, disgust, and weariness.

Let us then think only of the present, and not even permit our minds to wander with curiosity into the future. This future is not yet ours; perhaps it never will be. It is exposing our-

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

selves to temptation to wish to anticipate God, and to prepare ourselves for things which He may not destine for us. If such things should come to pass, He will give us light and strength according to the need. Why should we desire to meet difficulties prematurely, when we have neither strength nor light as yet provided for them? Let us give heed to the present, which is pressing upon us; it is fidelity to the present which prepares us for fidelity in the future.

✗ Accustom yourself to commune with God, not with thoughts deliberately formed to be expressed at a certain time, but with the feelings with which your heart is filled. If you enjoy His presence, and feel drawn by the attraction of His love, tell Him that you delight in Him, that you are happy in loving Him, and that He is very good to inspire so much affection in a heart so unworthy of His love. At such times of fervor your heart will easily pour out of its abundance. But what shall you say in seasons of dryness, coldness, weariness? Still say what you have in your heart. Tell God that you no longer find His love within you, that you feel a terrible void, that He wearies you, that His presence does

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

not move you, that you would fain leave Him for the lowest amusements, that you will never be easy till you are far from Him, and full of self. You will only have to tell Him all the evil which you know of yourself. You ask what to say to Him? Well! is there not here only too much matter for conversation? In telling Him all your troubles, you will be asking Him to cure them. Say to Him: "O God, look upon my ingratitude, my inconstancy, my unfaithfulness! Take my heart, for I know not how to give it to Thee! Keep it, for I know not how to guard it for Thee! Give me whatever outward troubles and crosses are needful to keep me under Thy yoke! Have pity upon me in spite of myself!"

Thus you will always have enough to say to God, either of His mercies or of your needs; it is an inexhaustible subject. In either case, tell Him unreservedly whatever is in your mind, with the simplicity and familiarity of a child towards its mother.

Occupy yourself during the day with your duties, controlling expenses, watching over the welfare of your household, working at the education of your children with a gentle au-

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

thority, fulfilling the just claims of society, so as to help all who see you, but without making any talk of religion. All this is very simple, plain, and ordinary; it may all form part of a most commonplace life, but it all tends to draw you continually closer to God. Oh! what consolation will be yours if you do so!

LXIII.

ADVICE CONCERNING THE INNER AND OUTER LIFE.

I AM not surprised at the disgust which you feel for so many things displeasing to God; it is the natural effect of the change in your heart. You would like a quiet condition in which you could attend freely to what most interests you, and escape from all that tends to reopen your wounds; but this is not the will of God. He wills that the things which formerly interested and absorbed you too much should now become wearisome, and serve as a penance. So bear this cross in peace as an expiation of your offences, and wait till God relieves you from it. He will do it in His own time, and not in yours.

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

In the mean time keep certain seasons for yourself in which to think of God, and to draw near to Him. You must read, pray, distrust your own inclinations and habits, remember that you carry the gift of God in an earthen vessel, and, above all, strengthen your inner life with His love.

Although one may have lived far from Him, one ought not to fear to approach Him with a childlike love. Speak to Him in prayer of all your wretchedness, your wants, your troubles; speak even of the disrelish you sometimes feel for His service. You cannot speak too freely or too trustfully to Him. He loves the simple and lowly; it is with them that He converses. If you are of this number, lay aside all your lofty ideas, open your heart to Him, and tell Him everything. After thus speaking to God, listen to Him. Prepare your heart in such a manner that He may impress upon you such virtues as shall please Him. Let all within you be silent, and listen to Him. This silence to the outer world, to low passions, and human thoughts within, is essential, if you would hear that voice which calls the soul to die to self, and to worship God in spirit and in truth.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

You have great helps in the knowledge you have acquired; you have read many good books, you know the true foundations of religion, and the weakness of all that is opposed to it. But all these means, which lead you to God in the beginning, would hinder you in the end if you should trust too much to your own light. The best and highest use of your mind is to learn to distrust yourself, to renounce your own will, and to submit to the will of God in simple faith, like a little child.

It is not a question of doing difficult things; do the smallest and most ordinary actions with a heart turned towards God, as one who is seeking the sole end of his being; you will do all that others do, except sin. You will be a good friend, obliging, and courteous, and cheerful, at such seasons and in such company as are fitting for a true Christian. You will be sober and moderate at table, and everywhere else; moderate in speech, moderate in expense, moderate in judgment, in your intercourse with others, in amusement; temperate even in your wisdom and foresight. The love of God teaches this universal sobriety in the use even of all that is best with a beautiful simplicity. Those who learn it are not aus-

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

tere, fretful, or scrupulous, but they have a principle of love within that enlarges the heart, and makes all things easy and pleasant; that, without constraint or anxiety, inspires a sensitive care never to offend God, and that checks us when there is danger of going too far.

In this state we suffer, as other people do, from weariness, difficulties, disappointments, annoyances, bodily infirmities, troubles from within as well as from without, temptations, and sometimes disgusts and discouragements; but if our crosses are the same with those of the rest of the world, our motives for bearing them are very different. We see God perpetually in all things, but we never see Him so clearly or so profitably as in suffering and humiliation.

Live, my friend, without making any exterior change, save what may be necessary either that you may avoid evil, or may be protected against your weakness, or that you may not discredit the Gospel. As to the rest, "let not your left hand know what your right hand doeth;" endeavor to be cheerful and tranquil.

Let your conduct be consistent, moderate,

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

without affectation of either good or ill, but firm in what is right, and so decided that no one can hope to drag you back. You will get off better, and be less tormented by others when they are convinced that you are thoroughly devoted to religion, and that you will not yield. Those who are suspected of weakness, inconsistency, or insincerity, are sure to be beset with importunity.

Put your trust, not in your own strength, nor in your resolutions, nor in the best possible precautions (though these should be taken with all care and vigilance), nor even in any promises you may make, but solely in God's goodness, who loved you from eternity, before you loved Him, and even when you were ungrateful to Him.

LXIV.

SURRENDER TO GOD DURING INWARD VICISSITUDES.

LET your heart go as God leads it, sometimes up, sometimes down; such vicissitudes are severe trials. If we were always in trouble, we should become hardened to it,

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

or else fail under it; but intervals of calm, when we can take breath, restore our strength, and make the renewal of our griefs more bitter than before.

As for myself, when I suffer I can see nothing but unlimited suffering before me; and when the time of consolation comes, my natural impulse is to dread accepting it, lest it be a mere delusion, which will make the renewed cross heavier. But it seems to me that true fidelity is to take good and evil alike, as they come, being willing to undergo all such disturbances. We ought to allow ourselves to be comforted when God comforts us, to be overtaken when God overtakes, and afflicted when He afflicts.

While saying all this to you, I myself have a horror of all that the experience of these things brings with it. I shudder at the mere shadow of the cross; but the outward cross would be nothing without the inward cross, which is desolation, dread, and agony. I say this to you without much purpose, just because it is what is occupying my mind at this moment. My heart to-day is in a state of dry and bitter peace; I know not what to-morrow will bring. God will do as seemeth Him

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

good; and this will always be our daily bread. It is sometimes very hard and unacceptable to the digestion. Listen to God, and not to yourself; therein is true liberty, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.

LXV.

PEACE IN SUFFERING.

AS for N., I pray that our Lord may give her a simplicity which shall be the source of peace to her. When we become faithful in putting aside at once all unnecessary, restless anxiety, which springs from a love of self very different from true love, we shall be at large in the midst of the narrow way; and, without failing in duty either to God or men, we shall enjoy the pure liberty and innocent peace of the children of God.

Sufferings arising from anxiety, in which the soul adds, to the cross imposed by the hand of God, an agitated resistance, and a sort of unwillingness to suffer, — such troubles arise only because we live to ourselves. A cross wholly inflicted by God, and fully accepted without any uneasy hesitation, is full of peace

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

as well as of pain. On the contrary, a cross not fully and simply accepted, but resisted by the love of self, even slightly, is a double cross; it is even more a cross, owing to this useless resistance, than through the pain it necessarily entails.

Generally, we bargain with God; we wish always to set a limit, and to see the end of our trouble. The same hidden root of obstinate self-love which makes us need crosses, makes us repulse them, and hinder their work. And so it has to begin again continually; we suffer, yet do not allow the mission of suffering to be accomplished in us. I pray the Lord that we may none of us fall into that torpid state in which our crosses do us no good. St. Paul says that "God loveth a cheerful giver." How much more must He love those who give up cheerfully all their own will, to surrender themselves wholly to His crucifying dealings with them!

Digitized by Google

Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

LXVI.

WE MUST ENDURE THE FAULTS OF OTHERS.

IT has appeared to me that your heart needed enlargement with regard to the faults of others. I grant that you cannot help seeing them when they are prominent, nor avoid your thoughts as to the principles on which certain people appear to act. You cannot even avert a certain pain which these things give you. It is enough if you are willing to bear with their faults, to form no judgment in doubtful cases, and not to cherish that degree of pain which would separate you from the offenders.

Perfection easily bears with the imperfections of others, and makes itself all things to all. We must learn to put up with the greatest defects in worthy souls, and quietly leave them alone till God gives the signal for gradually removing them; otherwise, one would uproot the good grain with the tares.

Such persons must labor in their own measure at self-amendment, and you must labor to bear with their weaknesses. You ought to remember, from your own experience, that cor-

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

rection is a bitter thing, and this should lead you to soften it to others. You have not naturally so much an ardent zeal to correct others, as a great fastidiousness which shuts your heart to them.

LXVII.

RESIGNATION TO THE WILL OF GOD.

I ENTER into your troubles; would that I could do something more! You must imitate Abraham's faith, and go on, not knowing whither. We only lose our way when we choose our own aim. Whoever seeks God's will alone, finds it everywhere, whithersoever God's providence leads him, and so he never goes astray. True resignation, having no selfish path, and no aim at self-pleasing, goes always straight on, as God pleases. The straight way lies in renouncing self, so that God may be all, and we ourselves nothing.

Fear your eager liveliness, your taste for the world, your secret ambition, which slips in unperceived. Do not become over-excited by political conversations, or social intercourse, which dissipates your mind, and unfits

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

you for recollection and prayer. Speak little, be brief, economize your time, work methodically and steadily, let deeds take the place of fine words.

I repeat, the future is not yet yours; perhaps it never will be. Limit yourself to the present; eat your daily bread. "To-morrow will take care for the things of itself; sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." You have not to-day grace for to-morrow; that will only come with to-morrow's need. The present moment is a brief eternity to us.

LXVIII.

To the Duc de Chevreuse.

ON THE DIFFICULTIES OF A BUSY LIFE.

I HAVE often noticed that you were always in a hurry to go from one occupation to another, while at the same time each particular thing carries you too far. This is because you give way overmuch to your tendency to dissect everything. You are not slow, but you are lengthy. You spend a great deal of time upon each thing, not from slowness of action, — on the contrary, your work is often

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

hurried, — but owing to the quantity of detail you take in. You want to say everything that has the smallest connection with what is in hand, you are always afraid of not saying enough; and this makes every proceeding too long, and obliges you constantly to hurry from one thing to another without interval. If you could be briefer, each matter would find room, and drop into its place without hindrance; but, to attain brevity, you must learn to retrench whatever is not essential, and to avoid a precision of detail which encumbers that which is really necessary with superfluities. In order to be sober in word, you must be sober in thought; you must not follow your natural impulse to convince others. You will only reach the source of evil by frequently withdrawing yourself into an interior silence. Such a silence of simple prayer would soon calm that actively argumentative mind, and soon God's Spirit would cast out all your speculation and discursiveness. You would learn to look at each matter from a simple, clear point of view; you would speak as you think; you would say what has to be said in two words, instead of taking so many means to convince men. You would be less bur-

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

dened, less excited, less distracted, freer, more easy, more methodical, though without effort, more decided, both on your own behalf and your neighbors'. Moreover, this silence, which would greatly tend to expedite external matters of business, would accustom you to do even your business in a spirit of prayer. Everything would be made easier to you ; but otherwise you will become more and more pressed, weary, and spent, and the business which overpowers the interior needs of the soul will likewise overpower the health of the body.

In God's name, cut these things short from morning to night, but deal with yourself in the same way as with others. Silence yourself inwardly ; return to frequent, earnest prayer, but without effort, rather dropping all thought than struggling against those which arise, and seeking such as do not offer themselves. Such calm and leisure will forward your affairs in a way which eagerness and forced efforts will never do. Listen rather less to your own thoughts, so as to be able to listen more to God. I venture to promise that if you are thus faithful to your own inward light on every occasion, you will soon find relief in your work, be more able to satisfy

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

your neighbors, and, at the same time, walk much more truly in your vocation.

It is not enough to care for good books, you must be a good living book yourself. Your inner mind should be the reality of these ideals. The saints had more difficulties and crosses than you, yet amid all these difficulties they preserved and fostered peace, simplicity, purity of life, and almost continual prayer.

I can easily believe that the multitude of your affairs distracts you, and withers you up. The real remedy is to cut each thing short, and not give way to your tendency to detail, lest by degrees your inward grace should run dry. Reserve seasons for interior refreshment, which will be the source of grace for all occasions; and, even in the press of external occupation, strive to act quietly, and with a brevity which will be a constant self-discipline.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

LXIX.

TO PRESERVE THE SPIRIT OF PRAYER IN BUSINESS.

IF you can wean yourself from all that is mere idle curiosity and superfluous reasoning, you will gain a great deal of time for meditation and for business. The spirit of prayer will make you simple, concise, clear, moderate in thought and word, calm under difficulties. Self is active, wordy, vacillating, impulsive, many-sided, for ever aiming at what is impossible, losing sight of the end for the sake of the means, wanting to convince, please, conciliate all. The spirit of grace calmly seeks nought save to be faithful, not fearing but that faithfulness will overcome all hindrances. This is the peace which the world can neither give nor take away, and which exceeds all human conception.

What I most desire for you is recollection and a tolerably frequent pause amid so much that must dissipate your mind. A state of continual mental activity, unless absolutely required by God, exhausts and dries up the inner life. You remember how Jesus Christ

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

was wont to take his disciples apart, and interrupt even their most urgent business. Sometimes he would leave the multitude which "came from afar," and waited for his ministry; he would withdraw from them, and say to his disciples, "Come ye apart." Suffer me to say the like to you. It is not enough to act or to give; we must know how to receive, to imbibe, to yield ourselves calmly to the divine impress.

LXX.

THE WILL OF GOD SHOULD BE OUR ALL.

I WISH you that peace of heart, and joy in the Holy Spirit, which are found in the midst of all the crosses and temptations of life. This is the essential difference between Babylon and the City of God. The inhabitant of Babylon, however intoxicated with worldly prosperity, has an indefinable feeling in the depths of the heart, which cries, "Not enough; I have not all that I want, and, yet more, I have that which I want not." But, on the contrary, the inhabitant of the Holy City bears in the depths of his heart a perpetual *Fiat* and *Amen*. He wills to bear all his troubles,

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

and he does not crave any of the consolations of which God deprives him. Ask him what he wishes, and he will reply that he wishes for precisely what he has. The will of God, at the present moment, is that daily bread which is better than all else. He wills all that God wills in and for Him. This will satisfies his heart; it is a never-failing manna.

LXXI.

ON PRAYER AND SELF-SURRENDER.

GOD is our true Friend, who always gives us the counsel and comfort we need. Our danger lies in resisting Him; so it is essential that we acquire the habit of hearkening to His voice, of keeping silence within, and listening so as to lose nothing of what He says to us. We know well enough how to keep outward silence, and to hush our spoken words, but we know little of interior silence. It consists in hushing our idle, restless, wandering imagination, in quieting the promptings of our worldly minds, and in suppressing the crowd of unprofitable thoughts which excite and disturb the soul.

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Accustom yourself to have familiar recourse to God, and to ask His help, whenever He requires some sacrifice which you have not courage to make. Your sensitiveness as to the smallest trifles shows how much you need that God should tear them from you. Oh, how blessed it is when one can make great sacrifices to God by offering up what is as mere child's play. We need not take to sack-cloth and hair-shirts, or fly to the desert; we need only let God deprive us of some childish trifles. Without overstepping the limits of ordinary life, we can die to self, and offer an inexhaustible sacrifice to God. If we have faithlessly refused something He asked, it needs but to relax our grasp the moment we are conscious of the fault. But, to obtain such faithfulness, we must watch, pray, strengthen our heart, not our curiosity, vanity, or sloth.

LXXII.

ON DISTRACTIONS.

PEOPLE carry to their prayers an imagination excited by all manner of idle

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

frivolities, a mind buoyed up with thoughts and projects of self-pleasing, and a will divided between duty to God and inclination to all that fosters self-love. Can you wonder that their prayer so easily becomes a mere helpless distraction, all lifeless, an uninteresting form, which they are impatient to have done with? That which ought to be their support in all temptation is itself without strength or power; that which ought to be the heart's food is itself unfed, — the source of life is dried up. What remedy can we find for this? I know but two; one to lessen the day's distractions, the other to increase recollection in those hours which are free.

I do not want you to cut off anything from your public duties; indeed, I have sometimes fancied that you did not give time enough to visits of courtesy, and the claims of society arising out of your position. But you ought to cut to the quick as regards your free hours. Less of mere indulged curiosity, fewer lengthy documents, fewer details, less of the anatomy of business. You should often cut things short with two decided words, and learn the great art of letting others help you. You dissipate your mind more in your own study with

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

disagreeable matters than you would do by performing social duties which interfere with your notions of freedom. Take away men's excitability and their roused self-love, and no occupations in the way of duty would distract them; all would be quietly done as in God's presence, and their exterior duties would become a kind of prayer.

LXXIII.

HOW TO BEAR CROSSES.

YOU have to carry many a cross, but you need them, since God lays them on you. He knows how to select them; it is the fact of their being His selection which disturbs and roots out self-will. Crosses which you picked out, and thought well to bear, so far from being crosses and means of death unto self, would be all that was wanted to sustain and strengthen self-will. You complain of your interior darkness and poverty: "Blessed are the poor in spirit." "Blessed are they who, not having seen, yet have believed." Is it not far enough for us to see if we can perceive our own frailty, and not at-

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

tempt to palliate it? If we see our own darkness, it will do.

Follow the leadings of lowliness, simplicity, and self-denial, and you will acquire peace, recollection, gentleness, detachment, forbearance towards others, and contentment under all your troubles.

LXXIV.

GOD PROPORTIONS OUR SUFFERINGS TO OUR STRENGTH.

I AM truly concerned for the sufferings of your dear invalid, and the trials of those whom God has placed near her to help her to bear her cross. Bid her never distrust God, and He will proportion her sufferings to the patience which He will give her. He only, who has made all hearts, and renewed them by His grace, knows what that due proportion is. The man on whom He is exercising it does not perceive it, and, knowing neither the extent of his future trial, nor that of God's sustaining grace, he is tempted to discouragement and despair.

"God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able." He

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

vouchsafes to call Himself *faithful*. How blessed is that faithfulness. Remind your invalid of this, and bid her leave all to God, without looking beyond to-day. Oftentimes, that which seemed most terrible and unbearable beforehand is lightened when it comes. All that is excessive comes, not of God, who never lays too much on us, but from our own imagination, which seeks to penetrate the future, and our self-love, which exaggerates all we suffer. This will help N., who sometimes is distressed, lest she should give way to distress at some future time. All our moments are alike in God's hand, the hour of death as that of life.

LXXV.

INDULGENCE FOR THE FAULTS OF OTHERS.

N. IS really a good man, although he has his faults. Who has not? Yet, overladen as we are with our own, which we leave uncorrected, we are so sensitive and impatient towards those of our neighbor! Nothing, seemingly can make us indulgent, since our own incorrigible frailty does not abate the severity of our criticism upon others. We

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

can often do more for other men by correcting our own faults than by trying to correct theirs. Be at rest, sir; let all these things flow by, like the river beneath a bridge. Do you abide in the presence of God, which will never flow away.

LXXVI.

PATIENCE WITH THE INFIRMITIES OF OTHERS.

I AM very sorry for all the disappointment you have met with. One must accustom one's self to look for little from men; it is the only way to avoid disappointment. One must take that which they are able to give, as we take from a tree the fruit it bears, though indeed some trees bear nothing but leaves and caterpillars. God bears with and waits patiently for imperfect men, and is not even repulsed by their resistance; we ought to imitate this loving patience, this merciful forbearance. It is only imperfection which is intolerant of what is imperfect; the more any one has advanced towards perfection, the more patiently and quietly he will bear with, though not foster, the imperfections of others.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

LXXVII.

ANXIETY CONCERNING THE FUTURE.

I WISH you all the benefit you are seeking in retreat; above all, that you may find rest in a simple line of conduct, without looking forward anxiously to the future. That future is in God's hands, not yours; God will rule it according to your need. But if you seek to forecast it in your own wisdom, you will gain nothing but anxiety and anticipation of inevitable trouble. Try only to make use of each day; each day brings its own good and evil, and sometimes what seems evil becomes good if we leave it to God, and do not forestall Him in our impatience.

Be sure that God will grant you whatever time you need to attain to Him. Perhaps He may not give you as much as you would like for your own plans, or to please yourself under the pretext of seeking perfection, but you will find that neither time nor opportunity for renunciation of self and self-pleasing will be lacking. All other time is lost, however well spent it may seem. Be assured that you will find all such matters adapted to your real needs.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

LXXVIII.

HOW TO DEAL WISELY WITH THE FAULTS OF OTHERS.

WHILE we are so imperfect, we can understand only in part; and the same self-love which causes our defects hides them very subtly, both from others and from ourselves. Self-love must be uprooted, and the love of God reign solely in our hearts, before we can see ourselves as we are; and then the same light which shows our faults would remove them. Till then, we only half know ourselves, because we are only half given to God, cleaving to self a great deal more than we think, or dare to own to ourselves. When we "receive all truth," we shall see clearly; and, loving ourselves only with the love of charity, we shall see ourselves as we see our neighbor, without partiality and without flattery. Meanwhile, God spares us, by discovering our weakness to us, just in proportion as our courage to bear the sight increases. We discover our imperfections one by one, as we are able to cure them. Without this merciful preparation of light and strength in due

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

proportion, the sight of our frailty would only lead to despair.

Those who correct others ought to watch the moment when God touches their hearts; we must bear a fault with patience, till we perceive His Spirit reproaching them within. We must imitate Him who gently reproves, so that they feel that it is less God than their own hearts that condemns them. When we blame with impatience because we are displeased with the fault, it is a human censure, and not the disapprobation of God. It is imperfection reproving the imperfect; it is a subtle, clinging self-love which cannot forgive the self-love of others. The greater our own self-love, the more severe critics we shall be. Nothing is so offensive to a haughty, sensitive self-conceit as the self-conceit of others. But, on the contrary, the love of God is full of consideration, forbearance, condescension, and tenderness. It adapts itself, waits, and never moves more than one step at a time. The less we love ourselves, the more considerate we are of others. We wait even years to give salutary advice. We wait for Providence to give the occasion, and grace to open their hearts to receive it. If you would

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

gather the fruit before its time, you lose it entirely.

Our imperfect friends can know us only imperfectly ; the same self-love that hides their defects magnifies ours. They see in us what we cannot see, and overlook much that we see. They are quick to discern many things which wound their sensitive, jealous self-love, and which ours equally conceals ; but they do not see those faults which lie deep within, and which sully our virtues, and displease God alone. Thus their best judgments are superficial.

My conclusion is that we must listen to the voice of God in the silence of our souls, and pronounce for or against ourselves, whatever this pure light may reveal to us at the moment when we thus endeavor to know ourselves. We must often silently listen to this teacher within, who will make known all truth to us, and who, if we are faithful in attending to Him, will often lead us to silence. When we hear this secret, small voice within, which is the soul of our soul, it is a proof that self should be silent, that it may listen to it. This voice is not a stranger there. God is in our souls, as our souls are in our bodies. This is

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

not a miraculous inspiration, which exposes us to illusion and fanaticism. It is only a profound peace of the soul that yields itself up to the Spirit of God, believing His revealed word, and practising His commands as declared in the Gospel.

LXXIX.

To the Duke of Burgundy.

THAT THE LOVE OF GOD SHOULD BE OUR ONLY RULE AND END.

THE true way to love our neighbors is to love them in God and for God. It is ourselves that we love in our friends, and this is an imperfect love. It is more like self-love than real friendship. How, then, must we love our friends? We must love them in the order of God; we must love God in them. That is to say, we must love the good things with which God has endowed them, and we must, for His sake, submit to the privation of those things which He has denied them. When we love them with reference to self, our self-love makes us impatient, sensitive, jealous, demanding much, and deserving lit-

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

tle ; ever distrusting ourselves and our friends. It becomes wearied and disgusted ; it very soon sees the termination of what it believed was inexhaustible ; it meets everywhere with disappointment ; it would like to have always that which is perfect, and finds it nowhere ; it becomes dissatisfied, changes, and has no repose.

But the love of God, loving friends apart from self, knows how to love them patiently with all their faults, and does not insist upon finding in our friends what God has not placed there. It thinks of God and of what He has given ; it thinks that all is good, provided it is from Him ; and it can support that which God suffers to be, and to which it is His will that we should submit, by conforming ourselves to His designs.

The love of God never looks for perfection in created beings. It knows that it dwells with Him alone ; and, as it never expects perfection, it is never disappointed. It loves God and His gifts in every living thing, according to their respective value. It loves less what is less excellent, and more what is nearer to perfection. It sees in an earthly parent the love of the Heavenly Father. In

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

a relative, in a friend, it acknowledges those tender ties which God has ordained. The more strictly these bonds are in the order of His Providence, the more the love of God sanctions them, and renders them strong and intimate. Can we love God without loving those beings whom He has commanded us to love? It is He that inspires this love; it is His will that we should love them; shall we not obey Him?

This love can endure all things, suffer all things, hope all things for our neighbor. It can conquer all difficulties; it flows from the heart, and sheds a charm upon the manners. It is melted at the sorrows of others, and thinks nothing of its own; it gives consolation where it is needed; it is gentle; it adapts itself to others; it weeps with those who weep, it rejoices with those who rejoice; it is all things to all men, not in a forced appearance and in cold demonstrations, but from a full and overflowing heart, in which the love of God is a living spring of the tenderest, the deepest, and the truest feeling. Nothing is so sterile, so cold, so constrained, as a heart that loves only itself in all things; while nothing can exceed the frankness, the

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

tenderness, the gentle loveliness of a heart filled and animated by the divine love.

CHRISTIAN COUNSELS.

LXXX.

ON THE EMPLOYMENT OF TIME.

TIME bears a very different aspect at different seasons of one's life, but there is one maxim which applies equally to all seasons, namely, that none should go by uselessly, — that every season carries with it various duties of God's own appointing, and concerning the discharge of which we must give account to Him, since from the first to the last moment of life, God never means us to look upon any time as purposeless, either to be used as our own apart from Him, or lost. The important thing is to know how He would have us use it. And this is to be learned, not by an eager and uneasy ardor, which is much more calculated to confuse than to enlighten us concerning our duties, but by a pure and upright heart, seeking God in simplicity, and

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

diligent in resisting the deceits and wiles of self-love as fast as it perceives them. For remember, we lose time not only by doing nothing, or doing amiss, but also by doing things in themselves right, which yet are not what God would have us do.

One general rule for the right use of time is to accustom yourself to live in continual dependence upon God's Holy Spirit, receiving whatever He vouchsafes to give, from one moment to another, referring all doubts to Him, and, where an immediate course of action has to be taken, seeking strength in Him, — lifting up your heart to Him whenever you become aware that outward things are leading you away, or tending to forgetfulness or separation from Him.

Blessed is that soul which by sincere self-renunciation abides always in its Creator's hands, ready to do whatever He wills, not weary of saying to Him a hundred times a day, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do? Teach me to do Thy will, for Thou art my God. Send forth Thy light, Lord, to guide me; teach me by a holy use of the present time, which Thou givest me, to make amends for the past, and never blindly to reckon on an uncertain future."

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

With respect to business and external duties, we only need for the right use of time to give a simple attention to the ordering of God's Providence. As it is He who prepares them for us, and presents them to us, we have only to follow Him obediently, submitting entirely to Him our own tempers, fancies, inclinations, our self-will, our fastidiousness or restless anxiety, our hurry, in short, all our own natural impulses to do what we like, in our own way. Take care not to let yourself be overwhelmed by outer things, nor utterly immersed in a multitude of external interests, whatever they may be.

We should endeavor to begin all our undertakings with reference to the glory of God, continue them quietly, and finish them without excitement or impatience.

Spare time is often the pleasantest and the most useful as concerns one's self; it can hardly find a better use than that of renewing our strength (and this bodily as well as mental) through secret communion with God. Prayer is so necessary, it is the source of so much blessing, that the soul which has found this treasure will hardly fail to return to it as often as it is free to do so.

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

LXXXI.

ON THE AMUSEMENTS THAT BELONG TO OUR CONDITION.

I do not think that you need to be troubled about those entertainments which you are inevitably called upon to share. Where amusements are innocent in themselves, and come in the way of things according to the state of life to which God has called a person, I think it is enough if she shares in them moderately, and as in God's sight. A stiff, constrained tone, — harsh, unbending, disobliging manners, — only tend to give worldly people a mistaken impression of religion, whereas they are quite sufficiently inclined already to misjudge it, and to think that God can only be served in a gloomy, dull life.

Let us go on with a simple heart in all peace and joy; such are the fruits of the Holy Spirit. He who does all, even the commonest things, as in God's presence, is still working for God, although he may appear to do nothing of much importance; always taking for granted that such trifling duties come

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

to him in the order of God's Providence, and that he conforms to that order in his life.

Most people, when setting about their reformation or conversion, are much more anxious to spend their lives in doing difficult or unusual things, than to purify their intentions and to renounce self-will in the ordinary duties of their position; but this is a great mistake. Far better make less outward alteration as to actions, and more inward change in the heart which prompts them. Those who are leading a decent, well-ordered life need much more interior than exterior change when they seek to become more earnest Christians. God does not care for lip service, or bodily gestures, or outward ceremonies; what He requires is a will plastic in His hands, asking nothing and refusing nothing, which wills unreservedly all that He wills, never under any possible excuse willing aught that He does not will.

Try always to have this simple will, — this will so imbued with God's will, wherever His Providence may lead you. Seek Him during the hours which seem so empty, and they will become full to you through His grace. Even the most unprofitable amusements will become

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

a kind of good works, if you enter into them simply out of genuine courtesy, and in conformity with the ordering of God's Providence. How free is the heart when God opens this way of simplicity. You will find yourself going on like a little child whose mother leads it by the hand, while it never questions whither they are going; you will be content to be bound or free, to talk or be silent.

Nothing is so simple, gentle, lovable, discreet, and steadfast in every duty as real religion founded on dutiful acceptance of the will of God, apart from personal tastes and likings, impetuosity and impulse. One so actuated leads very much the same life as all around, without affectation or strictness, sociable and easy in manner, but always regulated by duty, unremitting in giving up whatever is at discord with God's appointed way, looking steadfastly to God, and offering up all the impulsive tendencies of natural disposition to Him.

When you find that weariness depresses or amusement distracts you, you will calmly turn with an untroubled spirit to your heavenly Father, who is always holding out His arms to

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

you. You will look to Him for gladness and refreshment when depressed, for moderation and recollection when in good spirits, and you will find that He will never leave you to want. A trustful glance, a silent movement of the heart towards Him, will renew your strength; and, though you may often feel as if your soul was downcast and numb, whatever God calls you to do, He will give you power and courage to perform. This is the daily bread which we ask continually, and which will never fail us; for our heavenly Father, so far from ever overlooking us, is only waiting to find our hearts open, to pour into them the torrents of His grace.

LXXXII.

To a Lady at Court.

THE BURDEN OF PROSPERITY.

CHAINS of gold are no less chains than chains of iron; and, while the wearer is an object of envy, she is worthy of compassion. Your captivity is in no way preferable to that of one kept unjustly in prison, — the only real comfort is that it is God who deprives you of liberty, and this is the same

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

comfort by which the innocent prisoner would be upheld. . . . But, after all, the consolation of knowing that you are where you are through God's Providence is quite inexhaustible ; while you have that, nothing can matter. Well is it for those whom God cuts off from their own will, that they may follow His. Bearing these bonds, they cannot please themselves ; from morning to night they do what God would have done, not what they like ; so much the better : He holds them bound, so to say, hand and foot by His will, He never leaves them a moment to themselves ; He leads them on from one sacrifice to another, from one trouble to another, and trains them to fulfil His noblest plans amid commonplace annoyances, frivolous society, and trivialities of which they feel ashamed. He urges the faithful soul until it has scarce time to draw breath ; no sooner has one interruption ceased than God sends another to carry on His work. The soul would fain be free to think upon God, but all the while it is far more really united to Him by yielding to the cross He sends than by the most glowing and tender thoughts of His goodness.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

LXXXIII.

THE SAME.

GOD does not need that we should say much to Him, nor even that we should think much. He sees the heart, and that is enough; He sees its suffering and its submission. We do not trouble ourselves to say perpetually to some beloved friends, "I love you with all my heart;" so it may easily chance that for a long time together we do not reflect upon our love for Him, and yet that meanwhile we love Him every whit as much as though we were making the fondest protestations. True love abides deep down in the heart; it is simple, peaceful, and sometimes silent.

In suffering, the only thing to be done is to suffer silently in God's presence: "I became dumb, and opened not my mouth, for it was Thy doing." Depression, illness, oppression of the brain, faintness, exhaustion, interruptions, restraints, all are sent by God. Do not harass yourself with trying to excite an artificial sense of God's presence, or of any such truths within yourself; far better is it to abide

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

His time quietly with a submissive heart. By degrees you will learn that all the troubles of your position, your sufferings from bad health, and even your inward failings, so long as they are borne patiently and meekly, are real anti-dotes to the poison of what in itself is a very perilous condition.

LXXXIV.

ON CHRISTIAN PERFECTION.

CHRISTIAN perfection has not the strict-ness, the irksomeness, the constraint, that some imagine. It requires that we should be devoted to God from the depths of the heart; and, when we are thus devoted to Him, all that we do for Him becomes easy. Those who are wholly God's are always happy, for they wish only what God wills, and they wish to do for Him all that He wills; they renounce all, and find a hundredfold in this renuncia-tion. This hundredfold happiness, which the true children of God possess in the midst of crosses (provided they are faithful), consists in peace of conscience, freedom of heart, the sweetness of resigning themselves into the

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

hands of God, the joy of seeing the Light always increasing in their hearts, and, finally, deliverance from the tyrannical fears and desires of the world.

They sacrifice themselves, but it is to Him whom they love best; they suffer, but they are willing to suffer, and they prefer suffering to all their false joys; their body may endure severe pain, their imagination be troubled, their mind become languid and exhausted, but their will is firm and tranquil in its most secret depths, and it unceasingly says Amen to all the blows with which God smites in order to discipline.

What God requires of us is a will no longer divided between Him and any creature; a will pliant in His hands, which desires nothing, and rejects nothing, which wishes without reserve all that He wills, and never, under any pretext, wishes anything which He does not will. When one is in this state, everything is salutary; even amusements, taken in this spirit, are turned into good works.

Is it not a grievous mistake to be afraid to give yourself to God, and to commit yourself to so blessed a state of things? Blessed are they who throw themselves headlong and blindfold into the arms of "the Father of

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

mercies and God of all comfort." Then we desire nothing save to know what we owe to God; and we fear nothing save that we may not be quick enough to see what He requires.

The true Christian, with whatever distress Providence overwhelms him, wishes all that happens to him, and longs for nothing that is denied him; the more he loves God, the more happy he is; and the highest perfection, far from increasing his burden, renders his yoke more light.

What folly to fear giving yourself too entirely to God! It merely means that you are afraid of being too happy, of loving the will of God in all things too heartily, of bearing your inevitable crosses too bravely, of finding too much consolation in the love of God, and too much relief from the passions which make us miserable.

Let us then despise the things of earth, that we may belong wholly to God. I do not say that we should give them up entirely; for, when one is already leading a virtuous, well-regulated life, all that is needed is to have love become the motive power of our hearts, and we shall do nearly the same things that

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

we did before; for God does not alter the conditions He has assigned to men, nor the duties which He himself has attached to them, but we shall do, to serve God, what we have been doing to serve and please the world, and to satisfy ourselves. There will be only this difference, that instead of being devoured by our pride, our tyrannical passions, and the malignant censure of the world, we shall act, on the contrary, with freedom, courage, hope in God; we shall be full of trust, and looking forward to eternal blessings will sustain us in the midst of trials, when earthly happiness seems to slip from under us: our love of God, which will make us realize His love for us, will give us wings to fly in His way, and to waft us above all our cares and troubles.

LXXXV.

ON THE PRESENCE OF GOD.

THE true mainspring of our perfection is contained in these words of God to Abraham, "Walk in my presence, and thou shalt be perfect." * The presence of God

* In the English Bible, "Walk before me, and be thou perfect." — GEN. xvii. 1.

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

calms the spirit, gives tranquil slumbers, and brings repose and quiet of mind even in the midst of all our daily labors; but then we must give ourselves up unreservedly to Him.

It does not require a great deal of time to love God, to renew ourselves in His presence, to lift up the heart to Him, or to adore Him in the depths of the heart, to offer Him what we do and what we suffer; this is the true "Kingdom of God within us," which nothing can disturb.

When outward distractions and the rovings of the imagination hinder the soul from a sweet and peaceful state of recollection, let us at least calm ourselves by the integrity of our will; then the desire for recollectedness is in itself a kind of recollection which will avail. We must turn our minds inward to God, and do whatsoever He would have us, with a pure and upright intention.

We must endeavor, from time to time, to awaken in ourselves the desire of being devoted to God to the fullest extent of all the powers of our soul; that is to say, to contemplate Him with our mind, and with our will to love Him. Let us also desire that our senses may be consecrated to Him in all their operations.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Let us take care not to be occupied too long, either outwardly or inwardly, with things which cause such distractions to the heart and mind and draw them so much out of themselves, that they find it difficult to return within to find God.

Whenever we perceive in ourselves an eager desire for anything, whatever it may be, and find that our inclination is hurrying us with too much haste to do what is to be done, if it is only to say a word, to see an object, or to take a step, let us stop short, and repress the eagerness of our thoughts and the excitement with which we are acting, for God has said that His Spirit dwells not in disorder.

Let us take care that we do not concern ourselves too much in all that is said and done around us, and that we do not become too deeply engrossed in it, for it is a great source of disturbance. As soon as we have seen what God requires of us in each thing that presents itself, let us confine ourselves to that, and withdraw ourselves from everything else. By that means we shall always keep the depths of the soul free and tranquil, and we shall rid ourselves of many useless things

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

which encumber the heart, and hinder it from turning easily to God.

An excellent means of keeping ourselves in an inward quiet and freedom of spirit, is to put an end, at the close of every action, to all further thought about it, by dismissing all the reflections of self-love, whether of self-complacency or regret.

Happy is he in whose mind nothing remains but what is necessary, and who thinks of each thing only when it is time to think of it; so that it is rather God who awakens the impression of it by the sight of His will, which is to be performed, than the mind itself laboriously foreseeing and seeking it.

Finally, let us acquire the habit of recalling ourselves to ourselves through the day, and during the course of our employments, by looking simply to God. By that means, let us calm all the commotions of the heart, as soon as we see it agitated. Let us sever ourselves from every pleasure that does not come from God. Let us suppress useless thoughts and reveries, and speak no idle words. Let us seek God within us, and we shall infallibly find Him, and with Him joy and peace.

In our outward occupations let us be more

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

occupied with God than with all else. To do them well, we must do them as in His presence and for His sake. At the sight of the majesty of God, calmness and serenity should possess the soul. A word from the Lord stilled the raging of the sea, and a glance from Him to us, and from us to Him, should still do the same in our daily life.

We should often raise our hearts to God. He will purify, enlighten, direct them. It was the daily practice of David, who said, "I have set the Lord always before me." Let us often repeat his beautiful words, "Whom have I in Heaven but Thee, and there is none on earth that I desire in comparison of Thee. Thou art the strength of my heart, and my portion forever."

We must not wait for a leisure hour, when we can shut the door: the moment in which we regret the want of inward retirement is enough to bring us into it. Let us turn our hearts to God, simply, familiarly, and trustfully. The most interrupted moments, even while eating, or listening to others, are valuable. Unprofitable and wearisome talk in our presence, instead of annoying, will relieve us, by giving some interval of inward retirement.

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Thus all things work together for good to them that love God.

We should often read what is suited to our tastes and our needs, making frequent pauses to listen to the voice which will help to call the inner self to recollection. Two or three simple words, full of the Spirit of God, are like manna to the soul. The words are forgotten, but they are doing their work secretly, and the soul feeds upon them, and becomes strengthened.

LXXXVI.

ON CONFORMITY TO THE WILL OF GOD.

YOU will find several chapters in the "Imitation of Jesus Christ," on conformity to God's will, which are marvellous, and the writings of St. Francis de Sales, also, will nourish you with this manna.

All virtue consists in having a willing heart. It is not a question of knowing much, having great talents, or even doing great deeds; all that is necessary is to have a heart, and to long for holiness. But how does our will become sanctified? By conforming itself unreservedly to that of God. We will all that He

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

wills, and will nothing that He does not will; we attach our feeble will to that all-powerful will which performs everything. Thus nothing can ever come to pass against our will, for nothing can happen save that which God wills, and we find in His good pleasure an inexhaustible source of peace and consolation. The interior life is the beginning of the blessed peace of the saints, who eternally say, Amen, amen!

We adore, we praise, we bless God for everything; we see Him incessantly in all things, and in all things His paternal hand is the only object with which we are occupied. There are no longer any evils for us, since all things, even our most terrible sufferings, "work together for good," as St. Paul says, "to those that love God." Can the troubles which God sends to purify us, and make us worthy of Himself, be called evils? What does us so great good cannot be an evil.

Let us cast all our cares, then, into the bosom of so good a Father; let us suffer Him to do as He sees fit. Let us be content to follow His will in all things, and to merge our will in His, that we may renounce ourselves utterly.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Let God do what He will with us. Never resist Him voluntarily, even for a moment. As soon as we perceive the rebellion of the senses and inclinations, let us turn confidingly to Him, take His side against our own timid, rebellious nature, and give it up to the Spirit of God, who will gradually bring death upon it. Let us watch, as in His sight, against the slightest faults, so as not to grieve the Holy Spirit, who is so solicitous over our inner life. Let us profit by the faults which we have committed, through the humble consciousness of our weakness, without discouragement or weariness.

Can we better glorify God than by renouncing ourselves and our own will, and letting Him do according to His good pleasure? It is then that He is truly our God, and that His Kingdom comes within us; when, independent of all outward help and inward consolation, we no longer look to anything within or without, save the hand of God, overruling all things, the object of our unceasing worship.

To wish to serve Him in one place rather than another, by such and such a way, and not by the opposite one, is to wish to serve

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Him in our own way, and not in His. But to be equally ready for all things, to accept everything and reject nothing, to leave one's self like a toy in the hands of Providence, putting no limits to our submission, as, indeed, the dominion of God cannot endure any; this is serving Him by renouncing self; this is treating Him truly as God, and ourselves as creatures made only for Him.

Open, then, your heart; open it without measure, that God and His love may enter without measure, like a torrent. Fear nothing in the path which you are treading. God will lead you as if by the hand, if only you do not doubt, and are filled rather with love for Him than with fear for yourself.

LXXXVII.

ON INWARD PEACE.

THE peace of the soul consists in absolute resignation to the will of God. What you require is true simplicity, a certain calmness of spirit which comes from entire surrender to all that God wills, patience and toleration for your neighbor's faults, which a

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

sense of God's presence inspires, a certain candor and childlike docility in acknowledging your faults, and accepting reproof and counsel; these are the solid graces which are needful for your sanctification.

The trouble you feel about so many things comes from your not accepting everything which may happen to you, with sufficient resignation to God. Put all things, then, in His hands, and offer them beforehand to Him in your heart, as a sacrifice. From the moment when you cease to want things to be according to your own judgment, and accept unconditionally whatever He sends, you will be free from all your uneasy retrospects and anxieties about your own concerns; you will have nothing to conceal or to contrive.

Until then, you will be troubled, changeable in your views and tastes, easily displeased with others, and out of harmony with yourself, full of reserve and distrust; your talents, until they become truly humble and simple, will only torment you; your piety, however sincere, will serve less to sustain and comfort you than to fill you with inward self-reproach. If, on the contrary, you give your heart wholly to God, you will be full of peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

LXXXVIII.

ON PRAYER.

TRUE prayer is nothing else than the love of God. Its excellence does not consist in the multitude of our words, for God knows our inmost feelings without the need of words. The true prayer is that of the heart, and the heart prays only through its desires. He who desires not from the depths of his heart, makes a deceitful prayer. If he should pass whole days in reciting prayers, or in meditating, or in exciting himself to pious feelings, he does not truly pray, if he does not desire what he asks.

We pray without ceasing when we unceasingly retain true love and true desire in our hearts. Love, hidden in the depths of the soul, prays constantly, even when the mind is drawn another way. This love entreats God to give us what we need, and that He would have less regard to our frailty than to the sincerity of our intentions. This love removes even our slight faults, and purifies us like a consuming fire; it asks in us, and for us, that which is according to the will of God.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Then we wish all and we wish nothing. What God wills to give us is exactly what we should have chosen; for we wish all that He wills, and only what He wills. Even when we are busy about outward things, and our thoughts are unavoidably occupied with the duties which Providence has laid upon us, we still bear within us a constantly burning fire, which not only cannot be extinguished, but which, on the contrary, nourishes a secret prayer, which is like a lamp continually burning before the throne of God. "I sleep, but my heart waketh." "Blessed are those whom the Lord shall find watching."

The two principal means of preserving the spirit of prayer which unites us with God are to nourish it, and to avoid whatever tends to make us lose it. To nourish it, we need regular reading, appointed seasons of secret prayer, retirement when required, and frequent recollection of spirit during the day. We should greatly fear, and be exceedingly cautious to avoid all things that have a tendency to make us lose this state of prayer. Thus we should shun associates who dissipate the mind too much, pleasures which excite the passions, and everything calculated to awaken the love

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

of the world, and those old inclinations which have been so injurious to us.

The first effect of a sincere love is an earnest desire to know all that we can do to gratify our Beloved; to do otherwise is to love ourselves under the pretext of loving God; it is to wish to make God serve our pleasure, and not to sacrifice ourselves to His glory. God forbid that His children should so love Him! Cost what it may, we must know and do without reservation all that He requires of us.

We must fulfil our duties before we seek enjoyment in fervor. The man who has public duties, and who spends the time appropriate for them in meditating in retirement, would miss of God while he imagined he was seeking to be united to Him. True union with God is to do His will without ceasing, in spite of all our natural disinclination, in all the wearisome and painful duties of our condition.

We must reserve the necessary time for seeing God alone in prayer. Those who are in important positions have so many indispensable duties to fulfil, that, without the greatest care in the management of their

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

time, none will be left for communion with God. If they have even a slight inclination for trifling, the hours that belong to God and their neighbor disappear altogether.

We must be firm in observing our rules. This strictness appears excessive, but without it everything falls into confusion. To be faithful in prayer, we must be faithful in regulating all the employments of the day, with a firmness which nothing ever can disturb.

LXXXIX.

ON SELF-DENIAL.

GOD calls us to the exercise of self-denial every hour and moment, but nothing is more false than the maxim that we should always choose what is most painful to us. According to this rule, we should soon ruin health, reputation, business, our intercourse with relatives and friends, and the good works which Providence lays upon us.

A simple self-denial, which consists in constant fidelity under Providential crosses, is often far above severe austerities which render the life more marked, and tempt to a vain

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

self-complacency. Whoever refuses nothing which comes in the order of God, and seeks nothing out of that order, never ends his day without partaking of the cross of Jesus Christ. There is a necessary Providence for crosses as for the necessaries of life; it is our daily bread; God never suffers it to fail us; it is sometimes even a very useful trial to fervent souls to give up their own methods of self-denial, and to allow themselves to be disciplined from moment to moment by those which God ordains.

When we are not faithful to the opportunities for self-denial appointed by Providence, there is reason to fear some illusion in those which are sought in the fervor of devotion; this warmth is often delusive; and it seems to me that a soul in this case would do well to examine its faithfulness under the daily crosses allotted by Providence.

XC.

ON TEMPTATIONS.

I KNOW of but two resources against temptations. One is, to be faithful to the

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

inner Light, in avoiding promptly and entirely all that we are at liberty to avoid, which may excite and strengthen the temptation. I say, all that we are at liberty to avoid, because it does not always depend upon ourselves whether we shall fly from occasions of evil. Those which belong to the situation in life in which Providence has placed us are not considered to be within our power.

The second rule is to turn to God when tempted, without being disturbed, or anxious to know if we have yielded a half consent, and without interrupting immediate recourse to God. The shortest and surest way is to act like a little child at the breast; when it sees something which causes alarm, it shrinks back and buries its face in its mother's bosom, that it may no longer behold it.

The sovereign remedy is the habit of dwelling continually in the presence of God; He sustains, consoles, and calms us.

In a certain sense, there is little to do in doing the will of God. It is true that there is an enormous amount to do, because we must never hold back anything, or resist for a moment this Divine love which searches out self-will in the most secret recesses of the soul.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

But, on the other hand, it is not the multitude of hard duties, it is not constraint or contention, which advances us in our Christian course. On the contrary, it is to yield our wills without restriction and without choice; to go on cheerfully from day to day as Providence leads us; to seek nothing, to refuse nothing; to find everything in the present moment; and to suffer God, who does everything, to do His pleasure in and by us, without the slightest resistance.

XCI.

ON DEPRESSION.

WITH regard to a certain depression, which weighs down and dispirits the heart, there are two rules which seem to me important. The first is, to relieve this sadness by the means furnished us by Providence; for example, not to overload ourselves with difficult affairs, that we may not sink under an excessive burden; to husband the strength, not only of the body, but of the mind also, by not taking upon ourselves matters in which we should count too much upon our own

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

courage; to reserve for ourselves hours for prayer, for reading, for the cheering influences of good conversation; and even have recourse to diversions, in order to relax at the same time the mind with the body, according to our need.

The second rule is to bear in peace all the involuntary impressions of sadness which we suffer, notwithstanding the helps and precautions I have just mentioned.

XCII.

ON WANDERING THOUGHTS AND DEPRESSION.

TWO things trouble you; one is, to avoid wandering thoughts; the other, to sustain yourself against depression. As to the former, you will not cure them by set reflections; content yourself with yielding your will unreservedly to God, and never consider any painful condition without accepting it, in your mind, by offering yourself to the Divine guidance. Never, indeed, go forward to meet these crucifying thoughts; but, when God permits them to come to you without your seeking, never let them pass without fruit.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Accept, in spite of the repugnance and shrinking of nature, all that God presents to your mind as a trial by which He would exercise your faith. Never distress yourself to know whether you would have the strength to carry out what you desire to do beforehand; the moment of trial will have its grace, but the grace of the moment in which you look upon these crosses is to feel willing to receive them cheerfully, whenever it shall be the will of God to bestow them.

Whenever you perceive your thoughts wandering, recall them without a struggle, and you will tranquilly find yourself by His side again without disturbance of spirit. Your fidelity in returning to His presence every time when you perceive your condition will procure for you the blessing of His more constant and familiar indwelling.

When we are entirely given up to God, all that we do is well done, even without doing many things; we trustingly offer ourselves up, as regards the future; we desire without reserve all that God wills, and we close our eyes that we may not anticipate future events; meanwhile we apply ourselves to accomplish His will in the present; sufficient for each

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

day is its good and ill. This daily fulfilment of the will of God is the coming of His Kingdom within us, and at the same time our daily bread. We should be faithless indeed, and guilty of heathen distrust, if we wished to penetrate into that future which God conceals from us; we leave it to Him; it is for Him to make it sweet or bitter, short or long; let Him do what seems good in His sight. The most perfect preparation for this future, whatever it may be, is to die to all self-will, that we may give ourselves wholly up to His will.

Then the heart expands; we are relieved by being disburdened of the whole weight of self, by which we were overwhelmed; we are astonished to see how straight and simple is the way. We thought that there was need of perpetual strife, and constantly renewed exertions; we perceive, on the contrary, that there is little to do; that it is sufficient to look to God with confidence, without reasoning either about the future or the past, regarding Him as a Father who leads us in the present moment as if by the hand. If some distraction or other should make us lose sight of Him, without dwelling upon it, we return to Him

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

from whom we had turned away. You will find by experience how much more your progress will be aided by this simple and peaceful turning towards Him, than by all your vexation at the faults which have dominion over you.

As for the natural depression which arises from a melancholy temperament, it springs from the bodily condition, and diet and other remedies will diminish it. It is true that it continually returns, but it is not voluntary. When God gives it, we endure it in peace, like a fever, and other bodily sufferings. The imagination is sunk in profound gloom, and is hung with mourning; but the will, which lives by faith alone, is ready to bear all these impressions; we are at peace, because we are in accord with ourselves, and submissive to God. The question is not what we feel, but what we will. We wish all that we have, and wish nothing which is denied us.

If anything is capable of enlarging and freeing the heart, it is this entire surrender. It sheds abroad in the soul, "peace as a river, and righteousness as the waves of the sea." If anything can render the mind serene, dissipate its scruples and its gloomy fears, relieve

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

its sufferings by the anointing of love, give it a certain vigor in all its actions, and shed the joy of the Holy Spirit even over the countenance and words, it is this simple, free, and childlike manner of abiding in the arms of God.

The watchfulness which Jesus Christ commands is a faithful attention to loving the will of God always, and fulfilling it in the present moment, according to the intimations which are granted us; but it does not consist in distressing ourselves, in putting ourselves to the torture, and in being incessantly occupied with ourselves, instead of raising our eyes to God, who is our only help against ourselves.

When outward occupations shall prevent me from seeking Thy presence in prayer, then I will see Thee, O Lord, working all in all. I will everywhere behold with joy Thy will fulfilled, within me and without; like the saints in bliss, I will continually say Amen; I will always sing in my heart the song of the heavenly Zion. In the pure freedom of spirit which Thou givest to Thy children, I will act and speak simply, cheerfully, and trustfully. Even if I should walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

evil, for Thou art always with me. I will never seek any danger; I will never enter into any engagement, but with the indications of Thy Providence to be my strength and my solace. Even in those occupations in which I shall be sustained by Thy calling, I will give to recollection, to prayer, and to retirement, every day, every hour, every moment Thou shalt leave me free; I will never leave this blessed state, except when Thou shalt Thyself call me to some exterior duty. Then I shall apparently leave Thee, but Thou wilt go forth with me; and, while I thus seem to leave Thee, Thou wilt carry me in Thy bosom.

If it is Thy pleasure to make use of me to forward Thy work among men, I yield myself to Thee; without thinking of myself, I will simply impart to them those gifts which Thou hast showered upon me; I will not go groping along, always falling back on myself; however perilous or distracting the duty may be, I will bear myself simply in Thy presence, with an upright intention, knowing how fatherly is Thy goodness.

If, on the contrary, Thou dost not choose to make use of me for others, I will not offer

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

myself. I will not go to seek anything; I will perform in peace the other things to which Thou shalt limit me; for, according to that disposition of self-surrender which Thou dost grant me, I neither desire nor refuse anything. I am ready for everything, and I consent to be useless to all. Sought or rejected, known or unknown, applauded or opposed, what is it to me? It is Thee, and not myself, Thee, and not Thy gifts, distinct from Thee and Thy love, which I seek. All conditions appointed by Thee are the same to me. Amen.

XCIII.

UPON DAILY FAULTS.

WHEN we perceive an inclination to do wrong before we have committed a fault, we must abstain from it; but, after we have committed it, we must courageously endure the humiliation which follows. When we perceive the fault before we commit it, we must beware of resisting the Spirit of God which is warning us of danger, and which may, if we neglect it, be silenced within us, and which will in time leave us, if we do not yield

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

to it. The faults of precipitation or of frailty are nothing in comparison with those which render us deaf to this voice of the Holy Spirit which is beginning to speak in the bottom of our hearts.

Those faults which we do not perceive till after they are committed will not be cured by inquietude and vexation with ourselves; on the contrary, this fretfulness is only the impatience of pride at the view of its own downfall. The only use, then, to be made of such errors, is to submit quietly to the humiliation they bring; for it is not being humble to resist being humbled. We must condemn our faults, lament them, repent of them, without seeking any palliation or excuse, viewing ourselves as in the presence of God, with all our imperfections upon our heads, and without any feeling of bitterness or discouragement, meekly improving our disgrace.

Very often, what we would offer to God is not what He calls upon us to relinquish. What He demands of us is often what we most cherish; it is this Isaac of our hearts, this only son, this well-beloved, which He commands us to resign; it is His will that we should yield up all that is most dear, and short of this obe-

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

dience we have no repose. "Who is he that hath resisted the Almighty, and been at peace?" Do you desire the blessing of God upon your efforts? Give up everything to Him, and the God of peace will be with you. What consolation, what liberty, what strength, what enlargement of heart, what growth in grace, when the love of ourselves is no longer between us and our Creator, and we have made without hesitation the last sacrifice!

Never let us be discouraged with ourselves; it is not when we are conscious of our faults that we are the most wicked; on the contrary, we are less so. We see by a brighter light; and let us remember for our consolation, that we never perceive our sins till we begin to cure them. We must neither flatter, nor be impatient with ourselves, in the correction of our faults. Despondency is not a state of humility; on the contrary, it is the vexation and despair of a cowardly pride,—nothing is worse; whether we stumble, or whether we fall, we must only think of rising again, and going on in our course. Our faults may be useful to us, if they cure us of a vain confidence in ourselves, and do not deprive us of an humble and salutary confi-

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

dence in God. God never makes us feel our weaknesses, but that we may be led to seek strength from Him. What is involuntary should not trouble us; but the great thing is, never to act against the light within us, and to desire to follow where God would lead us.

XCIV.

ON FIDELITY IN SMALL MATTERS.

GREAT virtues are rare; they are seldom needed; and, when the occasion comes, we are prepared for it by everything which has preceded, excited by the greatness of the sacrifice, and sustained either by the brilliancy of the action in the eyes of others, or by self-complacency in our ability to do such wonderful things. Small occasions, however, are unforeseen; they recur every moment, and place us incessantly in conflict with our pride, our sloth, our self-esteem, our haughtiness, and our readiness to take offence; they are calculated thoroughly to subdue our wills, and leave us no retreat. It would please us much better to make certain great sacrifices to God, however violent and painful they might be, on

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

condition of obtaining liberty to follow our own desires and retain our old habits in all the little details of life. It is, however, only by fidelity in little things that the grace of true love to God can be sustained, and distinguished from a passing fervor of spirit.

Sometimes we cling more tenaciously to a trifle than to a great interest. It would give us more pain to relinquish an amusement than to bestow a great sum in charity. We are more easily led away by little things, because we believe them more innocent, and imagine that we are less attached to them; nevertheless, when God deprives us of them, we soon discover, from the pain of privation, how excessive and inexcusable was our attachment to them. Besides, if we are in the habit of neglecting little things, we shall be constantly offending our family, our domestics, and the public. No one can well believe that our piety is sincere, when our behavior is lax and irregular in its little details. What probability is there that we should not hesitate to make the greatest sacrifices, when we shrink from the smallest?

But the greatest danger of all consists in this, that, by neglecting small matters, the

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

soul becomes accustomed to unfaithfulness. We grieve the Holy Spirit, we return to ourselves, we consider it nothing to fail in our duty to God. On the other hand, true love thinks nothing small; all that can either please or displease Him always seems to be great; not that true love disturbs the soul with constraint and weak scruples, but it puts no limits to its faithfulness. It acts simply with God; and, as it does not concern itself about those things which God does not require from it, so it never hesitates a moment about what He does command, whether it be great or small.

Those persons, who are naturally less exact in small matters, ought to make an inviolable law with themselves in respect to them. They are tempted to despise them; they have a habit of thinking them of no consequence, and do not sufficiently estimate their importance; they are not aware of the insensible growth of the passions; they forget even their own most fatal experiences. "It is a trifle," they say; "it is a mere nothing." True; but it is a nothing which will be everything to you; it is a trifle which you love well enough to refuse to give it up to God; a trifle which you pretend to despise in words, that you may

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

have an excuse for retaining it; it is a trifle which you hold back from God, and which will be your ruin.

There is no real elevation of mind in a contempt of little things; it is, on the contrary, from too narrow views that we consider those things of little importance, which have in fact such extensive consequences. The more trouble it occasions us to be on our guard against small matters, the more need have we to fear negligence, to distrust our strength, and to interpose invincible barriers between ourselves and the least remissness.

Finally, judge by your own feelings. What would you think of a friend who owed everything to you, and who was willing from a sense of duty to serve you on those rare occasions which are called great, but who should manifest neither affection nor the least regard for your wishes in the common intercourse of life?

Do not be afraid of this continual attention to small things; it needs courage at first, but it is a penance which you deserve, which you need, and which will bring you peace and security; without it, all is trouble and relapse. God will gradually render this state pleasant

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

and easy to you, for true love is attentive without constraint, and without disturbance of spirit.

XCV.

ON DETACHMENT FROM SELF.

WE seek to discover all our weaknesses, and God tenderly spares us in this our seeking. He refuses us a light too advanced for our condition; He does not permit us to see in our hearts what it is not yet time to eradicate from them. It is an admirable forbearance of the goodness of God never to solicit us, by His inner voice, to sacrifice to Him anything that we have hitherto loved and possessed, without giving us the necessary light for the purpose, and never to give us the light leading to sacrifice, without affording the necessary strength. Souls most upright and watchful against their defects, are still in a state of obscurity concerning certain acts of renunciation, which God reserves for a more advanced state of faith and self-denial. We should not wish to anticipate the time for these, and it is sufficient to abide in peace, provided we are faithful in all we know. If

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

there remains anything to know, God will reveal it to us.

Meanwhile, God hides from us, with a veil of mercy, what we should not yet be able to bear. We have a certain impatient zeal for our own perfection, we would choose at once to see and to sacrifice all. But humbly waiting under the hand of God, and gently bearing with ourselves, without self-flattery, in this state of darkness and dependence, are infinitely more useful to us in dying to self, than all these uneasy efforts to advance our perfection. Let us then content ourselves with following, without looking farther, all the light that is given to us from one moment to another. This is our daily bread: God gives it only for each day.

It is this dependence, like that of a child upon its father, to which God wishes to mould us, even in spiritual matters. He dispenses the inner light to us, as a wise mother would assign tasks to her daughter; she would not give her a new one, until the first should be finished. Have you finished all that God has set before you? Instantly He will present to you a new work; for He never leaves the soul idle, and unprogressive in the work of detach-

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

ment. If, on the contrary, you have not yet finished the first work, He hides from you what is to follow.

Let us then allow God to work within us, and content ourselves with being faithful to the light of the present moment. It brings with it all that is necessary to prepare us for the light of the moment which follows ; and this succession of graces which are linked together like the rings of a chain, prepares us insensibly for the distant sacrifices of which we have not yet even caught sight.

XCVI.

ON THE PRACTICE OF SELF-RENUNCIATION.

WHENEVER we detect in ourselves a feeling of haughtiness, of subserviency to the opinion of others, of over-confidence in ourselves, of desire to follow our own inclination instead of our duty, or to seek our own selfish enjoyment, of impatience with the frailties of others, or with the trials and annoyances of our own condition, we must let all these thoughts drop as a stone drops to the bottom of the water, we must seek the

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

presence of God, and delay action until we are in a calm and devout frame of mind.

If the confusion of business or the liveliness of the imagination prevents the soul from collecting itself by prayer or meditation, it must at least endeavor to calm itself by the rectitude of its will, and the desire for recollection. Then this desire is a kind of recollection which suffices to strip the soul of self-will, and to render it pliant in the hands of God.

XCVII.

ON PIETY.

IF I were seriously persuaded that the life of a Christian is a life of patience and self-denial, if in sincerity and truth I loved Jesus Christ, who suffered and humbled himself for me, should I be contented with talking of trials when I am called upon to bear them, with giving lessons to my neighbor, and not applying them to myself? Should I be so impatient with the infirmities of others, so discouraged by obstacles, so disquieted by little troubles, so sensitive about human friendship, so jealous and intractable towards those

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

whom I ought to conciliate, so severe towards the faults of others, so lenient and so backward in mending my own? Should I be so ready to murmur at the trials by which God would prove my virtue?

Do we enjoy the contemplation of God? Do we feel a sincere joy when we pray to Him, and when we meditate upon His presence? "Prayer," says St. Augustine, "is the measure of love." He who loves much, prays much. He whose heart is closely united to God, has no sweeter consolation than in communion with Him. He finds a positive happiness in being able to love Him, to speak to Him, to meditate upon His attributes, to adore His majesty, to admire His power, to dwell on His goodness, and to yield himself up to his Providence. In this intercourse he pours out, as into the bosom of a tender Father, all the sorrows of his overflowing heart; this is his resource under every affliction; he finds strength and consolation in spreading out all his weaknesses and all his desires before Him; and as our whole lives are full of imperfections, as we are never free from sin, we should always, in the exercise of prayer, ask pardon of God for our ingratitude, and thank Him for His mercy.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Let us pray then, but let us pray with all our duties before us. Do not let us make eloquent and abstract prayers which have no connection with the practice of virtue, but let us pray to become more humble, more docile, more patient, more charitable, more modest, more pure, more disinterested in the performance of our duties. Without this, our prayer will be only an illusion to ourselves, and a scandal to our neighbor; an illusion to ourselves, for how often do we see a devotion which only nourishes pride and misleads the imagination; and a scandal to our neighbor, for there can be none greater than to see a person who prays unceasingly without correcting his faults, who comes from his orisons neither less frivolous nor less discontented, nor less anxious than he was before.

Are we resolved to give ourselves up without reserve to God? Do we consider His protecting Providence our best resource, or have we concerning our own affairs a timid anxiety which renders us unworthy of His care?

The disposition essential to the soul that consecrates itself to God, is to desire nothing but in reference to his will.

The defects of our neighbor interfere with

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

our own ; our vanity is wounded by that of another ; our own haughtiness finds our neighbor's ridiculous and insupportable ; our restlessness is rebuked by the sluggishness and indolence of this person ; our gloom is disturbed by the gaiety and frivolities of that person, and our heedlessness by the shrewdness and address of another.

If we were faultless, we should not be so much annoyed by the defects of those with whom we associate. If we were to acknowledge honestly that we have not virtue enough to bear patiently enough with our neighbor's weaknesses, we should show our own imperfection, and this alarms our vanity. We therefore make our weakness pass for strength, elevate it to a virtue and call it zeal ; an imaginary and often a hypocritical zeal. For is it not surprising to see how tranquil we are about the errors of others when they do not trouble us, and how soon this wonderful zeal kindles against those who excite our jealousy or weary our patience?

Everywhere we see men who disfigure religion by vain attempts to make it accord with their own caprices. One is fervent in prayer, but he is insensible to the miseries and weak-

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

nesses of his neighbor. Another talks much of the love of God, and of self-sacrifice, whilst he is not willing to suffer the least contradiction. Another deprives himself of allowed pleasures, that he may indulge in those that are forbidden.

This woman is fervent and scrupulous in works of supererogation, but faithless in the most common and positive duties; she fasts and prays, but she does not restrain her pride or the violence of her temper.

Far better is that simple obedience which finds the rule of life in the Gospel, and follows it, without any of those extravagances which disturb its calm and celestial features. Place each virtue in its proper rank. Practise, according to the measure of your gifts, the most difficult virtues; but do not practise them at the expense of others. Be strict, even austere, if you will; but be humble. Be very zealous for the reformation of abuses; but be gentle, charitable, and compassionate. Do, for the glory of God, all that your love for Him prompts, but begin with the performance of all the duties of the situation in which you are placed.

We must stifle all rising jealousies, all little

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

contrivances to promote our own glory, vain desires to please, or to succeed, or to be praised, the fear of seeing others preferred to ourselves, the anxiety to have our plans carried into effect, the natural love of dominion, and desire to influence others. These rules are soon given, but it is not so easy to observe them.

During the short and precious time that is allowed us on earth, let us hasten to employ ourselves. While it remains to us let us not fail to consecrate it to good works. For when everything else shall have vanished forever, the works of the just will follow them, even beyond this life; for it is certain, according to the beautiful language of St. Paul, "We have been created in Jesus Christ unto good works, that we should walk in them;" that is to say, pass our whole lives in this happy employment. We shall find occasions to do good everywhere; they surround us; it is the will that is needed. The deepest solitudes, when we seem to have the least communication with others, will furnish us with means of doing good to our fellow-beings, and of glorifying Him who is their Master and ours.

Finally, we must suffer. Yes, we must suffer, not only in submission to the will of Prov-

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

idence, for the purification of our souls, and the perfection of our virtues, but often for the success of those designs of which God has made us the instruments. Whoever desires to do good must be willing and must expect to suffer. You must arm yourself with courage and patience. You must be willing to endure tribulations and trials of all sorts, which would overwhelm you if you were not supported by well-established faith and charity.

The world will blame, will tempt you ; your friends and your enemies may appear to combine against your good designs. Those even with whom you are united to promote a good work may be a snare to you. Opposite humors and temperaments, different views, contrary habits, may cause you great suffering from those upon whom you have depended for support and consolation. Their defects and yours will perpetually clash in your intercourse with them. If true charity does not soften these difficulties, if a more than common virtue does not sustain you under these bitter trials, if an unfailing and fervent piety does not render this yoke easy to you, you will sink under it.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

XCVIII.

ON SIMPLICITY.

SIMPLICITY is an uprightness of soul which checks all useless dwelling upon one's self and one's actions. It is different from sincerity, which is a much lower virtue. We see many people who are sincere without being simple; they say nothing but what they believe to be true, and do not aim at appearing anything but what they are; but they are always in fear of passing for something they are not; they are always thinking about themselves, weighing all their words and thoughts, and dwelling upon what they have done in the fear of having done too much or too little.

Simplicity consists in a just medium, in which we are neither too much excited, nor too sedate; the soul is not carried away by external things, so as to be unable to reflect; neither does it make those continual references to self, which a jealous sense of its own excellence multiplies to infinity. That freedom of the soul which looks straight onward in its path, losing no time to reason upon its steps, to study them, or to dwell upon those which it has already taken, is true simplicity.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Dwelling too much upon self, produces in weak minds useless scruples and superstition, and in stronger minds a presumptuous wisdom which is incompatible with the spirit of God. Both are contrary to true simplicity, which is free and direct, and gives itself up to God without reserve, and with a generous self-forgetfulness. How free, how intrepid are the motions, how glorious the progress that the soul makes when delivered from all low and interested and unquiet cares.

If we desire that our friends be simple and free with us, disencumbered of self in their intimacy with us, how much more must God, our true Friend, desire that we should surrender our souls to Him, without fear or reserve, in that holy and sweet communion with Himself which He allows us! It is this simplicity which is the perfection of the true children of God. This is the end which we must have in view, and to which we must be continually advancing.

This deliverance of the soul from all useless and selfish and unquiet cares, brings to it an unspeakable peace and freedom; this is true simplicity. It is easy to perceive at the first glance, how glorious it is; but experience

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

alone can show how it enlarges the heart. We are like a little child in the arms of its mother; we wish nothing more, we fear nothing for ourselves; in this purity of heart we are no longer anxious about what others may think of us, save so far as charity would shun scandal; we do everything as it arises as well as possible, quietly, cheerfully, heartily, regardless of success or failure.

But you will ask, how can I help being occupied with myself when a crowd of anxious thoughts disturbs me, tyrannizes over me, and sets me ill at ease? I only ask that which is in your own power. Never voluntarily give way to these disturbing anxieties, that is enough; faithfulness in resisting them whenever you perceive them, will deliver you from them by degrees; but do not seek a collision with them in order to have a combat; you would only feed the evil. A continual attempt to repress thoughts of self and self-interest, would continually occupy our thoughts with ourselves, and would turn our minds away from the sense of God's presence and the duties which He has laid upon us.

The great thing is to yield ourselves up sincerely to God, to place all our interests,

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

pleasures, comfort, and reputation in His hands. He who unreservedly accepts whatever God may give him in this world — humiliation, trouble, and trial from within or from without — has begun to fortify himself against self-love; he does not fear the disapproval of men, or feel anxiety to avoid their criticism; he is no longer sensitive, or if he finds himself wincing, he deals so severely with his sensitiveness that it soon diminishes.

This state of entire resignation and perpetual acquiescence produces true liberty, and this liberty brings perfect simplicity. The soul which knows no self-seeking, no interested ends, is thoroughly candid; it goes on straight forward without hindrance, its path opens daily more and more to "perfect day," in proportion as its self-renunciation and its self-forgetfulness increase; and its peace, amid whatever troubles beset it, will be as boundless as the depths of the sea.

A person full of defects, who does not attempt to hide them, who does not seek to dazzle, who does not affect either talents or virtue, who does not appear to think of himself more than of others, but to have lost sight of this self of which we are so jealous,

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

pleases greatly in spite of his defects. On the contrary, a person full of acquired virtues, talents, and outward graces, if he appear artificial, if he seem to be always thinking of himself, if he affect even the best things, becomes repulsive, wearisome, and distasteful to all.

But, you will say, am I never to think of myself or of what affects me, and never to speak of myself? No indeed, you need not practise such constraint; such an attempt at being simple would destroy all simplicity. What is to be done then? Make no rules about it, but try to avoid all affectation. When you are disposed to talk about yourself from vanity, thwart this strong desire by quietly turning your attention to God, or to some duty He sets before you.

As to our faults, we should be watchful to correct them. There are many ways of doing this, but in general, it is certain that we shall extirpate our faults more surely by recollection, by the habit of checking eager longings and dislikes, in short, by pure love and unselfish surrender to God, than by an uneasy self-inspection. When God undertakes the work, and we do not frustrate Him, it goes on apace.

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Such simplicity shows in the outward appearance, and makes people natural and unaffected: they act without thinking of themselves or of their actions by a sort of uprightness of will, which is inexplicable to those who have not experienced it. This true simplicity has sometimes a careless and irregular appearance, but it has the charm of candor and truth, and sheds around it an indescribable artlessness, sweetness, innocence, cheerfulness, and peace; a loveliness that wins us when we see it intimately, and with pure eyes.

REFLECTIONS.

XCIX.

ON TRUE DEVOTION.

THAT piety which sanctifies us and devotes us entirely to God, consists in doing all His will precisely at the time, in the situation, and under the circumstances in which He has placed us. Perform as many brilliant works as you may, you will be recompensed only for having done the will of your sovereign Master.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Perfect devotedness (and from this has arisen the term devotion), exacts, not only that we do the will of God, but that we do it with love. God would have us serve Him with delight, it is our hearts that He demands of us. Such a master is entitled to our love.

This devotion must be manifested in everything; in what contradicts our views, our inclinations, or our projects; it should make us stand ready to yield up our fortunes, our time, our liberty, our life, and our reputation to the will of God. These are the dispositions, and such will be the effects, of true devotion.

C.

ON PATIENCE IN SUFFERING.

"In your patience possess ye your souls."—
LUKE xxi. 19.

THE soul loses command of itself when it is impatient. Whereas, when it submits without a murmur it possesses itself in peace, and possesses God. To be impatient, is to desire what we have not, or not to desire what we have. An impatient soul is a prey to passions unrestrained either by reason or

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

faith. What weakness, what delusion! When we acquiesce in an evil, it is no longer such. Why make a real calamity of it by resistance? Peace does not dwell in outward things, but within the soul. We may preserve it in the midst of the bitterest pain, if our will remains firm and submissive. Peace in this life springs from acquiescence even in disagreeable things, not in an exemption from bearing them.

CI.

ON SUBMISSION AND CONFORMITY TO THE WILL OF GOD.

"Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."—MATT. vi. 10.

NOTHING is done on earth or in heaven, but by the will or by the permission of God; yet men do not desire this will, because it does not always accord with their own wishes.

Let us love His will, and only His, and we shall make a heaven of earth. We shall thank God for everything, for evil as well as good things; for evil becomes good when He sends it. We shall no longer murmur at the

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

conduct of His Providence; we shall find it all in wisdom, and we shall adore it. O God! What do I see in the course of the stars, in the order of the seasons, in the events of life, but Thy will which they accomplish? May it also be fulfilled in me; may I love it; may it sweeten everything to me; may I resign my own will that Thine may reign; for it is for Thee, O Lord, to will, and for me to obey.

Jesus said, in speaking of his heavenly Father, "For I always do those things that please Him;" may we learn how far we can follow this example. He is our model, he whose life was devotion to the will of God. May we be united to Him in this spirit, may we no longer follow our own inclinations, but may we not only pray, and teach, and suffer, but eat, sleep, and converse, — do all things, with reference to His will. Then all will be sanctified within us; then will our lives be a continual sacrifice, unceasing prayer, and uninterrupted love.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

CII.

ON THE FAULTS OF OTHERS.

"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." — GAL. vi. 2.

CHARITY does not demand of us that we should never see the faults of others; we must, in that case, put out our eyes. But it commands us to avoid attending unnecessarily to them, and that we be not blind to the good, while we are so clear-sighted to the evil that exists. We ought to remember what God can do from one moment to another for the most unworthy creature, and think how many causes we have to think ill of ourselves, and finally, we must consider that charity embraces the very lowest. It acknowledges that in the sight of God, the contempt that we indulge for others has in it something harsh and arrogant which extinguishes the spirit of Jesus Christ.

Because others are weak, should we be less careful to give them their due? You, who complain so much of what others make you suffer, do you think that you cause others no pain? You, who are so annoyed at your

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

neighbor's defects, do you imagine that you are perfect? How astonished you would be, if those whom you cavil at, should make all the comments that they might upon you. Does it never come into your mind to fear lest God should demand of you why you had not exercised towards your brother a little of that mercy, which He who is your Master so abundantly bestows upon you?

CIII.

ON THE ONE THING NECESSARY.

WE think we have many important concerns, but we have really but one. If that is attended to, all others will be done; if that is wanting, all the rest, however successful they may seem to be, will go to ruin. Why then should we divide our hearts and our occupations? O ray of divine light! I will do at each moment, without anxiety, according to my strength, the work that His Providence assigns me. I will leave the rest without concern; it is not my affair.

"Father, I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do." Each one of us

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

must be ready to say this in the day in which we must render an account. I ought to consider the duty to which I am called each day, as the work that God has given me to do, and to apply myself to it in a manner worthy of Him; that is to say, with exactness and in peace. I must neglect nothing; I must be violent about nothing; for it is dangerous, either to perform the works of God with negligence, or to appropriate them to ourselves by self-love and false zeal. In that case, we act from our own individual feeling, and we do the work ill, for we get fretted and excited, and think only of success.

Almighty God! grant me Thy grace to be faithful in action, and not anxious about success. My only concern is to do Thy will, and to lose myself in Thee, whenever engaged in duty. It is for Thee to give to my weak efforts such fruits as Thou seest fit; none, if such be Thy pleasure.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

CIV.

ON OUR DAILY BREAD.

WHAT is this bread, O my God? It is not merely the support which Thy Providence supplies for the necessities of life, it is also the nourishment of truth, which Thou givest each day to the soul; it is the bread of eternal life, giving it vigor, and making it grow in faith. Thou dost renew it every day. Thou givest within and without precisely what the soul needs for its advancement in a life of faith and self-renunciation. I have then only to receive this bread, and to accept, in the spirit of self-sacrifice, whatever Thou shalt ordain, of bitterness in my external circumstances, or within my heart. For whatever happens to me each day is my daily bread, provided I do not refuse to take it from Thy hand, and to feed upon it.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

CV.

ON THE PEACE OF THE SOUL.

TRUE peace is found only in the possession of God; and the possession of God here on earth consists only in submission to faith, and obedience to law. Thus a pure and spotless love is maintained in the depths of the heart. Resign every forbidden joy; restrain every wish that is not referred to this will; banish all eager desires, all anxiety; desire only the will of God; seek Him alone, and you will find peace; you shall enjoy it in spite of the world. What is it that troubles you? Poverty, neglect, want of success, inward or outward crosses? Look upon everything as in the hands of God, and as real blessings that He bestows upon His friends, of which you receive your portion. Then the world will change its appearance to you, and nothing will deprive you of your peace.

Digitized by Google

Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

CVI.

ON THE DEPTHS OF THE MERCY OF GOD.

LET us give ourselves to God without any reserve, and let us fear nothing. He will love us, and we shall love Him. His love, increasing every day, will take the place of everything else to us. He will fill our whole hearts; these hearts which the world has intoxicated, agitated, troubled, but has never been able to satisfy; He will deprive us only of those things that make us unhappy. He will cause us to do in general what we have been doing already, but which we have done in an unsatisfactory manner; whereas, hereafter, we shall do them well, because they will be done for His sake. Even the smallest actions of a simple and common life will be turned to consolation and recompense. We shall meet the approach of death in peace; it will be changed for us into the beginning of the immortal life. We shall, as St. Paul says, "not be unclothed, but be clothed upon, that mortality may be swallowed up of life," and then we shall see the depth of the mercies which God has lavished upon our souls.

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Think, in the presence of God, on all the proofs of this infinite mercy that you have experienced; the light which He has given you, the pure affection which He has inspired, the sins which He has forgiven, the snares from which He has saved you, the wonderful aid which He has bestowed upon you. May your heart be touched by the remembrance of all these precious proofs of His goodness. Add to this the crosses which He has sent to sanctify you; for they are drawn from the depths of His treasury, and you should look upon them as signal proofs of His love for you. Let gratitude for the past inspire you with trust for the future. Be persuaded, timid soul, that He has loved you too much to cease loving you. Do not distrust Him; fear only yourself; remember that He is "the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation." He sometimes takes away His consolations from us, but His mercy ever remains.

Digitized by Google

Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

CVII.

ON THE RIGHT EMPLOYMENT OF TIME.

TIME is precious, but we do not comprehend all its value; we shall know it only when it will no longer be of any advantage to us. Our friends make demands upon it, as if it were nothing, and we bestow it in the same way. Often it is a burden to us; we know not what to do with it.

Our whole life belongs to God, as well as our whole heart; neither is too much to give Him. He has bestowed them upon us only that we may love and serve Him; let us keep back nothing from Him. We cannot always be doing a great work, but we can always be doing something that belongs to our condition. To be silent, to suffer, to pray when we cannot act, is acceptable to God. A disappointment, a contradiction, a harsh word, an annoyance, a wrong received and endured as in His presence, is worth more than a long prayer; and we do not lose time if we bear its loss with gentleness and patience, provided the loss was inevitable, and was not caused by our own fault.

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Thus spend your days, redeeming the time; give up vain amusements, useless correspondences, those weak outpourings of the heart that are only modifications of self-love, and conversations that dissipate the mind and lead to no good. Thus you will find time to serve God; and there is none well employed that is not devoted to Him.

CVIII.

ON LOVE OF OUR NEIGHBOR.

"See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently."

THE Apostle teaches us in these words that our charity should lead us to be always attentive not to give pain to our neighbor. Without this watchfulness, charity, which droops in this world, would soon die. A word uttered with haughtiness or unkindness, a harsh or scornful manner may overcome a weak spirit. Beings so dear to God, the precious members of Jesus Christ, should be treated by us with gentleness. If you neglect this carefulness, you are lacking in charity; for one cannot love without showing consider-

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

ation for those whom one loves. This watchful love should fill both mind and heart. It seems to me that I hear Jesus Christ say to you as he did to St. Peter, "Feed my sheep."

CIX.

ON TRUST IN GOD.

"I sleep, but my heart waketh."

WE sleep in peace in the arms of God, when we yield ourselves up to His Providence, in a delightful consciousness of His tender mercies; we no longer seek for anything, and our whole being reposes in Him. No more restless uncertainties, no more anxious desires, no more impatience to change our place; the place where we are is God's bosom; for it is God who has put us there with His own hands, and who holds us in His arms. Can we be unsafe where He has placed us, and where He guards us like a child who is held and caressed by his mother? Let us leave all to Him, let us rest in Him. This confiding repose, in which earthly care sleeps, is the true vigilance of the heart;

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

yielding itself up to God, with no other support than Him, it thus watches while we sleep.

CX.

"TEACH US TO PRAY."

LORD, I know not what I ought to ask of Thee; Thou only knowest what we need; Thou lovest me better than I know how to love myself. O Father! give to Thy child that which he himself knows not how to ask. I dare not ask either for crosses or consolations; I simply present myself before Thee, I open my heart to Thee. Behold my needs which I know not myself; see and do according to Thy tender mercy. Smite, or heal; depress me, or raise me up; I adore all Thy purposes without knowing them; I am silent; I offer myself in sacrifice; I yield myself to Thee; I would have no other desire than to accomplish Thy will. Teach me to pray; pray Thyself in me.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

CXI.

"WHAT WILT THOU HAVE ME TO DO?"

"WHAT wilt Thou have me to do?" I am ready to do everything, and to do nothing, to desire nothing and to desire everything, to suffer without any consolation, and to take comfort in the sweetest consolations. I do not say to Thee, "O God, I will perform the most difficult acts of self-denial, I will make striking changes in my conduct." It is not for me to decide what I will do. What I will do is to listen to Thee, and to await the dictates of Thy law. There is no question of my will; it is lost in Thine. Say only what Thou dost will; for I will all that it pleases Thee to will. Humiliations of spirit, sacrifices of health, repose, friendship, reputation, inward consolation, peace, this earthly life, and even this inner support which is a foretaste of eternity, — all are in Thy hands.

It is not only the worldly and unrighteous man who fails to find peace, until he turns to Thee; but the soul which Thou hast freed from the bonds of sin can enjoy no peace, if it still resists, by any reserve and delay, those

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

piercing pricks of Thy Spirit which urge it on to renunciation, childlike docility, and self-denial. Without this utter sacrifice, there can be no peace, no progress; nothing remains but the uneasiness of a soul which is solicited by God, and which fears to see how far God wills to lead it.

University Press: John Wilson & Son, Cambridge.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Digitized by Google

Original from
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Digitized by Google

Original from
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Digitized by Google

Original from
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Digitized by Google

Original from
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Digitized by Google

Original from
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Digitized by Google

Original from
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Digitized by Google

Original from
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Digitized by Google
Original from
HARVARD UNIVERSITY