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LIFE OF FATHER CHAMPAGNAT

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J. B. M. CHAMPAGNAT, S.M.

*Founder of the Society
Of the Little Brothers of Mary,*

1789-1840.

LIFE AND SPIRIT

OF

J. B. M. CHAMPAGNAT

PRIEST AND FOUNDER OF THE SOCIETY OF THE

LITTLE BROTHERS OF MARY

BY
ONE OF HIS FIRST DISCIPLES



Translated from the French

All for the greater glory of God and in honour of the august Virgin Mary
Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ.



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CONTENTS.

PREFACE. xv.
DECLARATION OF THE AUTHOR xxiii.
INTRODUCTION. xxv.

PART FIRST.

CHAPTER I.

Birth, parentage, and early education of Marcellin Champagnat, 1

CHAPTER II.

Marcellin is called to the ecclesiastical state, 6. Reflections on this subject, 7.
 His conduct and progress at the Seminary, 9. His prayer to obtain humility,
 12. Resolutions, 13.

CHAPTER III.

Edifying conduct of the Abbé Champagnat during his vacations, 16. He visits
 the sick and teaches Catechism to the children of the village, 18. His austere
 and mortified life impairs his health, 20. In concert with other pious
 Seminarists, he forms the project of founding the Society of Marists, 21.
 He prepares for Holy Orders and is ordained priest, 23.

CHAPTER IV.

Father Champagnat is appointed curate at Lavalla, state of that parish, 25.
 His rule of life, 26. His respect for, and his submission to, his Parish Priest,
 27. He studies the character of the people and strives to gain their confidence,
 28. His care for the children, ib. Gabriel Rivat, 30.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER V.

Father Champagnat reforms the parish by his sermons and familiar instructions, 32. He corrects vices and abuses, 36. His zeal and charity for the sick, 39.

CHAPTER VI.

Father Champagnat founds the Institute of the Little Brothers of Mary, 42. Vocation of his first Disciples, *ib.* Admirable conduct of Brother François, 48. Brother Jean-Marie is appointed Director, 49. Father Champagnat gives his Brothers a religious costume and a Rule of Life, *ib.*

CHAPTER VII.

The Brothers take charge of the parish school of Lavalla, 53. Father Champagnat goes to live with them, 55. He trains them to teaching, makes them Catechists, and sends them two and two to teach Catechism in the hamlets, 57.

CHAPTER VIII.

Foundation of an establishment at Marthes and one at Saint Sauveur, 61. Edifying conduct of Brother Louis, 62. Foundation of establishments at Tarantaise and at Bourg-Argental, 67.

CHAPTER IX.

Father Champagnat prays to God for subjects, 70. How God hears his prayer, 71.

CHAPTER X.

Father Champagnat enlarges the Novitiate, 77. His care to train the novices in piety and in the virtues of their state, 78. Great fervour in the Novitiate and in the establishments, 79. The Brothers teach Catechism three times a day, 81.

CHAPTER XI.

Contradictions and persecutions which Father Champagnat meets with in founding his Congregation, 83. Monseigneur de Pins, Administrator of the diocese of Lyons, takes the Institute under his protection, 88.

CHAPTER XII.

Other contradictions caused by the removal of the Novitiate, 90. The Venerable de la Salle, 91. Building of the Hermitage, 92. Remarkable instances of divine protection, 94. How to give a good Christian education to the children, 96.

CHAPTER XIII.

M. Courveille joins Father Champagnat, and strives to get himself named Superior, 99. Father Champagnat's mode of travelling while visiting his schools, 102. He falls dangerously ill, 103. Deplorable state of the Community during his illness, 104. How he confirms a postulant in his vocation, 106.

CHAPTER XIV.

Further trials of Father Champagnat—Withdrawal of M. Courveille and several Brothers, 108.

CHAPTER XV.

The Brothers' Act of Consecration and promise of fidelity to their vocation, 113. Father Champagnat admits them to make vows, 115. New Foundations. Edifying generosity of M. Tripier, *ib.* Importance of the Rules concerning intercourse with strangers, 117. An apostate Religious, 118.

CHAPTER XVI.

Father Champagnat completes the costume of the Brothers, 120. He adopts for the schools the new pronunciation of the consonants, 121. Objections of some Brothers to the cloth stockings and to the new method of teaching reading, 122. Remarkable scene in the Chapel, 126. They all submit except two who are dismissed, 127.

CHAPTER XVII.

The Institute continues to prosper, 129. Father Champagnat tries to obtain its authorization by the Government, but the negotiations are interrupted by the events of 1830, *ib.* Confidence and security of Father Champagnat, 130. He tranquillises the fears of the Brothers, *ib.* Domiciliary visit to the Mother-House, 131. The Establishment at Feurs is suppressed, 133. Foundation of the House of La Côte St. André, 134.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Father Champagnat endeavours again to obtain legal sanction for the Society, 136. Project of fusion with the Brothers of St. Paul-Trois-Châteaux, 137. Development of the Society, notwithstanding the difficulties it meets with on every side, 139. M. X. proposed to remove Father Champagnat and join the Brothers with those at St. Viateur, at Vourles, 141. The printing of the Rules, 143.

CHAPTER XIX.

Father Champagnat's devotedness to the Society of the Marist Fathers, 146. His letter to the Vicar-General, 147. The Missions of Polynesia are offered to the Marist Fathers, 153. Their Society is authorised by the Holy See, 154. Father Colin is elected Superior-General and Father Champagnat Assistant, *ib.* Father Champagnat and some other Fathers make their religious Profession, 155. Departure of the first Marist Missionaries to Oceania, *ib.*

CHAPTER XX.

Enlargement of the Mother-House, 158. Further efforts of Father Champagnat to obtain legal authorization for the Society, *ib.* Father Champagnat's manner of living in Paris, 162. The good Father's health is seriously impaired, 164. Appointment of his Successor, 166.

CHAPTER XXI.

Foundation of the Novitiate of Vauban, 168. Father Champagnat's illness increases, 169. The pious Founder arranges the temporal affairs of the Society, 170. He makes a General Confession, 171. Exhortation to the boarders of Grange-Payre, *ib.* He foretells the future prosperity of the Society, 173. He receives the last Sacraments, 174. His address to the Brothers on that occasion, *ib.*

CHAPTER XXII.

Spiritual Testament of Father Champagnat, 179. Counsels given to different Brothers, 185. Visits received and the consolations they bring him, 187. His piety, his fervour, his love for God increase with his sufferings, *ib.* He desires to be removed to the Infirmary, 188. His agony, his death and obsequies, 191.

CHAPTER XXIII.

The Brothers manifest their attachment for Father Champagnat by their fervent prayers for the repose of his soul, and by their entire submission to his successor, 193. The Brothers of St. Paul-Trois-Châteaux join the Marist Brothers, 195. Their example is followed by the Brothers of Viviers, 196. Increasing prosperity of the Society, 197. Founding of the Novitiate of Beaucamps, 198. The Society is approved by the Government, *ib.* Revisal, examination and final acceptance of the Rules by the General Chapter, 200. Visit of Father Colin to the Hermitage, 203. His address to the Members of the General Chapter, *ib.*

 PART SECOND.

 THE VIRTUES AND TEACHING OF FATHER CHAMPAGNAT

CHAPTER I.

Portrait and character of Father Champagnat, 207. His sentiments concerning sadness, 209; and holy joy, 211. The care he took to remodel the character of his Brothers, 215. Reasons why the child should be respected, 216. Defects opposed to the respect which is due to childhood, 217. Rules to be observed in correcting children, 218.

CHAPTER II.

Father Champagnat's spirit of faith, 219. It inspired him with zeal for the glory of God, fervour in prayer, and profound respect for all religious objects, 220. His instructions on the spirit of faith, 224. We can do good only by the help of God by prayer and virtue, 225. Human means alone will not secure the prosperity of our schools, 226.

CHAPTER III.

His trust in God, 228. It is by faith and confidence in God that Father Champagnat succeeded in all his undertakings, *ib.* The change of hearts is the work of grace and not the effect of human talents, 229. Nothing is more prejudicial to the work of God than presumption and self-sufficiency, 230. Father Champagnat's style, although simple, was noble and vigorous, 231. The motives why he so earnestly recommended confidence in God, *ib.* His reproaches to those who wanted this confidence, 232. His confidence in God was his only resource, 233. He expected everything from God, *ib.* Effects of this confidence, 236. Good Brothers are the treasure of the Society, 239. He did not pray to God for riches, but for good subjects, *ib.*

CHAPTER IV.

Father Champagnat's love of prayer, 241. It was in prayer he began, continued, and ended everything he did, *ib.* How much he held to the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin and the Rosary, 242. A Brother's task is twofold; to pray and to instruct, 244. Prayer is the great means of sanctification for the Brothers; it is the *Main Point*, *ib.* To have the gift of prayer, is to possess all the virtues, *ib.* A Brother without piety is good for nothing, 245. Remarks on those who miss their religious exercises, *ib.* What he considered the most important exercises, 246. Importance of meditation, 247. How carefully he trained the Brothers to piety and meditation, 249. Brother Lawrence during meditation, 250. Pious Brothers are the pillars of the Institute, *ib.*

CHAPTER V.

His spirit of recollection, and the care he took to keep himself in the presence of God, 251. This exercise is the shortest, the easiest, and most efficacious to arrive at perfection, *ib.* Sentiment of St. Francis of Sales, 252. How Father Champagnat practised the presence of God, 253. He constantly recommends it to his Brothers, 254. Effects of the presence of God, 255. How the Brothers should practise this exercise, 257.

CHAPTER VI.

His love of our Lord, 259. His devotion to the infant Jesus, *ib.* To the sufferings of our divine Saviour, 260. To Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament of the altar, *ib.* The first of all devotions, 261. Visits to the Blessed Sacrament, a source of grace, 262. In all his difficulties, he had recourse to Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, *ib.* His counsels to a Brother who had violent temptations, 264. His profound respect for the House of God and the offices of the Church, *ib.* His piety in celebrating Holy Mass, 265. To miss Mass or Holy Communion through one's own fault is an irreparable loss, 266. He admonishes a Brother who easily omitted the Thursday Communion, *ib.* The fruits of Holy Communion, 267.

CHAPTER VII.

Father Champagnat's devotion to the Blessed Virgin, 269. His motto, *ib.* He establishes the month of May devotions at Lavalla, 270. Devotion to the Blessed Virgin is a mark of predestination, 271. He believes that all the Brothers who will persevere in their vocation will be saved, *ib.* Edifyin death

of Brother Justin, 272. How Mary is honoured in the Institute, 273. The Brothers should imitate her virtues and spread devotion to her among the children, 274. Various examples of the Saints—*Footnote*, 275. Zeal in propagating this devotion is a great means of gaining children to God, and is a source of blessings to the Catechist, 277. The Brothers should never omit the recitation of the Little Office and the Rosary, 279. The beads and the scapular are two spiritual arms which a Brother should always bear with him, 280. The *Salve Regina*, 281. Mary is the *ordinary resource* of the Institute, *ib.* Devotion to Mary a sign of vocation, *ib.* Remarkable instance of protection by the Blessed Virgin, 282.

CHAPTER VIII.

His obedience, and his respect for the Clergy, 284. Obedience, necessary to the Brothers for three reasons, 285. A Brother who is not submissive to his Director does not fulfil his vow, 287. To be happy, a Brother must be on good terms with God and with his Superior, *ib.* Father Champagnat sought occasions to practise obedience, 288. His profound respect for the Holy Father and for the Pastors of the Church, *ib.* Beautiful comparison between the Pope and the sun, 289. How the Brothers should act at the visit of a Bishop—*Footnote*, 290. Father Champagnat recommended nothing so much to his Brothers as respect for the Clergy, *ib.* His own example in this respect, 291. How the Brothers should act when the Parish Priest proposes anything contrary to the Rule, 293.

CHAPTER IX.

His love of poverty, 294. Frugal fare of the Brothers, 295. Their yearly expenses, *ib.* They practise poverty from virtuous motives, 296. Various examples, *ib.* How carefully he trained the Brothers to the practice of poverty, to order and economy, 298. Economy is a duty for the Brothers, 300. They should all learn cookery and domestic economy, *ib.* They must learn to sew, and be able to mend their own clothes, 301. Examples of St. Thomas of Villanova and of Father Colin, *ib.* Precautions of the Father to maintain the spirit of poverty among the Brothers, 302. A Brother Director buys a pair of silk breeches, 303. The practice of poverty is indispensable to attain the end of the Society, 305. Through a spirit of poverty, Father Champagnat did nearly all his travelling on foot, *ib.* Reasons why small expenses should be avoided in a Community, 306. The spirit of poverty and the community spirit are fundamental duties for the Brothers, *ib.* How Father Champagnat practised his vow of poverty, 307.

CHAPTER X.

His detachment from his parents and from earthly creatures, 308. Detachment is the foundation of evangelical perfection, 309. The servant Brother and the true child of the Society, 310. Attachment to parents is one of the most dangerous faults, 311. It ruins piety and compromises one's vocation, *ib.* When a Religious is bound to abandon his vocation for the purpose of assisting his parents, 312. Two examples, *ib.* Those who compromise the interest of their parents, and those who are most useful to them, 313. Terrible punishment of an apostate Religious, 314.

CHAPTER XI.

His love of mortification, 316. He never took anything between meals, *ib.* Mortification is the A B C of the spiritual life, 319. Unmortified Religious are exposed to the greatest dangers, *ib.* They are Religious only in name and habit, *ib.* The good Father looked upon his body as his greatest enemy, 320. He afflicted it with discipline and hair-shirt, *ib.* Interior mortification is absolutely necessary, 321. It comprises the mortification of the passions, *ib.*; of employment, 322; of one's state, 323. Mortifications sent by Providence, 326.

CHAPTER XII.

His humility, 327. He proposed two things in founding the Society, 330. Why *Little Brothers of Mary*, *ib.* The first lesson he gave his postulants, *ib.* The first vice he aimed at correcting, 331. His marked aversion to flattery, 332. Four means to combat pride and acquire humility, *ib.* The *Golden Book*, 333. A model Religious, 334. Not to envy the success of others, 335.

CHAPTER XIII.

His love of purity, 337. The three chief causes of this vice, *ib.* Rules to prevent all dangerous occasions, 338. How much he held to these Rules, *ib.* Women should not be admitted to the interior of the Brothers' houses, 339. On what occasions the pious Founder was moved to tears, and showed himself inexorable, 340. Expulsion of a postulant at Lavalla, 341. The seven marks of sanctity, 343. Father Champagnat feared only sin, *ib.* Two things which he could not bear, *ib.* Sin, its effects and chastisements, were the ordinary subjects of his instructions, 344. His sentiments on venial sin, 345.

CHAPTER XIV.

Father Champagnat's love of work, 347. He teaches by his example, *ib.* The religious life is a life of devotedness, of labour and mortification, 349. Occupations of the Brothers, and what Father Champagnat required of them, *ib.* The fruits of labour, chastisement of idleness, 350. Four reasons which oblige a Brother to work, 351. The two devils, *ib.* Sloth is the greatest enemy of religious vocations, 352. A Brother should labour to become capable of filling any post in the Society, 353. He established competitions among the Brothers, *ib.*, and quarterly conferences, 354. The study which he recommended most, *ib.* Terrible consequences for those who neglect the study of Religion, *ib.* The Brother who did not know the life of his patron Saint, 355. The Brother who does not properly discharge his duty, is a burden to the others, and sets the whole house in disorder 356. The Father's great remorse, and the last lesson he gave his Brothers, *ib.*

CHAPTER XV.

Father Champagnat's love for his Brothers, 357. How carefully he provided for all their wants, 359. His care of the sick, 360. His greatest delight and consolation, 361. His last wish and the most ardent desire of his heart, 363. How the Brothers should love one another, *ib.* What things ought to be in common among them, *ib.* They must excuse and hide one another's faults, 364. Why detraction and backbiting are extremely dangerous faults, 365. They must support each other, *ib.* The Director who could not support his Brothers, *ib.* The admonition of faults, when and how to make it, 366.

CHAPTER XVI.

How he corrected his Brothers' defects, 369. He disliked a scolding disposition, 370. The giddy Brother, *ib.* *You owe me*, 371. He was ever kind and indulgent, *ib.* Four things are indispensable to preserve the vocation of the young Brothers, 372. Correction, the most difficult of the duties of a Superior, 374. Four things to be avoided, *ib.* His admonitions and corrections were always accompanied with mildness and firmness, 375. A public penance well received, *ib.* Other examples, 376. The Brother who wanted to study geometry, 377. How he tried the virtue of the Brothers, 379.

CHAPTER XVII.

How he trained the Brothers Directors, 381. The art of arts, *ib.* The influence of a Superior on his Community, *ib.* The means he employed to train the Brothers Directors, 383. The most terrible of all responsibilities, *ib.* He who dreads control, becomes good for nothing, 384. The qualities of a good Brother Director, 385. Young men with old heads, 386. Directors must be professed, *ib.* They must be marked with the Cross, *ib.* Some form an erroneous idea of their authority, 387. In what a Brother Director ought to make his authority consist, 388. A wise reply, *ib.* What ought to be the object of a Brother Director's vigilance, 389. The functions of a Brother Director comprised under seven heads, 390. How his authority is weakened, 391. How it is preserved, 392. The five things he ought to respect in his inferiors, *ib.* Two kinds of authority, 393. Wisdom and prudence must be the guiding star of every Superior, 394.

CHAPTER XVIII.

What he did to preserve the Brothers in their vocation, 395. The religious vocation, a mark of predestination, *ib.* What it is to become a Brother, 397. The means he took to habituate the postulants, *ib.* The power of example, 399. Brother Jerome, 401. The loss of vocations, the heaviest cross of the pious Founder, 403. Four chief causes of the loss of vocation, *ib.* God visits His gardens, 405. The Superior is the proper judge of the vocation of a Religious, *ib.* Sad end of the Brother who sought counsels in Egypt, 406.

CHAPTER XIX.

The precautions he took to preserve the Brothers in the spirit of their state, 407. The vows are alone capable of fixing the inconstancy of the human heart, 408. Four things called for the special attention of the Founder, *ib.* Inter-course with externs, the greatest danger for the Brothers' virtue, 411. The Rule that should be maintained *with rigour*, 413. Rules regarding visits, 414. The greatest peril for the Brothers Directors, *ib.* The Community life most essential to the Brothers, 415. Supervision and fraternal charity, the safeguard of the Brothers and of the Institute, *ib.* If there were no receivers, there would be no thieves, 416. Not to inform the Superior is to become answerable for the loss of your Brother, *ib.* Something which afflicted and alarmed the pious Founder, 417. Tepid Religious are the greatest enemies of the Institute, 418. He promised Paradise to those who observed their Rule faithfully, 419.

CHAPTER XX.

His zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, 420. His work of predilection, 421. Why he so ardently desired to have Brothers, 422. The first thing which he endeavoured to impress upon the Brothers, 423. Why science is taught in the Brothers' schools, 424. All the subjects taught by the Brothers should turn to the service of Religion, *ib.* Excellence of the functions of Catechist, 426. An easy means to obtain pardon of sin and secure one's salvation, 427. Objection answered, 428. A good First Communion, a pledge of salvation, 429. True zeal is generous and constant, 431. How a Brother shows his love for Mary, 432. Catechism contributes more than sciences to the success of the school, 433. It must be taught twice a day in the schools, 434. Three most efficacious means to secure the success of an establishment, 436.

CHAPTER XXI.

His charity towards the poor, 438. The halfpenny and the five sous, *ib.* Charity, an infallible means to gain men to God, 440. The orphan child, 441. Remarks on the expulsion of a child, 442. He provides for some poor old people, 444. His respect for the poor, 445. It was chiefly for them he founded his Institute, *ib.* Equality, the grand law of the Brothers' schools, 446.

CHAPTER XXII.

What Father Champagnat did for the primary instruction of children, 448. The programme of studies for the Brothers' schools should include all the subjects usually taught in well-conducted primary schools, *ib.* The instruction given in the Brothers' schools should be as complete as that which is given in secular schools, 449. Advantages of higher studies in primary schools, *ib.* Necessity of securing the co-operation of the pupils, *ib.* Emulation, the surest and most efficacious means of doing so, 450. The master must be thoroughly efficient, *ib.* Father Champagnat introduces a new method of teaching to read, 451. Reasons why the Infant School is the most important, *ib.* Introduction of the plain chant into the schools, 453. Necessity and advantages of school discipline, 454. An undisciplined school is a pest in a parish, 456. Object of discipline, 457. Abuse of corporal punishments, *ib.* The predominant spirit of the school should be one of respect, love, and mutual confidence, 458. Vigilance, twofold object of this virtue, 459. Nothing can make up for the want of vigilance, 460. How the Brothers should discharge the duty of supervision, *ib.* The school time belongs to the children, *ib.* The great good done by the Brother who carefully watches over his pupils, 461.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Father Champagnat's opinion regarding the education of children, 463. His object in founding this Institute, *ib.* What is meant by educating a child, 464. How to mould the hearts of the children, and inspire them with piety and obedience, 465. Education must be the work of good example, 466. The dangers of partiality and particular friendships, *ib.* How to make instructions pleasant and attractive to the children, 467. Teaching Catechism, not a difficult task for one who is pious and zealous, 468. Discipline, indispensable

to attract children to school, 470. Five defects which ruin a master's authority, *ib.* When authority is too weak in a school, *ib.* Charity comprises all the virtues and qualities of a perfect teacher, 471. Excellence and fruits of zeal for the sanctification of children, 473.

CHAPTER XXIV.

His constancy in doing good, one of the most striking characteristics of the pious Founder, 476. Time and patience, two infallible means to secure the triumph of Religion in times of persecution, 478. How to compete with other schools, *ib.* Constancy, a mark of vocation, 480. Instruction on this virtue, 482.

APPENDIX.

Development of the Institute since the death of its Founder, 485. State of the Society at the death of Father Champagnat, *ib.* First Brothers sent to England in 1852, 486. The Society is divided into seven Provinces, *ib.* The Society is approved by the Holy See in 1863, 487. Various blessings and encouragements received from the Sovereign Pontiffs, *ib.* Foundations in the Colonies, 488. The juniorates, *ib.* The action of God, visible in the great work established by Father Champagnat, 489. Summary of the *Personnel* of the Institute in 1886, 490. Summary of establishments in 1886, 491.

INDEX TO ILLUSTRATIONS

Portrait of Father Champagnat,	facing Title Page
View of Lavalla and surrounding Country,	page 25
Lavalla, Cradle of the Institute,	45
N. D. de l'Hermitage (Loire),	90
Mother-House, St. Genis-Laval, Rhône,	488





P R E F A C E.

To write the life of a saint, to make known his combats, his virtues, and his victories, all that he has done for God and his neighbour, is to proclaim the glory of Jesus Christ, the Divine Redeemer of the world, and the author of all sanctity. Indeed, all the saints who, by their teaching, disperse the gloomy clouds of sin and ignorance that surround us, borrow their light from the life of Jesus and become inflamed with zeal, by meditating His virtues, in the same way that many lamps are lighted with a single taper from which they all receive light and heat.*

There is no saint who could not say with St. Paul: '*I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me.*' He lives in their understandings by faith, whereby they enjoy a foretaste of eternal life; He lives in their memories by the remembrance of His greatness, His goodness, and His benefits, the very thought of which overwhelms them with joy; He lives in their hearts by His love; He lives in all their virtuous actions and in all the powers of their souls. He it is who gives them a predilection for eternal truths, and induces them to listen to the inspirations of the Holy Ghost, and draws them to Himself by the fragrance of His virtues. Thus, all the gifts and graces bestowed on the saints come from Jesus, and redound to the glory of Jesus.

'The saints,' says St. John Chrysostom 'are like the stars

* St. Macaire. Sa doctrine.

that shine in the heavens and form a celestial concert to publish the glory of Jesus. All in them breathes His spirit; their conversation is a eulogy of His perfections; all their actions are triumphs of His grace; all their pains and sufferings are oblations of praise to His infinite majesty; in short, their lives are nothing else than copies of His life and virtues.*

To write the life of a saint is to combat vice, to encourage piety, and promote virtue. 'The life of a saint,' says St. Gregory the Great, 'is a very efficacious instruction on virtue and on the means of acquiring it; it is a mirror in which we see our faults and imperfections, in a manner so real and, therefore, so repulsive, that one glance at them is sufficient to make us resolve to correct them.' 'The life of a saint places before us the practice of evangelical perfection, and points out the different steps by which we may attain it. It is the Gospel in practice, and there is no more difference, says St. Francis of Sales, between the written Gospel and the life of a saint, than between a written piece of music and the same when executed.

Whilst reading the lives of the Saints, we are gently but forcibly, incited to imitate their virtues. Each of them seems to call upon us, repeating what St. Augustine, while reflecting on chastity said to himself, at the beginning of his conversion: 'Why cannot you do what these men have done? Was it by their own strength they overcame all their trials and temptations? No, but the grace of God was sufficient for them as it will be for you, if you correspond with it as they have done. The same grace will make you as strong as they were, and enable you to do what they did.'

But although the examples of all the saints may be very useful in leading us to perfection, 'nevertheless,' says St. Peter Damian, 'prudence should guide us in the imitation of those Saints whose lives are more conformable to our own calling.' 'Each Institute or Order,' says St. Jerome, 'has its Founder, whose example should be the model for all his

* Nouet. Vie de Jésus dans les Saints.

followers.' He adds: 'Let Bishops and Priests take Apostles and Apostolic men as their models and try to have the merit as well as the honour attached to their state. For us, who make profession of a solitary life, let us form ourselves after the examples of Paul, of Anthony, of Julian, of Hilarion, and of Macarius.' According to this wise counsel of the holy Doctor, the Brothers ought to take their pious Founder for their master in the spiritual life, and their model in the practice of virtue, for nothing can be more useful or more profitable to them than his example.

In order to raise His Saints to the highest sanctity, God sometimes leads them by extraordinary ways which we can more easily admire than imitate. At other times, he conducts them by familiar and ordinary paths, but in a heroic and perfect manner, which affords us an object both of admiration and imitation. It was in this way that God effected the sanctification of our venerated Father, so that his life is, in every respect, a model which we can and ought to imitate. His life is a mirror which shows us all our defects and the virtues which God requires us to practise. It is a practical Rule, every page of which points out what we must do to be pious and fervent religious men, animated with zeal for the Glory of God, and burning with love for Jesus Christ, Religious, truly devout to Mary and earnest imitators of the humility, simplicity, and modesty which the august Virgin practised in her hidden life. In meditating on the virtues which are so brilliantly portrayed in this Life, each of us should say to himself, 'Behold the model which I ought to copy and strive to reproduce; I shall be a perfect Religious, a true Brother of Mary, only in so far as I shall follow in the footsteps of my Father and Founder, the prototype of the perfection of my state.'

After the death of St. Benedict, his chief disciples, whilst at prayer, were rapt in ecstasy; God showed them a broad path leading towards the East, from the Saint's cell up to Heaven.

This path was lighted with torches which shed a soft clear light. St Maurice, with the other Brothers, was earnestly contemplating this spectacle when an angel appeared to him and said: 'What is that you gaze upon so attentively? Do you know what that path is?' 'No,' replied St. Maurice. 'That,' said the angel, 'is the path by which your holy Father, St. Benedict, went to Heaven and which you must follow if you wish to meet him there; that is, you must imitate the virtues of your Father, follow exactly the Rule which he has left you, and which he himself observed so faithfully.'

In reading the Life and sayings of our pious Founder, we ought to keep before our minds the words of the angel to the sons of St. Benedict, and say: 'Behold the way, behold the Rule which our Father has followed in order to do good, to gain heaven, and to reach that high perfection which he attained. If we wish to be his true disciples, to continue the work which he began, and share his glory in heaven, we must walk in his footsteps, imitate his virtues, and observe the Rule which he has given us, and which he himself observed so faithfully; for, this Rule is the one which shall bring us to God and to the haven of salvation.'

The prophet Isaiah, speaking to the faithful Israelites, exhorts them to meditate on the life and actions of their father Abraham, in order that the example of the great Patriarch might encourage them to advance with firm steps in the path of holiness. Let us enter into the spirit of the prophet Isaiah, let us keep our eyes constantly fixed on him whom God has appointed to be our Father and guide; let us remember his spirit of faith, his unbounded confidence in God, his ardent zeal for the salvation of souls, his affectionate and generous love for Jesus, his filial piety towards Mary, his profound humility, his mortification, his detachment from creatures, his constancy in the service of God, that we may be incited to the practice of the same virtues.

God has given to the Founder of each Religious Order

abundant graces of state and the spirit of the Society over which He placed him as head and model; it is through the Founder that this spirit and these graces are communicated to the Religious, to animate their actions and to quicken their virtues. Religious who have not imbibed, or who have lost the spirit of their Founder, must be looked upon, and ought to look upon themselves, as dead members; such Religious are in great danger of losing their souls, by abandoning their vocation, and returning to the world. Even should they remain in Religion, it is very difficult for them to persevere in the grace of God and be saved. Like branches that lose their leaves and die, although still attached to the trunk, these Religious, by their repeated infidelities, lose the spirit of their state, deprive themselves of charity and lose their souls, by the abuse of the very means which should lead them to the highest perfection. To a Religious, the spirit of his state and of his Founder, is not only useful, it is indispensable, and there is neither grace, nor virtue, nor happiness, in this life, nor salvation in the next, for the Religious who does not possess this spirit.

‘All the children of Israel,’ says St. Paul, ‘are not true Israelites, nor all those born of Abraham true sons of Abraham;’ neither are all Religious true Religious; those who have only the name, the habit, the appearance of Religion, are not true Religious; those only who have the spirit of their Founder and who imitate his virtues, are entitled to the name. It is this spirit and these virtues that make a Religious, that insure his vocation, his perfection and his happiness, both in this world and in the next. May all the Little Brothers of Mary thoroughly understand this important truth and apply themselves unceasingly to the study of the life and example of their holy Founder, to the imitation of his virtues and the acquiring of his spirit. The Brothers who had the happiness of living with him, imbibed this spirit at its very source, in the daily instructions and personal advice he gave them. Their successors must derive it from the assiduous meditation of his

Life, his examples, and the Rules of the Institute. To this end, we have carefully collected the words of our revered Father, summarised his instructions, quoted his explanations of Christian and religious virtues, and made known the end and motives which led him to frame most of the Rules which he has left us.

In order to enable our Brothers to read this Life with greater pleasure and profit, we have only now to assure them of the truthfulness of all the statements which it contains, and let them know the sources whence they are drawn. The papers and documents from which we have compiled this work, have not been taken at random. They are the result of fifteen years of laborious research ; and have been supplied :—

(1.) By Brothers who have lived with Father Champagnat, who have been eye-witnesses of his conduct, who have looked closely into his actions, taken part in his labours and heard his instructions. These Brothers have given us their written notes. To verify these notes, we have specially interrogated each of them upon their contents, in order to ascertain the accuracy of each statement, and to collect from the Brothers themselves, whatever further information our questions might elicit.

(2.) By a great number of other persons who have lived with Father Champagnat or have known him intimately. These persons are either venerable Ecclesiastics or pious laymen who knew him or assisted him in his work.

(3.) By the Father's own writings and a large number of letters which he had written to Brothers or to other persons. We have read all these letters, over and over again, with the greatest attention. We have also found most useful information in a number of letters written to our pious Founder by Brothers and all classes of persons.

(4.) By our own recollection ; for we have had the advantage and happiness of living nearly twenty years with our venerable Father, of holding office in his council, of accompanying him in many journeys, of discussing with him

many things concerning the Rule, the Constitutions, and the method of teaching which he left his Brothers, and generally on all that relates to the Institute. We may say, therefore, in all sincerity that, in writing this Life, we have recorded what we have seen and heard, and what has been to us a subject of serious study for many long years.

How edifying soever the Life of Father Champagnat may be, we should have but a very imperfect knowledge of him if we confined ourselves to the mere narrative of his life and actions. Imposing actions, grand undertakings, and toilsome and protracted works, are little in themselves; that which gives them value and shows their excellence, is the spirit which animates them. It is this spirit which pervaded all the sentiments and dispositions of our good Father, that we have undertaken to make known in the Second Part of this work, which, we think, is the more edifying, and which will be found the more useful to the Brothers. We might have called this part 'the Rule in Practice,' for in it, Father Champagnat appears to us a perfect model of all the virtues proper to our state. Particularly is he a model of humility, poverty, mortification, zeal, exactitude, and regularity. After the example of our divine Master, he began to do and then to teach; that is, before giving any Rule, imposing any practice of virtue or piety, he first observed it himself. Finally, what renders this part of his Life extremely interesting, is that it brings both his example and instructions before us at the same time. In it we shall often hear his very words as spoken or written by himself, in his own instructions, letters, and manuscripts; sometimes these words will be conveyed in notes furnished by Brothers, sometimes our own recollection will come to our aid. When we give his instructions and exhortations, we do not pretend always to quote his words verbatim, which would be morally impossible; but when we have been unable to do so, we have, at least, faithfully expressed his opinions and sentiments. Moreover, we have the firm and

conscientious belief that our book faithfully portrays the spirit which animated Father Champagnat, that it summarises his instructions, his maxims, his sentiments concerning the practice of virtue, the Rule and the manner of observing it. and that it contains nothing which is opposed to, or inconsistent with, his life and teaching.



DECLARATION OF THE AUTHOR.

IN conformity with the Decree of Urban VIII, of the year 1625, we hereby declare that we attribute but a mere human authority to the facts and appellations contained in this Biography, having given to Father Champagnat, and other persons mentioned in our Work, the title of Saint or Blessed, simply in accordance with common usage and general opinion. Moreover, we submit this Work to the judgment of the Roman, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, and we retract and withdraw beforehand anything in it which, in the judgment of Ecclesiastical authority, may be found reprehensible.



NOTE OF THE TRANSLATOR.

Page 365—(4) ‘Because one has little or no scruple regarding these faults, which are looked upon as trifles, they are often overlooked in confession and thus one is exposed to commit sacrilege, etc.’

In order to warn his Religious against the dangers of detraction and backbiting, the pious Founder here shows that certain detractions, certain words against Charity, are often esteemed but slight faults by the offender, who does not even mention them in confession, whereas, in reality, they may be mortal sins, and thus they expose him to commit sacrilege.

Page 458, *Bottom line*.—‘The good Father considered corporal punishment so serious an abuse;’ *read*: ‘The good Father considered the abuse of corporal punishment so serious an offence.’

In this chapter, Father Champagnat’s objections to the abuse of corporal punishment, are brought out so strongly, to guard the Brothers against the danger of compromising themselves in the eyes of the French Laws, which strictly prohibit all afflictive penances in the schools. But it was never understood in the Society that Father Champagnat condemned the principle of corporal discipline, since it was practised in the Brothers’ schools in his lifetime, and the moderate use of the *ferule*, or strap, is sanctioned in the Brothers’ *School Guide*.

The pages in the present book which might be misconstrued in this country, will be altered or omitted in subsequent editions.



INTRODUCTION.

ON THE SUBLIME FUNCTIONS OF A CATECHIST.

THE knowledge of God is of such importance that Jesus Christ came down upon earth to teach it to man. The Divine Saviour went on foot from place to place, to cities, towns, and villages to instruct, to catechise, and to preach His heavenly doctrine. Children as well as adults were the objects of his tender zeal. *'Suffer little children to come to Me'* He said to His disciples, *'for of such is the kingdom of heaven ;'* and so much has He their salvation at heart, that He uttered the most terrible threats against those who should scandalise them. The Son of God is then the Author and first Teacher of the Christian Doctrine. He brought it from Heaven, He taught it on earth, and it may be said that His manner of publishing it, was more in the form of catechising than of preaching. What raises the method of catechising above every other style of teaching the word of God, is the fact that it was employed by Jesus Christ and His Apostles.

This method of teaching the Christian Doctrine, in a simple and familiar manner, was learned from Jesus Christ and the Apostles by the Bishops who, as Fathers and Pastors of the faithful, considered it their duty to catechise. As the faithful increased in number, the Pastors were obliged, by the force of circumstances, to confide this duty to others, but they were careful to appoint only

the ablest and most virtuous men in their dioceses to discharge this sublime Ministry.*

In the early ages of the Church, the greatest Doctors considered it an honour to discharge the duties of Catechists, and to prepare the Catechumens for Baptism. St. Cyril, Bishop of Jerusalem, St. Ambrose, Archbishop of Milan, St. Gregory of Nyssa, and St. Augustin, have left us works written expressly for the instruction of Catechists and showing the manner of teaching the principles of the Christian Religion to children and adults preparing for Baptism.

In the Church of Alexandria, there was a celebrated school of Catechists for the instruction of Catechumens. Pantenus, St. Clement of Alexandria, and Origen, had successively charge of this School, and raised it to such repute, that it was crowded with persons from the most distant parts of the country. Here, St. Gregory Thaumaturgus learned the elements of the Faith and made such progress that, afterwards, he became the admiration of succeeding ages.

Origen, when only eighteen years of age, and still a layman, was charged with the instruction of the Catechumens. At Carthage, St. Cyprian confided the same office to a rhetorician named Optatus, as he mentions in these terms: 'We have appointed Optatus, a rhetorician, master of Catechumens.' Two hundred years later, the deacon Deogratias filled the same office in the same church, and it was at his request that St. Augustin composed his beautiful work entitled, 'The manner of teaching the principles of the Christian Religion to those who are not instructed therein.' All this goes to prove that this important duty was confided sometimes to a deacon, sometimes to a priest, and at other times even to a layman; and that in the choice of Catechists, regard was had, not so much to the rank of the person as to his talents and his qualifications for the duty he was called to discharge.†

At the same time, the Bishops were careful to establish schools in which the principles of Religion and human Sciences were taught to the young. The appointment, in the episcopal churches of an ecclesiastical Inspector or Chancellor, took place about this time. The greater number of the Councils held in the

* Le Père Garreau. Vie. du Vén. de la Salle, t. I.

† Cours complet de théologie, tome 20, chap. III.

middle ages, and particularly those of Châlons-sur-Saône, in 813 ; Aix-la-Chapelle, in 816 ; Paris, in 829 ; Meaux, in 845 ; Toul, in 859 ; Troffé, in 909 ; Lateran, in 1179 and 1198, earnestly urged the foundation of schools, and obliged the Pastors to teach Catechism to the people, who were then in a state of great ignorance.*

The Fathers of the holy Council of Trent, grieved at the sad havoc which ignorance of Religion was causing among the faithful, and fully convinced that it arose chiefly from the neglect of Pastors to instruct their flocks, made several decrees to remind priests having charge of souls, of their obligations on this important point.† But of all these decrees, there was none more necessary, or attended with such happy results as that which ordains that every Parish Priest shall teach Catechism to the children, on Sundays and Holydays. This decree has had three results which have renewed the face of the Church.‡

Firstly.—It awoke the zeal of the Clergy for the Christian Instruction of the children, so that classes for Catechism were universally established. Scarcely had the Church spoken, when, on all sides, the most admirable zeal was displayed for the Christian instruction of youth. A great number of Provincial Councils confirmed and published the decree of the Council of Trent, and ordered Pastors to open classes for the teaching of Catechism. In Italy, St. Charles Borromeo published this decree in his first Provincial Council, and, in concert with his suffragan Bishops, he commanded that the children should be summoned to the Catechism class by the sound of the bell.§ The first Synod of Sienna,|| that of Camerino,¶ the Synods of Monza, Cesena, and Torli ; those of Parma, Albano, and Montefiascone, and a great number of others followed the same example. The Synod of Brescia in Lombardy recommended Parish Priests to distribute rewards among the children, in order to entice them to Catechism, also to speak kindly to them and show them all the tenderness of a mother.**

Secondly.—It caused the teaching of Catechism to be highly

* L'Abbé Joly, chancelier de l'Eglise de Paris. Institution des enfants.

† Concile de Trente, session 24, chap. IV.

‡ Histoire des Catéchismes de St. Sulpice.

§ Actes de l'Eglise de Milan, Concile Provincial, année 1565.

|| Synode de Sienna, année 1599.

¶ Synode de Camerino, année 1630.

** Synode de Brescia, année. 1603.

esteemed and honoured. Whilst, on all sides, Councils were occupied with the grand object of procuring Christian instruction for the children, Bishops, Ecclesiastics of the highest rank, and Saints favoured with the gift of miracles, were to be seen performing the duties of Catechists and effectually proving its importance by the sublime examples they gave to the Christian world. St. Charles Borromeo, Archbishop of Milan, although overburdened with occupations, devoted some time, every week, to the teaching of Catechism to little children, and to the directing of the Catechists whom he had appointed in every parish of his diocese.*

On all Sundays of the year and on all Saturdays of Lent, St. Francis of Sales took his turn with his canons in teaching Catechism. The children were called to Catechism by a herald, wearing a kind of coat of arms of a blue colour, on which was the name Jesus, in letters of gold. This herald rang a bell through the streets and called out in a loud voice, '*Come to the Christian Doctrine, little children; there you will learn the way to heaven.*' The holy Bishop was always provided with gifts and rewards which he himself gave to the children to entice them to the Catechism. Twice a year, he walked with them in procession through the town.†

St. Ignatius of Loyola and his companions bound themselves by vow to teach Catechism. Having become General of his Order, he entered on his functions by teaching Catechism for forty-five days in one of the churches of Rome, and it is in imitation of his example that the Superiors of the Society of Jesus teach Catechism for forty days when they enter office.‡

St. Francis of Borgia travelled through the country, with a little bell in his hand, to call the children together for the purpose of teaching them the Christian doctrine. But it was not only the children that followed him, persons of every age ran at the sound of his handbell to hear him. They called him 'the man from heaven,' and they listened to his words as to the words of a celestial messenger.§

St. Francis Xavier used to go through the city of Goa and

* Vie de St. Charles Borromée.

† Vie de St. François de Sales, par le Père Larivière, page 362.

‡ Vie de St. Ignace, par le Père Maffé, page 121, et par le Père Bouhours, page 219

Vie de St. François de Borgia, page 153.

call aloud to the heads of families to send their children and their slaves to the Catechism. The holy man, says the author of his life, was persuaded that if the youth were all well instructed in the principles of Religion, Christianity would soon flourish in Goa, and it was in fact by means of the children that the city became entirely reformed.*

The blessed Peter Claver spent his whole life in teaching Catechism to slaves, and he prepared more than 200,000 for Baptism.† St. Philip Neri, by his daily catechisings, at which all classes of persons assisted, produced wonderful fruits in the city of Rome.

St. Vincent de Paul, when he was Parish Priest, applied himself to study the *patois* of the country people, that he might more easily teach them Catechism; and it was by this kind of instruction that he reformed his whole parish.‡

It was by teaching Catechism that St. Francis Regis began all his missions. A great preacher, after hearing the Saint give one of his instructions, in a church in Puy, exclaimed: ‘Alas! this great servant of God converts souls and inflames them with divine love by his Catechisms, whilst we gather so little fruit from our grand sermons.§

The Blessed Emiliani gathered together the little children of Venice, twice each day, to teach them Catechism, and by this means he did much good in that vast city.||

Cardinal Bellarmine, Archbishop of Capoua, assembled the children in his Cathedral, taught them Catechism himself, and gave rewards for the best answers. His instructions were so interesting that, not only children, but persons of all ages, hastened to hear him.¶

We might mention Venerable Prelates and learned Ecclesiastics who have resigned their Sees and renounced all temporal prospects to devote themselves exclusively to the humble, but most important, functions of catechist. Such were Dom Bartholomew-of-the-Martyrs, Archbishop of Braga, in Portugal; M.

* Vie du Saint par Bouhours, pages 119 et 574.

† Vie du Bienheureux Claver.

‡ Vie de St. Vincent de Paul.

§ Vie du Saint par Daubenton, page 112.

|| Actes des Saints, mois de Février, page 218.

¶ Vie de Bellarmine, par Frizon, page 255.

le Nobletz in Brittany ; Father Romilion, Founder of the Ursulines in France ; the Venerable Cæsar of Bus ; John Gerson, Chancellor of Paris, who spent the last years of his life in catechising the children of Lyons. Pope Clement XI. was often seen in the streets of Rome, catechising little children and distributing medals and rosaries to those who answered well.*

After such examples, who would not think it an honour to teach Catechism to little children ? What a blessing and consolation for the Brothers to be employed in the sublime function of Catechist, so earnestly recommended by the Church, and fulfilled by so many holy and distinguished persons, and by Jesus Christ Himself !

Thirdly.—*The third effect of the decree of the Council of Trent was the foundation of a great number of Societies whose aim was the instruction of youth !* If it required the grand examples of zeal and charity, which we have just related, to prove the necessity and the excellence of the catechetical method of religious instruction, it was necessary, in order to perpetuate these examples in the Church, to found Societies devoted to the Christian instruction of youth.

The Holy Pope, Pius V., who was raised up by God to repair the ravages made in the Church, founded a society of Catechists in Rome under the name of ‘the Christian Doctrine.’ A great number of persons entered this society, and bound themselves to teach Catechism on Sundays and Holydays. Moved by the great fruits this society produced in Rome, the Pope, by a special Bull, exhorted all the Archbishops and Bishops to introduce it into their dioceses ; he granted indulgences to all who should join it, or who should assist at the instructions given by its members.†

St. Charles Borromeo established the Confraternity of the Christian Doctrine in Milan and exerted himself to spread it throughout his diocese, where, in a short time, it effected the most salutary reforms. The holy Archbishop took a pleasure in visiting the Catechism classes he had formed ; at his death, there were in the whole diocese about 740 Catechism classes, upwards of 3000 Catechists, and more than 40,000 persons attending them.‡

As soon as St. Francis of Sales was promoted to the

* Guide de ceux qui annoncent la parole de Dieu, page 379.

† Vie de Saint Pie V., page 507.

‡ Vie de Saint Charles Borromée, page 462.

Episcopate, he established the confraternity of the Christian Doctrine at Annecy, and drew up rules for its guidance and for ensuring its stability.*

The Society of Jesus, which was founded during the Council of Trent, devoted itself likewise to the sanctification of children and to the direction of a great number of colleges. Stephen and Sigismund, both Kings of Poland, as also the Emperors of Austria, Ferdinand I and Ferdinand II, declared that they had not found more effectual means of re-establishing the Catholic Faith in their States, then rent and torn by the heresy of Luther, than the schools kept by the Jesuit Fathers. The Lutherans of Germany openly acknowledged that the Jesuit colleges were the great obstructions to the so-called Reformation.†

Shortly afterwards, St. Vincent of Paul also founded a congregation for the instruction of children. He directed his priests, when preaching missions to country people, to give a short instruction on the Catechism at mid-day and a longer one in the evening; a part of this time was to be spent in questioning the children. One day, having learned that one of his priests neglected his injunctions on this point, he wrote to him as follows: 'I am much grieved to learn that, instead of teaching Catechism in the evening, you have been preaching sermons. This is wrong, because the people have more need of Catechism and they profit more by it than by sermons; because, in teaching Catechism, you follow the method our Saviour followed in converting the world; because it is our way of doing; and because it has pleased our Lord to bestow signal blessings on this method in which there are more opportunities of practising humility.'‡

A great number of other congregations, having the same object in view, were founded about this time; for example those of the Priests of the Oratory, by the Abbé, afterwards Cardinal Bérulle; the Eudists who reformed Normandy; the Josephites, founded at Lyons, by M. Crétenet. In Italy, the Barnabites and Oratorians of St. Philip Neri. In Rome, the Pious Schools founded by St. Joseph Calasanctius, &c.§

* Auguste de Sales, page 306.

† Histoire de la Compagnie de Jésus, par Créteineau Joly.

‡ Vie de St. Vincent de Paul par Abelly, t. ii. page 10.

§ Vies du Card. de Bérulle, page 391, de M. Crétenet, de M. Roussier, de St. Philippe de Néry, de St. Joseph Calazance.

Thanks to the zeal which animated the members of all these Congregations, the religious instruction of the children of the middle classes was amply provided for; but the children of the poor were still left in a state of profound ignorance and disorder, because they were yet generally deprived of religious instructors. The necessity of finding some means to remedy so great an evil, was keenly felt by all the great men whom Providence raised up in this century to reform society. One of them wrote: 'The wounds inflicted on the Church can be healed only by Seminaries and primary schools. The Seminaries are the schools for Ecclesiastics, and the primary schools are the seminaries for the people. But in order that schools may be useful to Religion, the masters who teach in them must be apostles, not hirelings.'*

To obtain such masters there was formed in the Congregation of St. Sulpice, an association for prayer, which was under the protection of St. Joseph, the Patron and Model of all instructors of youth. 'As the instruction of the children of the poor is much neglected, wrote one of these pious associates, 'God, who watches over His Church, wishes, perhaps, to supply this want by some extraordinary means, and to raise up for the schools of the poor, masters and mistresses who will undertake this work with apostolic zeal. This seems to be His object in sending the spirit of prayer into the hearts of so many people.' Providence must have listened favourably to these ardent prayers, for it was immediately after this, that so many Congregations of lay persons devoted themselves to this long neglected work. And, as if God had wished to show, that this revival was due to the sons of M. Olier, nearly all the Founders of Congregations, devoted to primary instruction in France, were trained at St. Sulpice.†

From this time onwards, various attempts were made to establish Christian schools for the children of the poor, and in many towns, societies of Ecclesiastics were formed, who opened primary schools, to facilitate the teaching of Catechism to the children.‡ We may mention, among many others, M. Coudere who, under the direction of M. Olier opened a school at Privas. M. Bourdoise established primary schools in Paris. Pierre Franchot, formerly an advocate at Paris, bought a house at

* Vie de M. Bourdoise.

† Vie de M. Olier tome ii., page 322.

‡ Histoire des Catéchismes de St. Sulpice.

Orleans and transformed it into a poor school. He taught there himself and conducted his pupils to the church, singing hymns as they went. Similar schools were established at Blois, and at Tours, a pious layman named Pierre Perdoux founded more than thirty schools in the diocese of Orleans.*

Charles Demia, a priest of the diocese of Lyons, and proctor in the Archbishop's court, established a kind of Seminary in which some excellent schoolmasters were trained. The pious founder having studied at St. Sulpice, placed this house under the direction of a Sulpician, thinking that he could not do better than have it under this celebrated Congregation.†

The venerable de la Salle, Canon of Rheims, founded the Congregation of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, who very soon spread themselves throughout France, and have now more than 200,000 children under instruction.‡

Similar institutions were founded for the instruction of young girls. Of those formed in France, there may be mentioned, the Sisters of Notre Dame, established at Bordeaux, and approved by Pope Paul V.; the Religious of the Visitation; the Ursulines who, in the course of half a century, established more than 300 houses; the Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, founded by the Venerable Mother Barat; the Sisters of Notre Dame in Lorraine, the Sisters of Charity, founded by St. Vincent de Paul; the Sisters of St. Joseph, founded at Puy; the Teaching Sisters, established in the same city; the Sisters of the Faith, in the Diocese of Agen; the Daughters of St Geneviève, the Sisters of St. Charles, in Lyons, founded by M. Demia; the Sisters of the Infant Jesus, established by Father Barré; and a multitude of other Congregations, which, though less known, were in their various degrees not less serviceable in reforming society during this time of universal renovation.§

But why, we may ask, with an illustrious prince of the Church, his Eminence Card. Giraud, 'Why all these public and private schools, the number of which is daily increasing—schools for children, schools for youths, schools for adults, day schools, night schools, and Sunday schools? Why these infant

* Influence de la Religion en France, tome ii., page 325.

† Vie de Charles Demia, page 137.

‡ Vie de M. de la Salle, par Garreau.

§ Histoire des Ordres Religieux, par Henrion.

schools, opened in nearly every parish for the training of the young, and those nurseries destined to give shelter and protection to the newly born? Why, in fine, all this eagerness, all this foresight, all these institutions, unheard of before our time—the eternal honour of the right-thinking portion of Society and the eternal disgrace of the other? Is it only progress, improvement, advancement, as one may please to call it? No, it is a necessary remedy for a great want in our day. It is an antidote against the evils that assail us. Do you not see that the times are changed, and the order of things inverted, that it is in the family that society ought to recruit its strength, and that, on the contrary, it is society which here comes to the aid of the family? If domestic education were what it ought to be, no one would ever have thought of substituting adoption for maternal tenderness. Why did it never occur to men's minds a century ago, to erect infant schools to teach little children the elements of Religion and morality, or to found nurseries to care for and feed them? Why?—Because then the family was Christian. There were, no doubt, schools for completing and perfecting one's education, but the first school was the family circle. There are in these new services of charity a thousand subjects of praise and blessing for those generous souls who conceived them and carried them out; but there is also, to a discerning mind, a frightful revelation of the woful decay of our public morality.*

Impiety has inflicted deep wounds on Religion; but the greatest of all, that which aggravates and perpetuates all the others, is the almost universal destruction of domestic education. In fact, the greater number of parents no longer give religious instruction to their children, either because they are too much occupied with temporal affairs, or because they have not a sufficient knowledge of Religion, not having been themselves sufficiently instructed in their youth, or what is still more deplorable, they are irreligious, and consequently indifferent to the salvation of their children. Hence it follows that great numbers of young people would remain in ignorance of the truths of the Christian Religion, and would be sunk in vice, if God, in His infinite mercy, had not had pity on them and raised up pious teachers to

* Mandement sur l'éducation domestique, par le Card. Giraud, Archevêque de Cambrai, page 28.

take care of them and give them a Christian education. This is a noble task, a sublime calling.

As the ancient orders of the Church were not sufficient to accomplish all this, God has raised up a great number of other Congregations who, keeping pace with the wants of the age, have adapted their rules and the manner of placing their subjects in parishes, so as to fulfil the mission they are called on to discharge.

Of men alone, these new Congregations are :—

The Brothers of Christian Instruction for Brittany, founded by M. l'Abbé Jean de la Mennaie, formerly Vicar-General of St. Brieuc.

The Brothers of St. Joseph, in the diocese of Mans, of which M. Dujarrié, curé of Ruillé-sur-Loire, was the founder.

The Brothers of St. Gabriel, in the diocese of Nancy, who have for their founder the Abbé Fréchal.

The Brothers of Christian Instruction of the Holy Ghost, established at St. Laurent-sur-Sèvres, Vendée, whose founder was M. l'Abbé Deshayes.*

The Marianite Brothers, founded at Bordeaux by M. Cheminal, Canon of the Metropolitan Church of that city.

The Brothers of the Sacred Heart, in the diocese of Puy, established by M. Coindre, French missionary.

The Brothers of St. Viateur, in the diocese of Lyons, whose founder was M. Querbes, curé of Vourles.

The Brothers of the Cross and the Brothers of the Holy Family, in the diocese of Belley, the first founded by M. Bochart, formerly Vicar-General of Lyons, and the second by Brother Gabriel Tabarin.

The Brothers of Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux, established by M. Fièrè, Vicar-General of Valence.

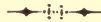
The Brothers of Viviers, of whom M. Vernet, superior of the Grand Seminary in that city, was the founder.

Lastly, the Little Brothers of Mary, actually making but one family with those of Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux and those of Viviers, founded in 1817, by Father Champagnat, whose life is the subject of this book.

* Histoire des Ordres Religieux, par Henrion.



Life and Spirit of Father Champagnat.



PART FIRST.

CHAPTER I.

BIRTH, PARENTAGE, AND EARLY EDUCATION OF MARCELLIN CHAMPAGNAT.

THIS holy priest was born on the 20th of May, 1789, at Marlhes, a village on Mount Pila, in the Department of the Loire, diocese of Lyons. He received, in baptism, which was administered to him on the following day, the Feast of Our Lord's Ascension, the names of Joseph Benedict Marcellin. He was the youngest child but one of John Baptist Champagnat and Mary Chirat, who had ten children, five sons and five daughters.

Destined to be the founder of an Institute, the special characteristics of which were to be humility and simplicity, and which was to have for its object the Christian education of children, Providence ordained that he should be born amongst a religious, but rude and illiterate people, in order that he might know, by experience, the wants for which, later on, he would have to provide, and the habits and dispositions of those for whom he would have to train teachers.

The father of young Champagnat was a man of sound judgment, and well instructed, considering the time and place in which he lived. His prudence and kindly disposition won for him the esteem of all his neighbours. He was arbiter in their disputes; and his reputation for impartiality was so great that his decisions were universally respected. Madame Champagnat

was a woman of sincere piety, of firm character and thrifty habits, was orderly in her ways, and entirely devoted to the care of her household, and the education of her children. Neighbouring housewives had recourse to her in all their troubles, and they never failed to obtain from her words of kindly advice and encouragement. Every day she recited the Rosary with her children. She read or got some of the family to read, portions of the Lives of the Saints, or some other edifying book; she saw that all her family were present at night prayers; and she practised many acts of piety and virtue, in honour of the Blessed Virgin, in order that she might merit her protection.

The child of benediction, who was to become so distinguished a servant of Mary, was, no doubt, given to the virtuous mother as a reward of her piety, of her devotion to Mary, and of her constant fidelity in honouring the august Mother of God.

As soon as the child began to speak, her first care was to teach him his prayers, and make him frequently pronounce the holy names of Jesus and Mary. Not satisfied with training her children in piety, and accustoming them to religious practices, she carefully corrected their faults, moulded their character, and inculcated that politeness and good breeding which are so necessary to the happiness of families and the well-being of society. She would never allow them to keep company either with children or others who were likely to scandalise them, or lead them into sin. Among other good habits, she required them to be temperate in eating and drinking; she would not permit them to choose for themselves at table, or to show too great an eagerness to be served. On one occasion, a neighbour expressed surprise at this strictness, and advised her to give her children more liberty. She answered, 'I know what suits my children. I take care of them and provide for all their wants; but I do not approve of their taking whatever they may fancy or like best, because that might lead them to acquire greedy habits.'

Although she tenderly loved all her children, she had a particular affection for little Marcellin, the survivor of her two youngest children, and this, not because he was the youngest, but because of the presentiment she had of his future sanctity. She was fully confirmed in this presentiment by a sign which can hardly be looked upon otherwise than as supernatural. Several

times, as the child lay in the cradle, she saw, as it were, a bright flame, which appeared to issue from his breast, and which, after hovering round his head, diffused itself about the apartment. An occurrence so remarkable inspired her with mingled feelings of astonishment, fear, and admiration. She felt that Heaven, in its mercy, had designs upon her child, to be made known in its own good time, and that it was her duty to correspond with its intentions, to the best of her power, by bringing him up in more than ordinary virtue and piety.

The pious mother was well seconded in her endeavours by the child's aunt, a person of eminent piety and virtue. This good lady was a nun, who, like so many others, had been turned out of her convent by the men, who, at that time, were covering France with blood and ruins. Once, as she was speaking to the child's mother about the events of the time and the evils of the Revolution, little Marcellin, who had been listening to them without being observed, said to her: 'Aunt, what is the Revolution, is it a man or a beast?' 'Poor child,' replied the good nun weeping, 'May God keep you from ever knowing by experience what the Revolution is. It is more cruel than any beast.' This pious lady, perceiving that her nephew was happily inclined to piety, took the greatest pleasure in explaining to him the mysteries of our holy Religion, in teaching him his prayers, and relating to him the lives of the Saints. Devotion to the Blessed Virgin, to the Guardian Angels, and to the Souls in Purgatory, were frequently the subjects of her instructions. Time could not efface the impression made on the child's mind by the lessons and good example of his pious aunt, as was evident from the way in which he often spoke of her and of the instructions which she gave him in his childhood.

Thus instructed and trained in piety by his mother and his virtuous aunt, kept by them at a distance from anything having even the appearance of evil, and constantly surrounded by good example, Marcellin became a pious and docile child, endowed with great purity of soul. He carefully prepared for his first Communion, to which he approached with great fervour, at the age of eleven years.

Finding it impossible to give him the necessary secular instruction, his parents sent him to a day school. During the first day of attendance, he was very timid, and did not venture

to leave his place. The master, perceiving this, called him up to read; but, at the same moment, another scholar crushed in before him. This annoyed the master, who became vexed, and, thinking to please and encourage Marcellin, gave the boy a blow on the ear and sent him sobbing to his seat. This rude manner of acting was little calculated to inspire confidence in the new scholar, or to attach him to the school. Afterwards, when relating this incident, he declared that, at the time, he trembled from head to foot, and was more inclined to cry than to read. His judicious mind condemned such severe treatment. He said to himself: 'I will not come back to this school, for the ill-treatment of that boy shows what is in store for me, should I have the misfortune to vex the master. I don't want his teaching, and much less his punishments.' On no account would he go back to the school. He often related this incident to the Brothers to show them how harsh treatment, or punishment inflicted in anger, turns children against the master, gives them a disgust for his instructions, and drives them from the school.

While he was preparing for his first Communion, it happened that the priest, who gave instructions to the class, had reprimanded a boy several times to no purpose. At length, yielding to impatience, he began to scold him, and called him some offensive name. The boy, mortified and humbled before his companions, remained quiet during the remainder of the instruction; but when it was over, and the class dismissed, the other boys gathered round him and began to call him by the name which had been so imprudently applied to him. The poor boy looked downcast, became angry and excited, and threatened his tormentors; but this only made them tease him the more. At last he was obliged to hide from them, and steal to the instructions, for fear of being seen by them. After some time, his character was so changed that he became dull, melancholy, obstinate, and almost savage. 'Behold,' Father Champagnat would say, 'a child whose education is spoiled, and whose character may be a cause of annoyance, perhaps a scourge to his family and his neighbours, all through an indiscreet word spoken in an outburst of anger, which might have been so easily repressed.' This incident made such an impression on Father Champagnat that he inserted, in the Rule of his Institute, an article which forbids the Brothers to call the children nicknames.

Although Marcellin was remarkably pious, it does not appear, up to this time, that he had any notion of quitting the world, or embracing the ecclesiastical state ; on the contrary, it would seem that he thought only of helping his father, who worked a small farm and kept a flour-mill. The father, naturally ingenious and handy, taught his son a little carpentry, masonry, and every other kind of work required on a farm. The boy's robust constitution, activity, and love of labour, made him earnest and successful in all kinds of work.

At the age of fourteen or fifteen, he began to entertain thoughts of business. When he received presents in money, instead of spending it on trifles as most boys do, he put it aside and would not allow it to be taken, even to buy new clothes for himself, arguing that, as his brothers' clothes were all bought with money from the family purse, his should be provided from the same source. His parents, pleased with this spirit of economy, gave him two or three young lambs, and promised to allow him to sell them for his own advantage, when they should be grown up. He tended them with great care, sold them, and bought others, always making profit by his sales ; so that, in a short time, he had amassed a little fortune of six hundred francs (twenty-four pounds sterling.) He formed a plan for extending his little business which was to take one of his brothers into partnership, to live together, and share each other's fortunes during their lifetime : but God destined Marcellin for a higher and holier calling, and manifested His will to him in a striking manner.





CHAPTER II.

MARCELLIN IS CALLED TO THE ECCLESIASTICAL STATE.

FRANCE had just emerged from the chaos into which the Revolution had plunged her. The Church, once more free, began to re-organise her sacerdotal army, and to make every effort to fill up the gaps which martyrdom, apostasy, and death had made in its ranks. At that time the pious and illustrious Cardinal Fesch, uncle of Napoleon I, was Archbishop of Lyons. This worthy prelate, grieved to see so many parishes in his vast diocese without priests, made enormous sacrifices to found seminaries and to encourage vocations to the ecclesiastical state. He instructed his Vicar-General, M. Courbon, to do everything in his power to induce Parish Priests to find students for these seminaries. M. Courbon, through one of the professors of the diocesan seminary, who was going home to Marlies for a holiday, requested his intimate friend, the Rev. M. Alliot, the Parish Priest, to find him some pious young boys suitable for his purpose.

M. Alliot accordingly directed the professor to the house of M. Champagnat, who received him very cordially. After the usual greeting, the professor made known the object of his visit thus: 'You are not aware, M. Champagnat, why I have called on you. Your Parish Priest has given me to understand that you have, in your family, some fine boys who may be inclined to study Latin and to become priests. I have just come to see you on the subject.' 'None of my boys,' said M. Champagnat, some-

what surprised, 'has ever shown any desire to study Latin.' 'Would you like to study Latin?' said he to the eldest who happened to be present. Blushing, he timidly answered, 'No, sir.' 'Where are the others?' inquired the professor. The second eldest and Marcellin, who had been at the mill together, came in just as he spoke. 'Here,' said their father, 'here is the priest who has come to take you away to study Latin. Will you go with him?' The elder answered distinctly and decidedly, 'No.' Marcellin, a good deal embarrassed, stammered out a few words, but so indistinctly as not to be understood. The professor taking him aside, looked at him closely, and was so much pleased by his gentle appearance, and his frank open character, that he said to him, 'My child, you must study Latin and become a priest—it is God's will.' After a short conversation with the professor, Marcellin made up his mind as to his vocation, and formed a resolution which was never afterwards shaken.

This incident suggests some remarks which may not be out of place here. God alone has the right of prescribing to each one his vocation, and has innumerable ways of manifesting His will to men. Sometimes, He calls them in an extraordinary manner, and directly, as He did the Apostle to whom He addressed these words: 'Follow me,' as He did St Paul when He struck him to the ground on the way to Damascus; and as He did many others in a manner altogether miraculous. But His ordinary way of calling souls, is by attraction; that is, by giving certain lights, certain inclinations, certain inspirations, which induce them to quit the world and embrace the religious state. He frequently makes use of natural means, such as sickness, loss of fortune, humiliation, or persecution. St Paul, the first hermit, withdrew from the world, in order to avoid persecution; St Arsenius, to escape the wrath of Arcadius, his pupil; and St Moses, a recluse, to elude human justice which pursued him for theft. At other times, God makes use of a word, a good advice, or the example of a friend, to lead a soul whither He wishes. It is therefore a gross error to doubt the genuineness of a vocation because one has entered Religion at an early age, or through the advice of a father, a mother, or a pious teacher, through the example of a companion, or even from some human motive.

St Francis of Sales says that God does not employ the same means with all those whom He calls to Himself; few, even, are

drawn to God by perfectly supernatural motives. Of the women whose conversion is recorded in the Gospel, Magdalen alone came to Jesus through love; the Adulteress came through constraint, the Samaritan by chance, and the Canaanean to obtain help. 'It matters very little,' adds the holy prelate, 'from what motive a person has come, provided he perseveres in well-doing.' Those who were constrained to attend the marriage feast, nevertheless enjoyed the banquet. God has made use of all these means to bring into religious houses many persons who persevered and who became good religious, and eminent servants of God; whereas, several, who were called by extraordinary ways, did not persevere and were lost, as was Judas, who, like the other Apostles, was chosen by our Lord Himself.

Marcellin's resolution to study Latin, was not a passing fancy. His parents, knowing that he was not talented, tried in vain to make him abandon it, by reminding him of the difficulties he had experienced in learning to read, and of the little taste he had ever shown for study, but all to no purpose. He no longer felt interested in his usual occupations, or in the little dealings which he formerly liked so well. 'My resolution is taken,' said he, 'and I can think of nothing but study.'

He wished to go at once to the Seminary, but as he could neither read nor write well enough to begin to study Latin, he asked his parents to be sent, for a while, to live with one of his uncles, a schoolmaster, who knew the language and could teach him its rudiments, and, at the same time, complete his primary education. He lived a year with his uncle who spared no pains with him, but was so little satisfied with the progress which he made, that he advised his parents not to send him to the Seminary. 'Your son,' said he 'is bent on becoming a priest, but you should not let him continue his studies, he has not sufficient talent to succeed.' Often did his uncle himself try to dissuade Marcellin from attempting it, assuring him that he was not fitted for such studies; and that, sooner or later, he would be obliged to give up, perhaps after having incurred considerable expense, lost much time, and injured his health.

Marcellin, who had prayed and reflected much during the year, was not for a moment shaken in his resolution, either by the advice of his uncle or the remarks of his parents. 'Prepare my

outfit,' said he, 'I will go to the Seminary, I must succeed, since it is God who calls me.' As they still hesitated to buy his outfit, he added: 'Let this expense be no obstacle, I have money enough to pay it.' Thus, without thinking of it, the pious young man performed the first act required for the religious life, that of detachment from the goods of this world. This generosity at once convinced his parents, who, without further delay, prepared his outfit which was paid for out of his own savings.

Before his attention was fixed on his vocation, his conduct was exemplary, but when he made up his mind to embrace the ecclesiastical state, it became still more edifying. He approached the Sacraments oftener and prayed longer. He was more recollected, more modest, and more detached from worldly matters. His devotion to the Blessed Virgin increased. He said the Rosary every day, recommended his vocation to Mary, and besought her for light and intelligence to succeed in his studies.

He entered the Seminary of Verrières, near Montbrison, in the month of October, 1805. His timidity made his first days at the Seminary far from pleasant. He was not bold enough to ask for what he needed. At table, he feared to present his plate to be served, and it needed the pangs of hunger to compel him to do as others did. His bashfulness and rustic appearance at first drew upon him the railleries of some of the students; but his frank, straightforward character, and, above all, his exemplary conduct, soon removed unfavourable impressions and gained for him the esteem of both masters and pupils. He was now in his seventeenth year, the tallest, and most backward of his class. Far from being discouraged, however, at finding himself in the midst of a class of little boys, all smaller and cleverer than himself, his application to study was thereby increased.

His superiors publicly manifested their appreciation of his good qualities and the confidence they had in him, by appointing him superintendent and prefect of a dormitory, in preference to many others much longer in the Seminary, and more advanced in their studies. His appointment to an office for which he believed himself ill qualified, covered him with confusion; nevertheless, he submitted without the slightest observation, for he had made up his mind to refuse nothing coming to him from his superiors.

This office afforded him an opportunity of having more time to study. Every night, after having made the round of the dormitory, to see that all the doors and windows were shut and the pupils in bed, he covered his lamp for a short time, then took out his books and began to prepare next day's lessons, prolonging his studies until a late hour in the night ; and as his bed was in a sort of recess, he continued this course for several years without being noticed. This intense application to study somewhat weakened his health, but greatly accelerated his progress. On entering the Seminary, he was so backward in reading and writing, that it was proposed to place him, for some time, in the preparatory class ; but he would not hear of this, and so earnestly did he beg permission to begin Latin, that the superior consented, being convinced that, in a few days, he would tire of it, and, of his own accord, ask to be sent to the preparatory class. The superior was mistaken, for at the end of a few months, Marcellin was first in his class, and, in the course of his first year at the Seminary, he passed through two classes.

Marcellin's close application to study did not cause him to neglect his spiritual advancement. He knew how necessary knowledge was for him, but he knew also that virtue was still more indispensable. He appreciated and profited by the regular life of the Seminary, by the wise counsels of his superiors, and by the good examples constantly before him. He had a particular liking for the exercises of piety, and he assisted at them with a fervour and modesty which soon attracted the attention of his superiors, and also of his fellow-students. Not satisfied with the usual exercises, he often asked to be allowed to devote more time to prayer, and especially to make visits to the Blessed Sacrament during the recreations. His devotion to the Blessed Virgin, to St Aloysius, and to St John Francis Regis, was much increased by the instructions which he heard in the Seminary, and by the devotions practised there, in honour of the Mother of God, and of these two great Saints.

Before entering the Seminary, he approached the Sacraments only once a month ; but afterwards, he very soon asked permission to receive Holy Communion, first, once a fortnight, then, every Sunday. The ceremonies of the Church, which, in the Seminary, were performed with great pomp, filled his heart with emotions which he could not always control. Many a time, the singing of

hymns made him shed tears of joy, but he was particularly affected by the hymn of St Theresa, on Holy Communion and the desire of death.

His piety, however, did not consist in affectionate sentiments only. He knew that solid virtue should manifest itself by good works, that is to say, by avoiding sin, and by the fulfilling of all Christian duties. The following resolutions, written with his own hand at this time, show us how he felt on this subject :—

‘O my Lord and my God, I promise never more to offend Thee, to make acts of Faith, Hope and Charity whenever Thou mayest inspire me to do so, to avoid bad company, in a word, to do nothing contrary to Thy holy will ; to give good example ; to lead others to the practice of virtue as far as lies in my power ; to instruct the ignorant in Thy divine precepts, and to teach the Catechism to the poor as well as to the rich. Grant, O my divine Saviour, that I may faithfully keep these resolutions.’

To these resolutions, he was constantly faithful, and his superiors certify, that during all the time he remained at Verrières, he was a model of every virtue. Not satisfied with giving good example, he took every opportunity of leading others to the practice of virtue ; he possessed a certain natural eloquence, and a persuasive way of speaking, which commanded attention and led many to God.

A young student, previously distinguished for his talents and good qualities, took such a distaste for study and piety, that he was preparing to leave the Seminary ; Marcellin, perceiving the sad change, resolved on using every possible means to inspire him with better sentiments. He contrived to be with the young man during the recreations, and found out that the principal cause of his discontent, was a belief, that he had been unjustly punished. ‘My dear friend,’ said Marcellin, ‘either you have deserved punishment or you have not. If you have deserved it, as it appears to me you have, you should not be vexed at it, neither should you blame your professor, but accept it with docility and gratitude as a just reparation for your fault and a remedy for your defects. If you believe yourself innocent, you ought to accept the punishment with resignation, in reparation of the many faults which you have committed during your life, and for which you have not been punished ; moreover, you ought to receive it as an act of mortification, and in imitation

of our Lord, who was punished for sins which He did not commit. Again, is it reasonable for one of your age to be stubborn, to neglect your religious duties, to abandon your studies for such trifles? Don't you see that the devil is making game of you? That aversion for your professor, with which he has inspired you, is a deep-laid snare of his to destroy your prospects, to cause you to lose your vocation, and perhaps your soul. Come, now, away with these annoyances. Let us begin a novena to the Blessed Virgin, and all these fancies that fill your mind, will very soon vanish.' The novena was begun, and before it was ended, the young man saw his folly, and resolved to have no further intercourse with a certain fellow-student, whose evil counsels were the sole cause of his disgust for study and decline from piety. He kept his resolution, recovered his former fervour, resumed his studies, and became an excellent priest.

Having finished his course at the Seminary of Verrières, Marcellin was admitted to the Diocesan Seminary of Lyons, in October, 1812. He always looked upon the years which he spent in this holy retreat as the happiest of his life. His first resolution, on entering it, was to be constant in his observance of the Rule, which, to him, was the expression of God's will, the shortest and most efficacious means of advancing in perfection. After a serious examination of conscience, he deemed it necessary to make special resistance to pride, and he determined to make it the subject of his particular examination. In order thoroughly to uproot this, which he believed to be his prevailing vice, he resolved to practise the contrary virtue of humility, and begged one of his fellow-students to admonish him of his faults and correct every defect he perceived in him.

But knowing that every perfect gift must come from above, he earnestly begged of God to grant him this virtue. To obtain it, he composed the following prayer which he frequently recited. It is here given as we find it in his own handwriting.

'O Lord, I confess that I do not sufficiently know Thee, and that I am full of sins and imperfections. Grant that I may know my faults, and, above all, give me grace to combat them and never to cease from waging war against them or striving to correct them. I ask this favour of Thee, O my God, with the deepest humility of heart. Divine Heart of Jesus, who, by Thy profound humility, hast combated and vanquished human pride, it is to

Thee, first of all, that I address my prayer. Give me, I beseech Thee, humility. Destroy in me this edifice of pride, not because it is hateful to men, but because it displeases Thy Divine Heart and offends Thy Sanctity. Holy Virgin, my good Mother, ask for me, thy unworthy servant—ask for me, from the Adorable Heart of Jesus, the grace that I may know myself, fight against myself, overcome myself, destroy my self-love and pride. Prostrate at thy feet, I make the resolution to wage continual war against pride.'

To make unrelenting war against pride, as he himself said, he resolved on two things ; the first was to refrain from all vain or sarcastic words, and in general, from all sins of the tongue. The second was to be always polite, charitable, and even respectful towards his fellow-students, and never to lose an occasion of doing them a service.

To carry these resolutions into practical effect, he resolved :—

(1.) To impose a penance on himself, every time he should yield to pride, either in thought or word.

(2.) To speak to all his fellow-students without distinction, and always to render them every service in his power, in spite of any repugnance he might feel in doing so, as such repugnance could proceed only from pride.

(3.) To look upon himself as the least among the students, saying : Why should I set myself above any of them ? Is it because of my talents ? I have none, and I am the last in my class. Is it because of my virtue ? Again, I have none, and I am full of pride. Is it because of my personal appearance ? It was God who made my body, and He has not chosen that it should be handsome. In a word, I am but a little dust ; why, then should I be proud ?

(4.) To make no choice of company at recreation, and to restrain his tongue as much as possible.

(5.) Carefully to avoid backbiting, under any pretext whatever.

(6.) To observe silence constantly between recreations, and not to speak in class, in the corridors, or on the stairs, by signs or otherwise, without great necessity.

(7.) To be not only silent, but very attentive during class, conference, and the other exercises that require it.

(8.) To make a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, after every class and conference ; to examine, in presence of our Lord, if he

had fulfilled these resolutions, and to ask Him for humility. He concluded by the following prayer:—

‘My God, I promise, with the help of Thy assistance, to endeavour to be faithful to these resolutions. But Thou knowest my weakness, have pity therefore on me, I beseech Thee, and give me grace not to sin by my tongue. Holy Virgin, pray for me. Thou knowest that I am thy slave; I am indeed unworthy of so great a favour, but my unworthiness will show forth thy goodness and mercy towards me.’

He frequently renewed these resolutions, and, on the 3rd of May, 1815, he added the following:—‘To-day, the Vigil of the Ascension of our Lord, the Vigil of my baptism, I resolve anew, to fulfil all the resolutions which I have already made, and set down as above, to which I add the following, and place them under the protection of the Blessed Virgin, of St John Francis Regis, of St Aloysius, and of my patron, St Marcellin.

‘(1.) Whenever, at my evening examination, I may find myself guilty of backbiting, I will deprive myself of breakfast next day.

‘(2.) Whenever I may be guilty of untruthfulness, or of exaggeration, I will recite the *Miserere* to beg God’s pardon for having committed such faults.

‘My Divine Jesus, I promise, with the help of Thy grace, to be faithful to these two resolutions. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for me.’

His ardent desire to correct his faults and to acquire virtues, joined to a will fully determined to employ the necessary means for doing so, made him advance, with rapid strides, in the way of perfection. He soon became one of the most regular of that numerous band of young levites which then filled the Seminary. He divided his time between prayer and the study of Theology. Even his recreations were not lost time for him. He spent them in pious conversation with his fellow-students, or in good works, such as attending the sick, decorating altars, sweeping the chapel, or in visiting the Blessed Sacrament, when allowed to do so, a favour which he often asked.

Fidelity to God, respect for superiors, obedience, humility, charity, affability, mildness, modesty, piety, continual application to work, and exactness in discharging his duties; such are the virtues of which he constantly gave the example. From this

time forward, he became distinguished for that ardent zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, that spirit of Faith, that detachment from all earthly things, that boundless confidence in God, that love of mortification, and all those virtues which, afterwards, shone so conspicuously in him, and of which the present biography will furnish such rare and touching examples.





CHAPTER III.

EDIFYING CONDUCT OF THE ABBÉ CHAMPAGNAT DURING HIS VACATIONS.

THE Abbé Champagnat's conduct was not less regular at home, during his vacations, than it was within the walls of the Seminary. This is evident from the following rules which he drew up for his own use and observed with the greatest exactness. We quote them in full for the edification of the reader.

'(1.) I will spend my vacations with my parents.

'(2.) I will seldom go from home.

'(3.) I will conform, as much as possible, to the way of living of my parents. I will treat them with respect, meekness, and love. I will endeavour, both by word and example, to gain them to Jesus Christ. I will not say anything that may vex or annoy them.

'(4.) I will rise in the morning generally at five o'clock, but never later than half-past five.

'(5.) I will make at least a quarter-of-an-hour's meditation every day.

'(6.) If possible, I will hear Holy Mass every day, after which I will study my Theology for at least an hour.

'(7.) At a quarter to twelve A.M., just before dinner, I will make my particular examination of conscience, as in the Seminary, and I will always say grace before and after meals.

'(8.) At table, I will never entirely satisfy my appetite, so that I may avoid intemperance and all its evil consequences.

‘(9.) I will construct an oratory, in honour of the Blessed Virgin and of St Aloysius Gonzaga, in which I will kneel before the crucifix and adore, in spirit, the most Blessed Sacrament of the altar. I will perform all my religious exercises with the greatest recollection.

‘(10.) I will fast on Fridays, in honour of the passion and death of our Blessed Lord.

‘(11.) I will instruct the ignorant, whether rich or poor, in what concerns salvation.

‘(12.) I will visit the sick as often as I can.

‘(13.) As regards my Confessions and Communions, I will follow the advice of my confessor.

‘(14.) I will never be alone with persons of the other sex.

‘(15.) During the evening, I will try to devote another hour to the study of Theology.

‘(16.) I will say my evening prayers with my parents, and read, in private, the subject of next day’s meditation.

‘With thy help, O Holy Virgin, my divine Mother, I hope to follow these rules. May they be agreeable to thy divine Son, and may He preserve me during the vacations, and all my life, from sin and whatever may displease Him.’

He drew up these rules at the Diocesan Seminary, for his first vacation, and, strict as they are, in subsequent years, he added to them the following:—

‘(1.) I will rise at five o’clock every morning, and make half-an-hour’s meditation; after which I will say the Little Hours of the Office and assist at Holy Mass.

‘(2.) Every morning, I will devote an hour to the study of the Holy Scriptures, and another hour to the study of Theology.

‘(3.) After dinner, I will take an hour-and-a-half, or at most, two hours’ recreation, during which I will visit any sick persons in the neighbourhood or anyone who needs my advice.

‘(4.) After this recreation, I will devote an hour to going over the treatises of Theology which I have already studied, and another hour to the study of some ascetic work treating of the virtues necessary for a good priest.

‘(5.) I will then take an hour’s recreation, after which I will recite my office, viz., Vespers and Complin, and Matins and Lauds for the following day.

‘(6.) Before supper, I will try to devote half-an-hour to spiritual reading.

‘(7.) On Sundays and festivals, I will assist at two Masses and at Vespers. For my Communions, I will follow, as near as possible, the rule of the Seminary.

‘(8.) On those same days, I will be careful, between the two Masses, to read the Holy Scriptures for an hour; and in the afternoon, after assisting at the services in the church, I will, if possible, teach Catechism to the children. In the course of the evening, I will spend an hour in the study of Theology.

‘(9.) I will make as few formal visits as possible.

‘(10.) I will not play at any games of chance or at any that might give scandal. I will employ, in manual labour, the time set apart for recreation.

‘O Holy Virgin, as I cannot keep these rules without thy assistance, I humbly implore thy powerful intercession with God, and I hope that thou wilt obtain for me the grace to be faithful to them for the greater glory of thy Divine Son. Saint Francis Regis, who hast such power with God, do thou also help me by thy intercession to keep these rules.’

In giving the Abbé Champagnat a vocation to the ecclesiastical state, God inspired him with a great zeal for the salvation of souls, and the instruction of the ignorant. In the Seminaries, as we have already remarked, he took every opportunity of exercising this zeal towards those of his fellow-students over whom he had any influence; but, believing himself especially bound to labour for the salvation of his relatives, he made this his chief concern during the vacations. He earnestly recommended them to God in all his prayers, and constantly gave them good example. Every day, he read to them a portion of some pious book, and gave them good advice. In his daily conversations with them, he aimed at instructing them in the truths of Religion, and by showing them its beauty and advantages, he induced them to love it more and more. He also endeavoured to inspire them with a greater devotion to our Blessed Lady, the Guardian Angels, and the souls in Purgatory. He assisted, every day, at family prayers, to which he added the Rosary on Sundays and festivals.

He often gathered the children of the village into his room, and taught them prayers and Catechism. On Sundays, he

assembled even grown up persons, and gave them short but touching instructions on the mysteries of Religion, on the duties of a Christian, on the manner of hearing Holy Mass, and assisting at the offices of the Church. Several persons, even after a lapse of thirty years, remembered his pious instructions, and, with tears in their eyes, spoke of the good which their souls had derived from them.

The children loved and feared him. His presence in the neighbourhood was sufficient to make them obedient to their parents and attentive to duty. Many years afterwards, one of them said : ‘ He made such an impression on me, that the simple remembrance of him often sufficed to deter me from evil. In the time of temptation, the thought of what the Abbé Champagnat would say to me, restrained me and gave me strength to resist my little passions.’

But it was not the children only that feared him ; his presence made young men and women serious, modest, and reserved in their words and deportment. One day, he was known to be from home, so a number of young people met in a barn to have a dance ; they carefully closed the door so as not to be seen from without. The Abbé returned sooner than was expected ; he heard of what was taking place, and went immediately to the farm house ; and entering the barn, he exclaimed : ‘ Ha ! ha ! nice work indeed for Christians ! Let us see if you know your Catechism as well as you know how to dance.’ In the twinkling of an eye, the whole band disappeared, some by the door, some by the windows, and others hid in the hay. An old servant, who remained to lock up the door, got a sharp reprimand from the Abbé.

It was said of Father Champagnat that he was an austere Christian ; in fact, all his life he had a decided bent towards penance and mortification. Being extremely reserved and modest in his comportment and in his personal appearance, severe towards himself, an enemy of self-indulgence, temperate in eating and drinking, he denied himself everything that could only please the taste and encourage sensuality. Never would he eat or drink between meals, not even a little fruit or a glass of water. One day, passing under a cherry tree, he was tempted to eat some cherries. He took one and put it into his mouth, but, instantly reproaching himself for his want of mortification, he

exclaimed: 'What! shall I be the slave of greediness? Never!' and forthwith he spat out the half chewed cherry, trampled it under his foot, and promised God never again to give way to the demon of gluttony.

You, young Brothers, who are intrusted with the kitchen supplies, are much exposed to this temptation. Should the demon of gluttony tempt you to eat between meals, remember the example of your pious Founder and be his faithful imitators. The spirit of darkness and of sensuality will try to make you believe that it is no harm to taste the fruit that you have in your hands, to take some food or a drink which you seem to require. To yield once is a small matter, but the habit of yielding is certainly not a trifle. This habit may have the most serious consequences for you, and lead you to the gravest faults. How many young Brothers have lost all relish for piety, and even their vocation, by yielding to such temptations. Besides, the act of virtue practised by resisting temptation, by mortifying your taste and sensuality, is surely no trifle, since it preserves you from such great evils, merits fresh graces from God, mortifies nature, curbs the will, and leads to a closer union with God.

The Abbé Champagnat possessed a robust constitution. In childhood he was never ill, but his hard and mortified life, together with his intense application to study, impaired his health and obliged him to leave off his third year's Theology. To recruit his health he spent a few months at home. Being forbidden to study and dreading idleness, he worked in the fields, where he soon recovered his health and became fit to return to the Seminary and finish his course of Theology.

At this time, Napoleon escaped from Elba, returned to France, and proceeded to Paris. Lyons was in a state of commotion. The enemies of the Church took advantage of the disturbed state of the country and tried to banish Religion as they had banished their King, now fleeing before the victorious battalions of the great Emperor. Priests were insulted, threatened, pursued, and obliged to hide or seek safety in flight. The Abbé Champagnat, unaware of this state of things, and far from being faint-hearted, was walking quite unconcernedly through the streets of Lyons, on his way to the Seminary, when a pious layman ran out of his shop and thus addressed him: 'O Sir! How is it that you appear in the streets at such a

time? Are you not aware that one of your fellow-priests has been grossly insulted and nearly drowned in the Saône?' 'Why should I fear?' said the Abbé Champagnat. 'I have not harmed anyone.' 'I know that,' said the gentleman. 'Neither had your fellow-priest; but it is highly imprudent, on your part, to be in the streets at present.' 'I am going to the Seminary,' said the Abbé. 'But report says that the Seminary contains arms; a search has been made and it is now under guard. 'Yes, there are arms in it,' said the Abbé, 'and I have one here,' holding up his breviary. 'This,' he said, 'is the sort of arms they have in the Seminary. They are not likely to cause uneasiness to the Government.' Without appearing in the least afraid, he thanked the kind man for his charitable warning, and proceeded to the Seminary, where he found all quiet, notwithstanding the excitement that prevailed in the city.

About this time, the foundation of the Society of Marists was laid. A few seminarists, guided by the Abbé Colin and the Abbé Champagnat, met frequently to encourage one another to piety and the practice of priestly virtues. The salvation of souls and the best means to that end were the ordinary subjects of their conversations. From their free interchange of thought and sentiments, sprang the idea of founding a Society of priests whose chief object should be to promote the glory of God, the honour of His Blessed Mother, and to labour for the salvation of souls by giving missions and teaching youth. Their great devotion to the Blessed Virgin inspired them to place the new Society under her patronage, and call it the *Society of Mary*. Having settled their plan, and recommended it to God and to their Mother and Patroness, they made their project known to the Rev. M. Cholleton, Professor of Theology and Superior of the Seminary, who afterwards became Vicar-General, and subsequently a member of this Society. The venerable Superior, knowing their piety and virtue, highly approved their design and encouraged them to persevere in their purpose; moreover, he placed himself at their head, and they all went together on a pilgrimage to the Sanctuary of Mary at Fourvières, where they confided their design to her maternal heart, and besought her to bless it if it were calculated to procure the glory of her Divine Son. This heavenly Mother did bless it; the new Society that sprang up under her auspices, has grown and seen its children increase and multiply a hundred fold.

But in the plan of the new Association, no provision had been made to include Teaching Brothers. The Abbé Champagnat alone conceived the idea of adding them, and he alone put that idea into execution. Often did he say to his companions: 'We must have Brothers! We must have Brothers to teach Catechism, to help the Missionaries, and to teach schools.' No one disputed the advisability of having Brothers, but as this did not enter into the plan of the new Society, very little notice was taken of his incessant repetition: 'We must have Brothers!' However, the piety, the zeal, and tact of M. Champagnat, inspired his companions with such confidence in the success of his project, that at last, they said to him: 'Since you have the idea, carry it out.' He willingly accepted the charge, and from that day forward, all his thoughts and desires, all his plans, and all his labours tended to their inclusion in the plan of the new Association.

The Abbé Champagnat was so much taken up with the study of Theology, with his own sanctification, and the best means of contributing to the glory of God, that the years of his Seminary life were passing by almost imperceptibly, while the thought of his own future caused him no concern whatever. He abandoned himself completely to the will of his superiors, whom he considered as the interpreters of God's will in his regard, and he was perfectly indifferent as to the post or occupation they might assign him.

One day, some seminarists were speaking of the places they would like to have, at the same time declaring that they were resolved to employ, if necessary, every means to induce their superiors to send them to the posts and positions they so strongly coveted. 'As for me,' said the Abbé Champagnat, 'I will never do the like, for if I were appointed to the place of my choice, and afterwards met with trials and difficulties, I should be tormented by the thought that I had drawn all these troubles on myself, and that I was not where God wished me to be; whereas, in abandoning myself to Providence, and being guided by obedience, I shall always be content, in the conviction that I am doing God's will, and I can, at all times, say to Him, "It is by Thy will, O Lord, that I am here, and to Thee I look for all the grace and strength I require to do the work which Thou hast commanded me to do."'

A seminarist, desirous of being placed in a parish near his

parents, where he could see them frequently, and be of service to them, spoke of it to the Abbé, who replied, 'A priest ought to be like Melchisedech, without parents; that is, he should not busy himself about them,' he added, 'We were not made priests to assist our families, but to serve the Church, and save souls. If you frequently visit your parents, or if they often come to see you, they will be constantly talking to you of their temporal concerns; these will occupy your mind, weaken your piety, and diminish your zeal for the sublime functions of your sacred ministry. Besides, this intercourse will not fail to make people talk; you will scandalise the faithful, and lose their esteem and confidence. This desire, therefore, is a temptation, which you ought to combat if you wish to be a priest according to God's own heart.'

Such were his dispositions and sentiments in preparing for ordination.

On the 6th of January, 1814, he received the clerical tonsure, the four Minor Orders and the Sub-diaconate, at the hands of His Eminence, Cardinal Fesch, Archbishop of Lyons.

The following year, he was made deacon. At last, came the dawn of the long desired day for which he had prepared with such earnest study, so many prayers, and so many acts of virtue—that day which his humility made him fear, but which his love for Jesus made him desire and hail from afar, as the greatest and most solemn of his life; that great day, in fine, on which it would be given him to offer in sacrifice the Lamb without spot. After eight days' solemn retreat, he was ordained on the 22nd of July, 1816, by Mgr. Dubourg, Bishop of New Orleans, who was deputed, for that purpose, by His Eminence, Cardinal Fesch.

Most of the students, who had joined the Abbé Champagnat to found the Society of Marists, were ordained with him. Before separating to go to the different posts which obedience had assigned to them, they promised to do all in their power to carry out their project, and write often to one another, in order to maintain and strengthen that cordial union formed at the Seminary.

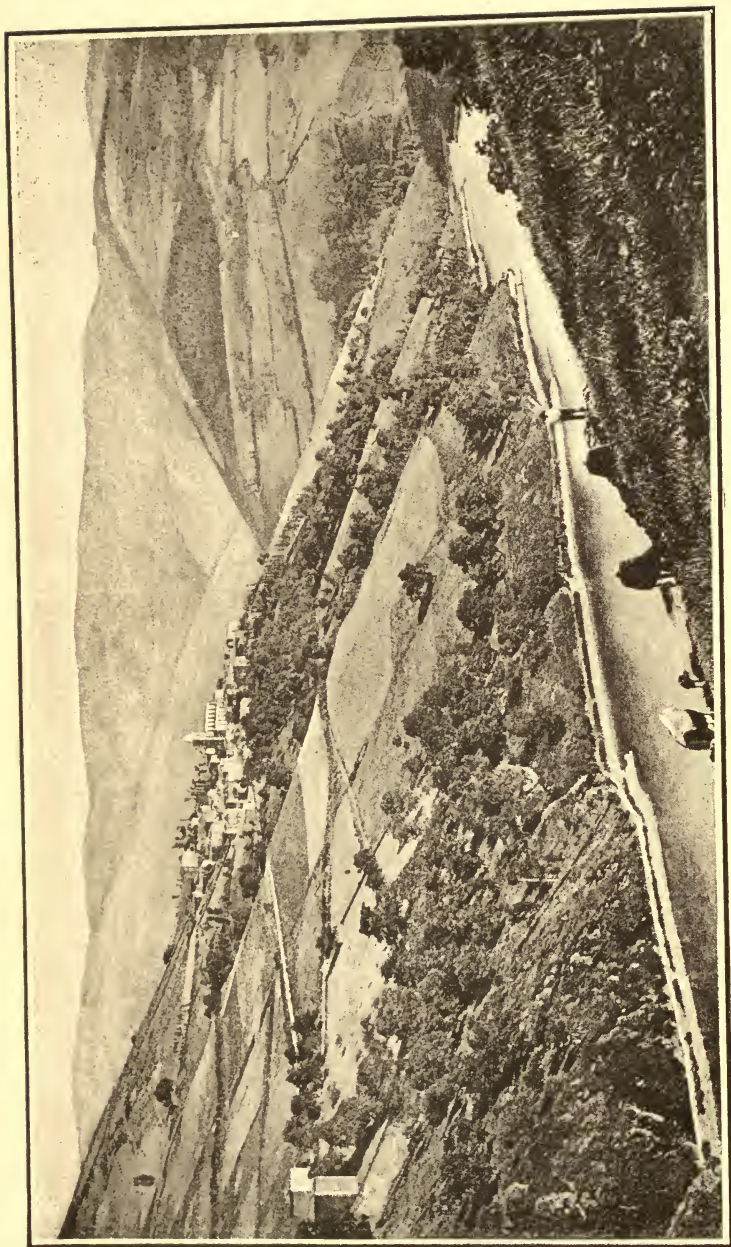
Before leaving Lyons, after his ordination, Father Champagnat went to Notre Dame de Fourvières, to renew his consecration to the Blessed Virgin and to place his ministry under her protection. After saying Holy Mass, he knelt before

the image of Mary, and made the following act of consecration which he had previously written.

‘O Holy Virgin! I raise my suppliant hands to thee as the throne of mercy and the channel of grace, earnestly beseeching thee to take me under thy protection and to intercede for me with thy Adorable Son, so that He may grant me the graces which are necessary to make me a worthy minister of His Altar. It is under thy auspices that I wish to labour for the salvation of souls. I can do nothing, O Mother of Mercy! I feel I can do nothing; but thou canst do all by thy prayers. Holy Virgin, I put all my confidence in thee. I offer thee, give thee, and consecrate to thee, my person, my labours, and all my actions.’







VIEW OF LAVALLA AND SURROUNDING COUNTRY (Loire).—Page 25.



CHAPTER IV.

FATHER CHAMPAGNAT IS APPOINTED CURATE AT LAVALLA.

SHORTLY after his ordination, Father Champagnat was named curate at Lavalla, near St Chamond, (Loire), and went to his parish without delay. On perceiving the church spire of Lavalla, he humbly knelt down and begged Jesus and Mary to bless his labours and all his projects for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

The parish of Lavalla, situated on the slope and in the passes of Mount Pila, is one of the most difficult to serve. Its population of about two thousand, is mostly scattered among the deep valleys or about the rugged heights of the mountain. It is impossible to give an exact idea of the situation and aspect of this parish. From every point of view, there is nothing to be seen but abrupt declivities, rocks and precipices. Several of its hamlets, situated in the ravines and defiles of Pila, are four or five miles distant from the church, and were almost inaccessible at that time, for want of passable roads.

The people of Lavalla were good and blessed with strong faith, but they were uneducated. Their ignorance was chiefly owing to the peculiar character of the place ; the greater part of the inhabitants, scattered about and lost, as it were, in those distant and almost inaccessible wilds, but rarely attended the church. Besides, there was no schoolmaster for the boys. Such was the parish Father Champagnat had to work up ; but, far from

being disheartened at this unpromising state of things, he immediately set to work, placing his whole trust in Providence.

Before entering into the details of his labours at Lavalla, we give here in full, the rule of life which he formed for himself, during his retreat preparatory to ordination, and which he faithfully kept as long as he remained curate in that parish :—

‘O Lord! heaven and earth and all that they contain are Thine. I desire also to become Thine by a voluntary offering of my whole being to Thee, in order that I may do Thy holy will in all things, and that I may labour more efficaciously for my own sanctification and that of the souls which Thou hast entrusted to my care. With this intention I promise faithfully to keep the following resolutions :—

‘(1.) I will make every day, a half-hour’s meditation, and that, if possible, immediately after rising, and before leaving my room.

‘(2.) I will always consider beforehand, and carefully prepare the subject of my meditation.

‘(3.) I will never say Holy Mass, without at least a quarter-of-an-hour’s preparation ; and after saying it, I will devote at least a similar time to thanksgiving.

‘(4.) I will read, once every year, the rubrics of the Missal.

‘(5.) During the course of each day, I will make a visit to the most Holy Sacrament, and to the chapel of the Blessed Virgin.

‘(6.) Every time I shall go out on a sick call, I will make another visit, as above, and one on my return, to thank God for the graces He may have given me, and to beg pardon for the faults I may have committed.

‘(7.) I will not fail to make my examination of conscience every evening.

‘(8.) Whenever, in my examination, I shall find that I have been guilty of speaking ill of my neighbour, I will inflict upon my body three lashes of the discipline, I shall do the same when guilty of vainglorious words.

‘(9.) I will study Theology for an hour every day.

‘(10.) I will not give any instruction without having prepared it.

‘(11.) I will ever remember that I carry Jesus in my heart.

‘(12.) In all my actions, I will ever remember the presence of God, and will carefully avoid all manner of frivolity.

‘(13.) I will try, in a special manner, to acquire the virtue of meekness, and, in order to gain souls to God more easily, I will treat everybody with great kindness.

‘(14.) I will devote a part of the afternoon to visiting the sick, if there be any in the parish.

‘(15.) After Mass, I will hear confessions, if there be any persons desiring to be heard ; the remainder of the forenoon, I will devote to study, unless I be prevented by the duties of my ministry.

‘(16.) In my meals, recreations, and other exercises of the day, I will follow as nearly as possible, the regulations of the Seminary.

‘(17.) I will read over these rules and regulations once every month.

‘(18.) Every time I shall have failed in any point regarding my religious exercises, I will take the discipline in union with the sufferings of our Saviour. I shall do so with the intention of making an act of faith and of love, and I pray the Blessed Virgin to render this poor offering acceptable to the Most Holy Trinity.’

In conformity with these rules, Father Champagnat rose regularly at four o’clock, made his meditation, and went to the church to celebrate Holy Mass. His whole day was devoted to prayer, study, and the duties of his ministry. He rarely went out, and the only visits he made were to the sick or to perform some other act of charity.

As is customary in the diocese of Lyons, Father Champagnat resided with his Parish Priest, by whose experience he was thus able to profit, while being initiated into the various duties of his sacred ministry. To him, he was always most respectful and sincerely attached, and on all occasions, he openly manifested his esteem for him. He never did anything of importance, nor undertook any good work, without his advice and approbation. He always took his part, supported his authority, and did everything in his power to gain for him the esteem and affection of his parishioners.

On arriving at Lavalla, Father Champagnat opened his mind to him as to a father, begging of him to be his adviser, to point out his shortcomings, and to correct his faults. The Parish Priest afterwards gave the following details : ‘ The conduct of M.

Champagnat, for the eight years during which he was my curate, was so regular and edifying, that I never had occasion to point out anything that might be truly called a fault, although, to please him, and at his own request, I watched him very closely, but I had frequently to moderate his ardour for work and his spirit of mortification. Had I permitted him to do so, he would have spent a great part of the night in study and prayer, and would have injured his health by privations and austerities. It was on these two points only that I had to restrain him, and as he was not one of those headstrong devotees, who will only follow the weak light of their own reason, he always received any remonstrances with respect and submission.'

Being convinced that it is necessary to gain the esteem and affection of men in order to lead them to God, Father Champagnat commenced his labours at Lavalla, by studying the character of his people and striving to win their hearts. His frank, open manner, his simple, modest and noble bearing, helped him much to gain their confidence. He had always a pleasant word for everyone he met. He entered into their views and ways of thinking; if he found them well disposed, he would give the conversation an edifying turn, and take the opportunity of offering some good advice, or he would gently reprimand them if circumstances required it. If he met with children, he would stop and speak pleasantly to them, would give them pictures to encourage them to be good, or he would ask them their Catechism. Considerate towards the old, indulgent to the young, charitable to the poor, kind and affable towards everyone, he made himself all things to all men, to cause them to love Religion and to win them to Jesus Christ.

But what gave him the greatest hold on the affections of his flock, was his edifying conduct, his virtue and piety, his regularity and exactness in the discharge of his pastoral duties. He was always ready when his services were required, either in the church or by the bedside of the sick.

Being persuaded that a man's life depends upon the principles he imbibes in youth, he took special care of little children, and earnestly endeavoured to instruct them thoroughly in the truths of Religion, to train them in virtue, and to accustom them to discharge their Christian duties. He undertook to teach the Catechism himself, and performed this work of charity, not

only on every Sunday during the year, but in winter, on most week days also. His method of explaining it was simple and familiar. He required, in the first place, that such children as could read, should commit the words to memory, he himself repeating the words to those who could not read; this done, he put such questions to them as served to make the meaning clear. He was eagerly listened to, for he possessed a wonderful power of riveting the attention of his pupils, and of making himself understood by them. The eyes of his juvenile audience were constantly fixed upon him during his instructions, on account of the interesting comparisons and stories by which he illustrated the subject of the lesson. To excite emulation, he sometimes put the same question to several children, or occasionally varied it, and when all had given their answers, he decided which was best, and bestowed a word of praise on the child who had given it. He was careful not to puzzle the children; on the contrary, he helped them to say what they knew only imperfectly, and if he saw them confused, he encouraged them and assisted them to bring out the answer.

Although kind and affable, he was always grave and serious when teaching, and this not only through respect for the divine truths and the sanctity of the place, but also to keep the children modest and respectful during religious instruction. He acquired such influence over his pupils, that a gentle rebuke or a trifling punishment was enough to quiet the most unruly. He seldom required to have recourse to punishment; his plan was to govern the children by appealing to their nobler sentiments, by emulation, by rewards and praise judiciously bestowed. He gave them little rewards, such as pictures, rosaries, medals, and the like. These things, although of little value in themselves, were highly prized by the children, and were kept as precious treasures by those who had the good fortune to gain them.

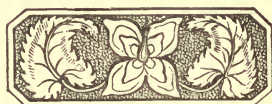
To render catechetical instruction really profitable to children, it must be made agreeable to them. This, Father Champagnat knew admirably well how to do, and, in consequence, his instructions were punctually and diligently attended. Neither rain, nor cold, nor snow, nor any other obstacle could keep the children away. Those even who walked a distance of three or four miles, were never late, but were sometimes seen waiting at the church door before daylight. It happened once that some of them,

deceived by the brightness of the moon, walked three miles, and arrived at the church door before it was opened. Father Champagnat, lamp in hand, came soon afterwards to say Mass, and was deeply touched on seeing the group of children standing there at such an early hour. They entered the church with him, but, when about to commence his Mass, the good Father observing that they knelt near the door, exposed to the draught, came down from the altar and took them to a more comfortable place. After Mass, he gave instructions as usual, and publicly praised the zeal and assiduity of those children, but, at the same time, cautioned them not to set out again at so early an hour, lest some accident should befall them.

He did not confine his attention to the children who were preparing to make their first Communion, but requested parents to send to him all that were able to walk. Fearing, however, that many parents, especially those who lived at a distance, might disregard his wishes, he hit upon the plan of promising a reward to each one who would bring a little child with him, as a means of getting these little innocents to his instructions. The plan succeeded admirably, for, next day, several children, all proud of their success, stood waiting at the church, before Catechism, one holding his little brother, another his little cousin, while another brought a little companion or a neighbour's child whom he had promised to take care of, and to bring home again in safety to its fond mother. The promised rewards were at once given to the little apostles, and in such a way that everyone envied the recipients, and determined to earn one for himself. In fact, so great was their ardour that, in a very short time, every child in the parish was under instruction. Surely the zeal of Father Champagnat must now have been satisfied. However that may have been, God meant to reward him, and did not delay to do so. One day, a boy preparing for his first Communion, presented his little brother to him, claiming the promised reward. Would you know who was the timid little child, whose countenance beamed with innocence and candour? It was no other than Gabriel Rivat, afterwards, Brother François, his immediate successor as Superior-General of the Institute.

Before concluding this chapter, we may add that Father Champagnat's instructions became so celebrated, that they were talked of all over the parish, and that crowds of grown up persons

of both sexes flocked to hear him every Sunday. This caused the able catechist to alter somewhat his method of instruction. He developed the lesson of the day, by means of clear, simple questions, adapted to the intelligence of his audience, and then, he made moral reflections thereon, calculated to touch the hearts of his hearers, and to lead them to the practice of virtue. Whatever the subject of instruction might be, he knew how to adapt it to the age, the position, and wants of his people. Hence it was said of him, 'He has something for everybody, and no one leaves his Catechisms without having learned some useful truth.'





CHAPTER V.

FATHER CHAMPAGNAT REFORMS LAVALLA BY HIS SERMONS AND FAMILIAR INSTRUCTIONS.

FATHER CHAMPAGNAT'S sermons were as effective as his catechetical instructions. Everything about him was a sermon ; his gestures, his pious and modest bearing, his stirring words, his strong manly voice—all was calculated to make an impression upon his hearers and to touch their hearts. He never entered the pulpit without having prepared his subject by study, reflection, and prayer. His first sermons were short and simple, but so impressive, that, on leaving the church, all the people remarked they had never before a curate in that parish who preached so well. The ordinary subjects of his sermons were the great truths : death, judgment, hell, heaven, the enormity of sin, the necessity of salvation, and the misfortune of losing one's soul. He spoke on these subjects with such effect, that he drew tears from his hearers, and made the most hardened sinners tremble. The tears were followed by remorse of conscience, and a sincere desire of returning to God and serving Him better for the future.

In a short time, a wonderful change was visible throughout the parish. Faith revived, piety flourished, the sacraments were frequented, and an almost universal transformation was effected. But it was among the old people, that his instructions produced the most abundant fruit. Most of these desired to make general confessions, and did so with sentiments of the deepest sorrow.

It was in the confessional, that he completed the work of the pulpit. No words can express the kindness of heart which he showed towards his penitents. He spoke to them with such tenderness and force, that they burst into tears. His words had a powerful effect in inspiring them with hatred of sin and love of virtue. 'He is from *Rozet*,' they said, 'and his words are as sweet and agreeable as roses.' It was remarked, that nearly all who owed their conversion to him, persevered in the practice of virtue.

Before Father Champagnat went to Lavalla, several persons had neglected the Sacraments for a long time, and many others approached them only at Easter, while they ordinarily neglected their other religious duties. In his instructions, he spoke so movingly to these people of the infinite treasures left us by Jesus Christ in the Sacraments, that, before long, he had the consolation of seeing the confessionals besieged, and the monthly communions increased fourfold. As the greater number of the faithful went to confession to him, he was obliged, on Saturdays and on the vigils of great festivals, to sit in his confessional till late at night, and on the following mornings, although he went to the church at a very early hour, he always found a crowd of penitents waiting for him. He did not leave the confessional till eleven o'clock, when he sang High Mass, which was always followed by Vespers.

The custom of singing Vespers immediately after High Mass, suggested to him the propriety of having evening devotions in the church, for the people of Lavalla and its neighbourhood. These devotions, approved of by the Parish Priest, consisted of the singing of Complin, evening prayers, and a short reading from some pious book, accompanied by suitable comments.

Father Champagnat put such life into these exercises that, in a short time, the whole village assisted at them. These pious readings, accompanied by simple, varied, and moving exhortations, contributed perhaps more than anything else to infuse into so large a number of the people of Lavalla, that piety and solidity of virtue which made them the glory and edification of the whole parish. In these familiar instructions, he entered into the minutest details of Christian duties, and of the practices of piety best calculated to sanctify the actions of the day and render them meritorious for Heaven. The following will give the reader some idea of his mode of instructing :—

'My dear brethren,' said he, one Sunday, 'this is the season

of hard work. The days are long and the heat is oppressive. You go to your work early in the morning, and you don't come home till evening; you toil all day and are wearied. O! how pleasing in the sight of God and how agreeable to Him would your actions be, and what graces you would draw down upon yourselves and your families, if you knew how to sanctify your labours and your fatigues. And what is necessary to that end? You must offer them to God in the morning, in union with the labours and sufferings of our divine Lord. Before beginning your work, and whenever you think of it during the day, offer it to God, saying: "My God, I wish to do and suffer all this in obedience to Thy holy will, to imitate Jesus Christ, to make expiation for my sins, to merit Thy grace, to gain Heaven, to beg Thy blessings on my children and all that belong to me."

'My dear brethren, if you do this you will be excellent Christians, you will be true children of God. Your labour will be a continual prayer. Every step you take, every action you perform, every drop of sweat you lose, will be rewarded. O! how pleasing to God is the man that acts thus! What treasures of merit for eternity! What glory and recompense will await him in Heaven! Behold here the grand secret of becoming saints, of assuring your salvation, and gaining a bright crown, without doing more than you do every day; for, being careful to offer your actions and labours to God, will not make your work harder; on the contrary, it will be less fatiguing, because you will do it for love of God; then, this good Father will give you help and strength, He will console you, bless you, and give you temporal prosperity. He will pour down peace and happiness into your soul, He will give you the assurance that these days of fatigue will be followed by eternal repose, and will cause this short time of suffering to be succeeded by never ending bliss.'

'My dear brethren,' said he, on another occasion, 'I strongly advise you to take advantage of the many opportunities you have of practising mortification. You are now gathering in your fruit, and you have it almost constantly before your eyes, or in your hands; do not eat any of it, except at meal time. Of course, it is not a sin to eat fruit, but it is an excellent act of mortification to abstain from it, in a spirit of penance and for the love of God. Such acts of self-denial, and many others, which

you have opportunities of practising every day, such as bearing with the defects of your neighbours, and bridling your tongue or your temper, in order to avoid sinning against charity, will, besides repressing your passions and preserving you from sin, draw down many graces upon you, will secure the protection of God, and obtain for you a great reward in Eternity. These little acts of virtue, taken separately, appear only trifles, but their number constitutes a real treasure. If you perform two or three every day, you will have several hundred at the end of a year; and at the end of your life, although you may forget them, God, who keeps an account of them, will show them to you in such numbers that you will not be able to count them. This is a sure means of acquiring much merit in a short time, of sanctifying yourselves in a quiet manner, unobserved by others, and without exposing yourselves to vanity.'

On another occasion, he said to the mothers of families, 'Undoubtedly, you love your children; you would like to see them blessed and favoured by God; you would esteem it the height of happiness to be assured by an angel, that "your child would be one day a saint." Well, now, his being a saint depends on you. He will be a saint, if you really wish him to be one. Yes, if you bring him up properly, if you train him in piety and virtue from his childhood, I promise you, in God's name, he will be a saint. But I hear you say, "It's very difficult to bring up a child in a Christian manner; I should like to educate my children properly, but I don't know how to do it." You are mistaken. It is easy enough for parents to bring up a child well, as you will see.

'Mothers of families, offer to God daily the child that you carry in your arms; consecrate him to the Blessed Virgin. Beg this Holy Mother, that his baptismal innocence may be preserved, and that his soul may be saved. Come, from time to time, to offer him to our Lord in the Holy Sacrament of the Altar. Beg Jesus, who loved little children so much, to bless your child, and to make him increase in wisdom and grace, as he advances in age. As soon as your child begins to speak, make him frequently pronounce the holy names of Jesus and Mary. Teach him little prayers, and accustom him to say them morning and evening. Keep him near yourself, and do not allow him to frequent bad company, or to go with anyone that might scandalise him.

Let the example, which you yourself set him, be a good one. Endeavour to inspire him with a great horror of mortal sin. Impress upon him, that mortal sin is the greatest of evils, and that you would rather see your house in flames, than to see him offend God. Speak often to him of his first Communion, and get him to say a prayer, every day, that God may give him grace to make it well. On Sundays, bring him with you to the church; teach him to follow the Mass, and to assist with piety at the offices of the church. Do all in your power to inspire him with great devotion to the Blessed Virgin; teach him to say some prayers to her every day, and to have recourse to her with perfect confidence in all his wants. Is it hard to do all this? Certainly not! And yet, this is all that is necessary, in order to give your child a Christian education and to assure his salvation. No; a child brought up in this way, will never be lost. No, no; the Blessed Virgin will never permit a soul to be lost, that has been so often consecrated to her; and should this soul go astray, for a time, she will bring it back to the path of salvation. Our Lord will never suffer a child, for whom His blessing has been so frequently implored, to be lost for ever.

‘It is related in the Gospel that this divine Master once took a child, embraced him and blessed him. This child afterwards became, as is commonly supposed, St Martial. That one blessing of Jesus sufficed to assure the child’s salvation, and to make him a great saint. Will you not then believe that, if He blesses your child every day, that child will be saved? Yes, yes, it is certain. A child so frequently offered to Jesus and Mary, shall never perish.’ These considerations made a profound impression on those that heard them, and it was remarked that, the following Sunday, all the fathers of the parish appeared at Mass accompanied by their boys, and the mothers, by their daughters.

At other times, in his familiar instructions or in his sermons, he vigorously attacked the vices, abuses, and disorders that existed in the parish, such as drunkenness, dances, nocturnal gatherings, cursing, blaspheming, and the reading of bad books. When he heard, that a dangerous assembly or a dance would take place, on a certain day, in some village or hamlet of the parish, he would announce, from the pulpit, on the previous Sunday, that a meeting for instruction in Catechism, would be held there, on the same day. These announcements usually sufficed to prevent the

assembly ; for, besides being respected, he was also much feared. On returning, one day, from the church, where he had been hearing confessions until very late in the evening, instead of taking supper, he said to the Brother who was waiting for him : ‘ I am going out.’ ‘ Where are you going so late, Father ?’ asked the Brother. ‘ I am going to see a sick person.’ ‘ But you must take supper first.’ ‘ No,’ said he, ‘ I have not time.’ As he was leaving, the Brother offered to accompany him, which was willingly agreed to by the Father. The sick person was not in danger, but Father Champagnat had other calls to make. On returning from the church, he had learned that dances were to be given in several of the neighbouring villages, as it was then Carnival time. In the first village, he surprised a very numerous gathering. The singing and dancing were in full swing. After waiting a moment at the door, he suddenly opened it, entered, and, without saying a word, stood looking gravely at the assembly. The amusements instantly ceased. All instinctively rose, and stood for a moment in dismay ; then dancers and spectators made their escape, pell-mell, by doors and windows, while a few of the less active stole under the tables. The mistress of the house, thus left alone, begged pardon with clasped hands and tearful eyes, alleging, in excuse, that it was her first offence, and that the like would never again happen in that house. Father Champagnat replied, in his own peculiar way, ‘ Yes, the first time ; *and the first time, you’ve been caught.*’ He then visited some other villages, in one of which he found a dance arranged, and ready to begin, it dispersed like the first. He had great difficulty in getting home to Lavalla, for the night was very dark and the roads were covered with ice. He, fortunately, had a staff with him, with which he groped his way ; but even so, it did not prevent his falling several times. It was past midnight when he got home, and as he wished to say Mass next morning, he warmed himself a little, and went to bed without taking any food.

Another time, having learned in the course of the day, that a dance was to take place, in the evening, in a village at a short distance from the church, he resolved to stop it. After saying night prayers, and announcing, to his little community, the subject of meditation for the next day, he said to a Brother, ‘ I am going out, follow me.’ ‘ I followed him,’ says the Brother who relates the incident, ‘ and although it was always a pleasure

for me to accompany him, this time I was only half-pleased ; the night was very dark, cold, and misty. After walking for some time on a narrow road, along the mountain, I stumbled and fell over a precipice into a hole, out of which I could not find my way. In vain, Father Champagnat suggested to me several means to get out ; I could not succeed. He then scrambled down himself and began to search for me, among the bushes, and it was only after great exertion, that he succeeded in dragging me out, and getting me on the road again. When we came near the village, some persons saw us, and either they, or the barking of some dogs gave the alarm, for the company, which had assembled for the dance, instantly dispersed. Father Champagnat turned back, saying : " Let us rejoice, Brother, at having prevented them from offending God. St John Francis Regis said that he would be happy and consider himself well rewarded for all his trials, labours, and sufferings, if he were sure of having prevented a single mortal sin. How then dare we complain of getting a little wetting, or stumbling against stones, or of falling into a ditch and scratching our hands ? Rather, let us thank God for permitting us to suffer something for His sake, and for giving us an opportunity of being useful to our neighbours."

He inveighed so strongly, in the pulpit, against these abuses, and exerted himself so strenuously with young and old, with children and with their parents, that he succeeded in putting a complete stop to these nocturnal meetings.

Drunkenness caused him even more trouble than the dances by night, but, by his prayers, his exhortations, and his threats of God's vengeance, he succeeded in eradicating this vice also. The dram-shops, which, before he came to Lavalla, were crowded every night, became deserted, and the people were ashamed to be seen in them, even during the day, or on business. When the exhortations from the pulpit did not put an end to the abuse, or correct the vice, he visited the guilty parties in their own homes, and begged, exhorted, and threatened, until they promised to change their lives.

He also undertook to purge the parish of all bad books that had found their way into it, and in this, as in the other cases, he was completely successful. Bad books were destroyed and replaced by works treating of Religion and piety. Under his direction, a library was established to provide good books for

those who had a taste for reading. He himself undertook to distribute these books to the young people, so that he might have frequent opportunities of giving them good advice, of directing them in their reading, and encouraging them to piety and the practice of virtue. This library entailed considerable expense upon him, but when there was question of doing good or of preventing evil, he did not reckon the cost, or scruple to spend whatever he had. In visiting about the parish, he adroitly induced the people to show him their books, and if he found any bad or suspicious works, he carried them off. Once, he collected so many bad books, that they kept him in fuel for several days. He was not content with lending good books, he bestowed a large number upon heads of families, recommending them to have these books read in the family circle. Occasionally, he would himself give readings to a family, from some book, and accompany the reading with suitable reflections.

But visiting the sick and administering the Sacraments to them, was perhaps the work which caused him most fatigue, and the one in which his zeal shone most brightly. Day and night, he was ready to go when called. He did not always wait till sent for; but as soon as he heard that anyone was ill, he went to visit him. Inclemency of weather, wind, rain, snow—nothing could stop him; he faced even the greatest dangers, in order to impart the aids of Religion to dying persons.

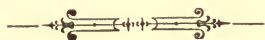
In the course of the winter of 1820, he heard that a poor woman was dying. The weather was such, that no person could venture out of doors. It was impossible to see to a distance of five yards, owing to the snow which, being drifted by a violent wind, filled the ditches so as to leave no trace whatever of the roads. Father Champagnat, quite regardless of the danger, set out at once, to hear the woman's confession. He had about six miles to go, and he arrived just in time to give her the Sacraments. Fortunate woman! she died a few minutes afterwards. 'Never,' says the Brother who relates the incident, 'did I see Father Champagnat so happy and gay as he was on that day. He did not cease to thank God, that he had arrived in time to impart the blessings of Religion to that poor woman; he was no less grateful to God for having preserved him from the great danger to which he was exposed; and he said with a smile, 'If God had not been with us, we should never have got out of our difficulties.'

On another occasion, the weather was so bad, that the parish clerk, although a strong, healthy man, hesitated to accompany him, when bearing the Holy Viaticum to a sick person. 'Courage, my friend,' said the Father to him, 'God will help us.' They certainly stood in need of God's help, as the poor clerk, to his grief, soon experienced. The ground was covered with snow to a depth of several feet, and, as in the preceding case, the wind had scattered it in such a way as to make it impossible to distinguish between roads and fields; the clerk, though he knew the way perfectly, mistook it, tumbled into a pond, and would certainly have been unable to extricate himself, had not the good Father pulled him out. When he got out, he begged the Father not to tell anyone, and, on reaching home, went to bed immediately, that he might recover from the chilling effects of his bath, and prevent illness. Father Champagnat, who feared that this accident might have serious consequences for the good man, went to see him shortly afterwards, and found him in bed. 'What is the matter with you?' said he. 'It is only a few hours since I saw you in good health.' 'No use in trying to conceal it,' said the clerk, 'thinking that you could not keep it a secret, I told all about it; but pray that my bath may not make me ill. You promised that God would protect me and, nevertheless, He did not prevent me getting up to my neck in the water.' 'I repeat what I promised,' said the Father, 'God will take care of you. Don't fear. He has brought you through the cold; He will now bring you through the heat, and that will cure all.'

Whenever Father Champagnat had administered the last Sacraments to anyone, he usually addressed a few touching words to those present, on the necessity of preparing for death, on the nothingness of the things of this world, or on some other subject which the time or the circumstance might suggest. Hardened sinners were sometimes so much touched, by these moving exhortations, that they changed their lives and became good Christians. Besides visiting the sick to hear their confessions, he went frequently to see them and prepare them for a happy death. As he was extremely kind and always spoke with great fervour of God and holy things, it was a great consolation for the sick to see and hear him. One morning, he left home at five o'clock, to hear the confessions of the aged and infirm who were unable to come to church for their Easter duties. After hearing these

confessions, he spent the remainder of the day, looking after those who had not approached the Sacraments. If they happened to be from home, he went to the fields and woods to find them. 'He exhorted them so earnestly to comply with their religious duties,' says the Brother who accompanied him, 'that not one resisted his entreaties; all promised, and kept their promises.' He also frequently visited people who were at enmity, that he might reconcile them and settle their disputes. His conciliatory spirit, his joyful character, his simple and agreeable manner, captivated all hearts. They willingly accepted him as arbiter in their differences; both good and bad revered him and respectfully received his counsels and even his reproofs.'

On his return home, after such tiresome rounds, although generally in a state of perspiration, he began at once to work without resting or taking the least refreshment. He would neither eat nor drink in the houses he visited, except when compelled by necessity. A few words, which once escaped him, give a correct idea of his labours, fatigues and sufferings, during the eight years which he passed as curate in the parish of Lavalla. Long afterwards, crossing Mount Pila with one of his intimate friends, he suddenly stopped, and, casting a glance across the country, he exclaimed, 'Ah! many a step I have taken on these mountains, many a shirt I have soaked with sweat along these roads; I believe that, if all the sweat I lost on those hills were collected in that valley, there would be enough to bathe in.' Then he added, 'But if I have lost much sweat, I have the comfort of knowing that I never arrived too late to administer the rites of the Church to any sick person. Thanks be to God! this is one of my greatest consolations to-day.'





CHAPTER VI.

FATHER CHAMPAGNAT FOUNDS THE INSTITUTE OF THE LITTLE BROTHERS OF MARY.

THE labours of the Sacred Ministry and his rich harvest of souls, did not make Father Champagnat lose sight of his plan of founding an Institute of Brothers. He kept this project constantly before his mind, and earnestly recommended it to God in all his prayers, and in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. At the same time, he was quite prepared to abandon it altogether, if it were not according to the will of God, and likely to promote His glory and the salvation of souls. On the very day of his arrival at Lavalla, he cast his eyes upon a youth whom he wished to make the first member of the new society. This young man came, one night, to accompany Father Champagnat on a sick call. The good Father availed himself of the opportunity to speak to him of God, of the vanity of the world and all earthly things, and to encourage him to practise virtue ; he also sounded his dispositions regarding the state of life which he would wish to follow. He was so satisfied with the young man's answers and good dispositions, that he went, next day, to see him in his own house, and gave him a book called the *Christian's Manual*. Jean-Marie Granjon, as he was called, hesitated to accept the book, alleging that he could neither read nor write. 'Take it all the same,' said the Father ; 'you can use it in learning to read ; and, if you wish, I will give you lessons myself.'

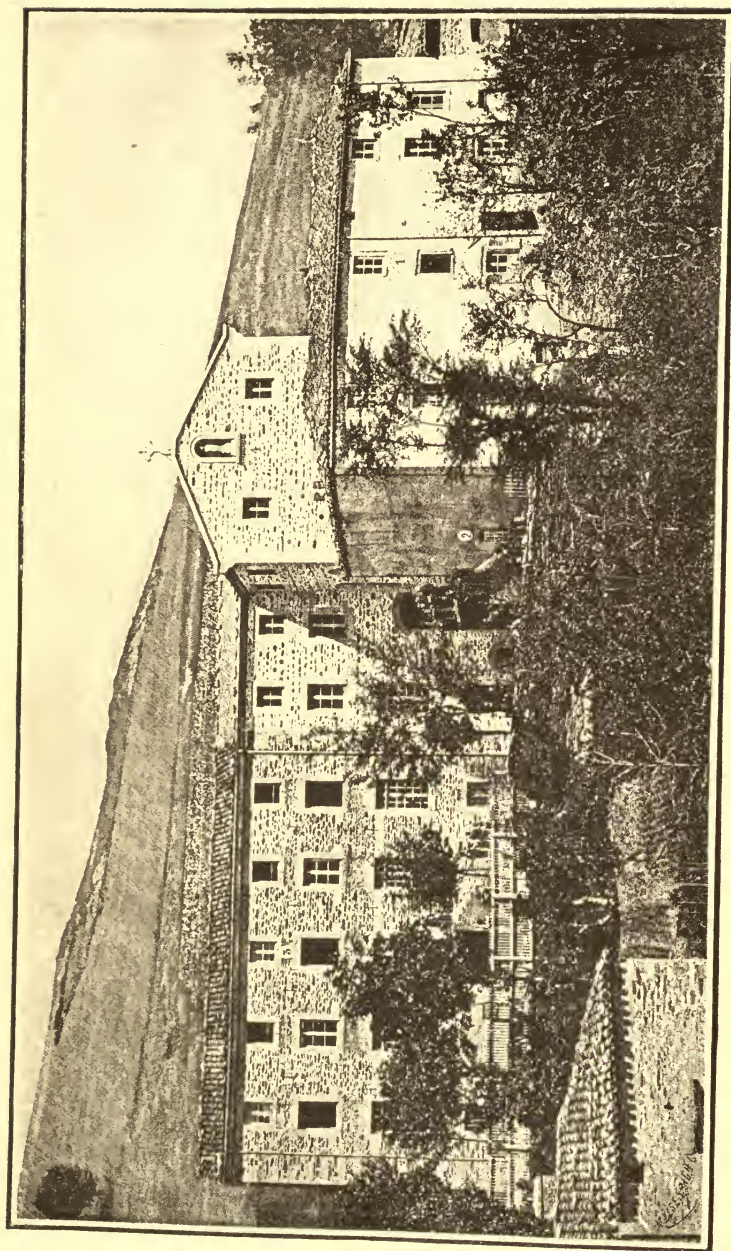
Shortly afterwards, Jean-Marie went to live near the pres-

bytery, and, under the guidance of Father Champagnat, not only learned to read and write, but became a model of piety and virtue for the whole parish.

About this time, an event took place which appeared to be specially ordered by Providence, for it finally determined Father Champagnat to proceed, at once, with the foundation of the Institute of Brothers. One day, he had to hear the confession of a boy, in one of the hamlets of the parish, and, having questioned him to ascertain whether he was sufficiently instructed or not in the truths of Religion to receive the Sacraments, he found, to his great surprise, that the child was completely ignorant of the principal mysteries, and did not even know of the existence of God. Grieved to find such profound ignorance in a boy of twelve years of age, and terrified at the prospect of his dying in this state, he sat down beside him, and began to teach him the mysteries and truths necessary for salvation. He spent two hours in this manner, preparing him for confession, and it was only after much trouble, that he succeeded in teaching him what was necessary ; for, the boy was so ill that he hardly understood what was said to him. After hearing his confession, and helping him to make several acts of contrition and the love of God, in order to prepare him to die well, he went to attend another sick person in the neighbourhood ; on hearing that the boy had died almost immediately after he left him, Father Champagnat felt intense joy at the thought of having been able to prepare his soul to appear before God ; but, at the same time, he was so terrified at the boy's narrow escape from being lost, that he repeatedly cried out, ' Oh, how many children are daily exposed to the same danger, because there is no one to instruct them in the truths of Religion.' Then, he was so forcibly struck with the necessity for founding a Society to provide for the Christian instruction of children, in order to remedy so great an evil, that he went straightway to Jean-Marie Granjon, and communicated to him all his projects. After explaining all the good that could be done by the Society which he proposed to found, he asked him, if he would like to join it and devote himself to the Christian education of children. The young man who had listened all the while with great attention, said, ' I am at your service ; do with me as you will. I shall consider myself very happy indeed, to devote my strength, my health, and even my life, to the Christian

instruction of little children, if you think me fit for such a work.' Delighted and edified at this answer, Father Champagnat said to him: 'Courage! God will bless you, and the Blessed Virgin will bring you companions.'

Jean-Baptiste Audras, a boy of angelic innocence, one day, found a copy of *Think well on't*, and read it with great attention. The reading of this book made a deep impression upon his mind, and inspired him with a determination to save his soul at all costs. He cast himself on his knees, and begged that God would make known to him what he should do to serve Him perfectly. On rising up, he felt resolved to quit the world and enter the Congregation of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. After considering the matter for some time, he spoke of it to his parents, who looked upon it as a boyish idea and paid no attention to it. With the lapse of a few months, he found his resolution still stronger, and very early, one Sunday morning, he started for St Chamond, heard Mass in St Peter's church, then went to the Brothers' House and asked to see the Brother Director, to whom he explained his intention of becoming a Religious, and begged to be admitted into the Order. The Brother Director encouraged him in his pious resolve, but, at the same time, told him, that he was too young to be received into the Novitiate. He advised him to pray to God and to consult his confessor, on the important affair of his vocation. Jean-Baptiste was not fully satisfied with this answer, but his ready submission merited for him what he so earnestly desired. In compliance with the Brother Director's advice, he went, on the following Saturday, to consult Father Champagnat, opened his mind to him, and told him what steps he had taken, unknown to his parents, with a view to join the Christian Brothers, and the answer he received. Having listened to the boy and sounded the motives of his vocation, Father Champagnat believed that he had found the second stone of the edifice he was going to build, and commended his pious resolution, at the same time, advising him to pray fervently for light and grace to know the designs of God upon him. Perceiving that the young Audras listened attentively to his words, he paused for a moment, to ask God what he should advise the young man to do; that instant, he felt, as it were, an interior voice saying to him, 'I have prepared this boy and brought him to you to be the foundation of your Society.' Then, without



LAVALLA (Loire).—*Page 45.*

1. Cradle of the Institute, 1817.
2. F. Champagnat's Window.
3. Boarding School, built in 1867.
4. Chapel, built in 1885.

betraying the deep impression which this unknown voice or inspiration had made upon him, he turned to the young man and proposed to him to go and live with Granjon. As an inducement, the good Father promised to give him lessons and to assist him in his endeavours to become a Religious.

Jean-Baptiste mentioned the matter to his parents, who placed no obstacles in the way, for they looked upon Father Champagnat's proposals only as a mark of kindness to their son, and a means of having him educated at a small cost. Shortly after this, Father Champagnat disclosed all his projects to his new disciple, and asked him if he would like to join the new Society. The young postulant, one of whose best qualities was entire submission to his Director, answered :—' Since I have had the happiness of being under your guidance, I have asked but one virtue of Almighty God, viz., obedience and grace to renounce my own will, so that you may do with me what you think fit, provided I be a Religious.' Noble virtue! Happy dispositions which gained for him the heart and affection of his spiritual Father, drew down upon him the blessing of God, and, as we shall see further on, secured his final perseverance.

Father Champagnat, finding his two disciples so well disposed, thought the time had come to begin the foundation. Close to the presbytery, was a small house for sale, this, along with a small garden and a piece of ground, he purchased for 1600 francs, (sixty-four pounds) a sum which the Father had to borrow as he had no money. He cleaned and repaired this house, and made, with his own hands, two wooden bedsteads and a small dining-table. When the house was ready and provided with the most indispensable articles of furniture, he brought his two disciples into it.

Such was the cradle of the Institute of the Little Brothers of Mary. The stamp of poverty was everywhere visible in this humble habitation ; but the stable of Bethlehem and the house at Nazareth were also poor, and it was fitting that the Children of Mary should resemble their Mother, and bear, from their very birth in Religion, the seal of her poverty and humility.

It was on the 2nd of January, 1817, that the two novices took possession of the house, entered on Community life, and laid the foundation of the Institute of the Little Brothers of Mary.

Their time was spent in prayer, manual labour, and study. In the beginning, the exercises of piety were few and short.

They consisted of Morning Prayer, assisting at Holy Mass, a few short spiritual readings from the *Christian's Manual*, or some other pious book, the Rosary, visits to the Blessed Sacrament, and Evening Prayer. They earned a subsistence by making nails, an occupation in which the good Father often took part. He loved these young men as his children, visited them often, worked with them, encouraged them, taught them reading and writing, directed them, and communicated to them all his projects for advancing the glory of God and securing the salvation of souls. The two novices faithfully corresponded with the views and intentions of the Father. They passed the winter alone in peace and fervour and in the practice of virtue. In the following spring, God sent them a new companion, Antoine Couturier, a good and pious but uneducated young man, who applied for admission and was received into the new Community. This young man afterwards became the excellent and virtuous Brother Anthony. He died at Ampuis, on the 6th of March, 1850, after having employed his health and strength in the teaching of children. He was a model of regularity, humility, of obedience and patience, and attachment to his holy vocation.

The parents of Jean-Baptiste Audras, unaware of the intentions of Father Champagnat and of the inclinations of their son, desired him to return home ; but the pious novice, firmly attached to his vocation, could not think of doing so ; on the contrary, he besought them earnestly to allow him to remain in the state he had chosen and in which he felt so happy. They paid no heed to his entreaties, and, to put an end to them, they sent an elder brother of his, to order him to return home. His brother, having expressed to him the will of his parents, the pious novice was very much troubled ; but, after a moment's reflection, he ran, with tears in his eyes, to Father Champagnat, sobbing out, 'My brother is come to take me home, but I won't go. Will you please urge my parents to leave me alone?' Father Champagnat calmed the fears of the young Audras, and went to speak to his brother who was waiting outside. Smiling, he addressed him in a decided tone of voice, 'You have come to take your brother home?' 'Yes, Father, my parents have sent me for him.' 'Instead of taking your brother home, you should ask leave of them to come here yourself.' 'What would you do with me, Father?' 'I would make a Brother,

a good Religious of you.' 'O, Father, I am too stupid to be a Religious; I am fit for nothing but digging in the fields.' 'Come, come, don't speak ill of yourself like that, it is a good thing to be able to dig. Come here and join us, I am sure, I can make something of you.' 'But, Father, I am too bad a boy to be a Religious.' 'No, no, I know you better, you are not a bad boy, but a fine fellow, and I promise you that, if you come, you will never regret it, for I am sure, you will succeed.' 'You almost make me feel as if I would like to come. But people will laugh at me, if they hear that I am going to become a Brother.' 'Let them laugh as much as they like, God will bless you; you will be happy; you will save your soul, and that's all that is wanted. So you will go now, and tell your parents that you want to join your brother here. I expect you back next week.' The young man returned to his parents and had no great difficulty in obtaining permission, both for himself and his brother, to follow their vocation. A few days afterwards, he entered the Novitiate, and, under the name of Brother Laurence, he became the fourth Brother of the Institute. In the course of this biography, we shall have several occasions to speak of him, of admiring his simplicity, and profound humility, his piety and his zeal for the Christian instruction of children. His brother, Jean-Baptiste, having a particular devotion to Saint Aloysius Gonzaga, took the name of Brother Louis, and Granjon, that of Jean-Marie. About the same time, Bartholomew Bodard, a youth of fifteen or sixteen, was received into the Novitiate, and, under the name of Brother Bartholomew, became an excellent Religious.

Father Champagnat did not lose sight of little Gabriel Rivat, already referred to in the fourth chapter. The piety and intelligence of this child were so remarkable, that he paid particular attention to him. Gabriel had just made his first Communion, and the good Father, wishing to attach him to the newly founded Institute, arranged with the boy's parents to let him live with the Brothers, so that his education might be better attended to, and promised to teach him Latin himself. The boy went to the Novitiate, got some lessons in Latin, and, a short time after, by the advice of Father Champagnat, joined the Institute, under the name of Brother François. His mother was delighted to see her child choose this vocation, and she said to Father Champagnat, on several occasions: 'My child belongs to the Blessed Virgin,

to whom I have given and consecrated him over and over again. I give him up to you now ; do with him what you please.' The child, too young to judge of his own vocation, but perfectly docile and obedient, allowed himself to be entirely guided by the advice of his prudent Director, whom he justly considered as the interpreter of God's will in his regard. When he was old enough to judge for himself in this matter, it never occurred to him to subject his vocation to a fresh test. Once, the Curé of Taran-taise, after trying to persuade him to study for the priesthood, seeing his proposal listened to with such marked indifference, said to him : ' Why would you not like to study for the priesthood like your brother ? ' ' Because,' said Brother François, ' I don't do my own will, but the will of God manifested to me by my superior.' The good Curé was struck with surprise at this answer, and all the following night, he could not banish from his mind these words : ' I don't do my own will, but the will of God.' Next morning, the Curé said to Brother Louis, ' Your little Brother François prevented me from sleeping last night. His sentiments are really sublime. If he perseveres in them, and I can scarcely doubt he will, God will bless him and make him an instrument for His glory.'

Brother François' conduct, on this occasion, was truly admirable, and all those who, like him, have had the happiness of being called to religion when young, cannot do better than imitate him. When, later on in life, the passions begin to make themselves felt, and the spirit of darkness stirs up, in their minds, doubts regarding their vocation, they ought to remember that in giving a religious vocation to a child incapable of reflection, it is not to his intelligence, or to his reason, but to his heart, that God speaks. He renders the heart docile to the counsels of a good father, a pious mother, or a true friend. He gives him a relish for piety, an attraction for the religious life, and the grace to walk in the way pointed out to him. This early vocation is a signal mercy, because it preserves a child from a multitude of sins to which youth is liable. It is all the more secure, since self-love and human motives have no share in it. But, later on, when the judgment is formed, one of the most dangerous snares of the devil consists in suggesting to a young man, that he entered Religion without knowing what he was doing, or without understanding the obligations he was con-

tracting, and consequently, without vocation. A false mode of reasoning which is suggested only by the devil and man's passions! When our Lord called His Apostles, He did not say, *examine well and then follow me*, but simply, *follow me*. The grace which touches the heart and inclines it to good, is as excellent as that which enlightens the mind, so that our vocation comes equally from God, whether He moves our hearts by pious sentiments, or by attraction, or enlightens our minds by His light, by reflection, or by judgment.

Seeing the number of his disciples increase, Father Champagnat judged it expedient to give them an organization more conformable to community life. As he could not always be with the Brothers himself, he saw the necessity of appointing them a Director who should be always with them, to guide them, to cause the Rule to be observed, and to admonish them on account of their faults. But to render obedience and submission more easy for them, he permitted them to choose their own superior, whom they elected by ballot. Father Champagnat publicly counted the votes, and proclaimed Brother Jean-Marie Director of the community. He was the oldest of the community and obtained a majority of the votes.

To make the Congregation better known by the outward appearance of its members, and thus to favour the procuring of more numerous vocations, Father Champagnat, after suitable trials, chose for them a simple and modest costume which distinguished them from seculars. This costume consisted of a sort of blue coat which reached a little below the knee, black trousers, a mantle, and a round hat. Blue was the colour chosen that it might remind the Brothers, that they were the children of Mary, and that, by wearing her habit and her colour, they might labour unceasingly to render their lives conformable to hers, by the imitation of her virtues.

The Rule of the Community was then modified and perfected, and the principal practices of the religious life were introduced. They rose at five o'clock, said morning prayers in Community, made half-an-hour's meditation, heard Holy Mass, said the Little Hours of the Office of the Blessed Virgin, then studied till seven o'clock, when they took breakfast, after which each one had some manual work till dinner-time. After dinner, they made a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, then took recreation

together. During the recreation, the Brothers were to converse on edifying subjects, in keeping with their profession. The afternoon was also employed in manual labour. At six o'clock in the evening, the Community assembled to say Vespers, Complin, Matins, and Lauds of the Office of the Blessed Virgin, and also the Rosary, followed by Spiritual Reading. After these exercises, they took supper, which was followed by recreation as after dinner. After recreation, they said night prayers, read the subject of meditation for next day, and went to bed at nine o'clock. Every Friday, after meditation, the Brothers held the Chapter of Faults. The Brother Director began, and the others followed in turn, according to seniority.

To encourage recollection and to foster piety among the Brothers, a little room was fitted up as an oratory. Father Champagnat arranged and painted it himself, and erected an altar in it; but as the Community was very poor, and could not afford to buy the necessary furniture, the most indispensable things were borrowed from the parish church. It was before this altar, and at the feet of Mary, that the Brothers performed their religious exercises, made their spiritual reading, held the Chapter of Faults, received the habit of the Institute, and, on bended knees, signed their first engagements.

At first, it was the Brother Director who recited all the prayers and gave the spiritual reading; but, afterwards, each Brother took his turn, according to seniority. In the same way, each Brother took his week to read in the refectory, and do the cooking, which was then a very simple operation, as their food consisted only of a little soup, milk, and vegetables; their only drink was water; thus the cook was able to attend almost all the Community exercises. Everything in the Brothers' little dwelling, was in keeping with their poor diet. Their beds consisted of a palliasse and a bolster-case filled with dried leaves or straw, two coarse linen sheets, and one or two blankets.

The Community, thus organised, assumed a new form. The silence, recollection, piety, modesty, and charity that reigned among the Brothers, reminded one of the lives of the early Christians. The Brother Director proved himself worthy of the confidence reposed in him, and acquitted himself of his functions with prudence, zeal, kindness, and firmness. He was constantly at the head of his Community, and was, everywhere, a model of

piety, regularity, and all the religious virtues. Every week, he gave the Brothers an exhortation upon the duties of their holy state, upon the way to overcome their predominant passion, on the correction of faults, or upon the practice of virtue. These instructions were carefully prepared, simple and practical, and were delivered with great force and animation. The Brothers listened to their Director with great attention, and applied themselves earnestly to the practice of virtue and the correction of their faults. The Director was kind to the Brothers, but did not flatter them. When they neglected their duty, he knew how to correct them, and imposed a penance proportionate to the gravity of their fault. Each Brother chose another to admonish him of his faults. They performed this act of charity and humility with much simplicity and frankness. Brother Jean-Marie chose one of the youngest for his monitor, and he besought him, in terms which proved his profound humility, to admonish him every time he failed in his duty. But finding this young Brother rather dilatory in the performance of this office, he asked permission from him to choose another monitor in his stead.

Father Champagnat often visited his children and spent all his leisure time with them. He heard a reading class every day, and profited by every occasion, to lead them to the love of God, the avoidance of sin, and the practice of virtue. On one occasion, he went to visit the Brothers, during the recreation, and perceiving that they spoke rather loud, he said to them: 'My young friends, your recreations are too noisy; they somewhat resemble the amusements of the world. If you wish to be Religious, you must take your recreations, and act, in all things, like Religious. The Little Brothers of Mary should endeavour to imitate their Mother in all her actions; the Blessed Virgin was always modest and recollected, even during the moments of relaxation that nature required.' This paternal correction had its full effect. The Brothers, who had just left the world, were not conscious of the fault which the Father pointed out to them, and received his admonition with humility and gratitude, they attended so well to it, that it never had to be repeated. The Brothers showed an excellent spirit, and kept all the regular observances through love of God and a desire to advance in virtue. One point, however, proved a serious

difficulty to them, namely, the rising in the morning, at the appointed hour. As they were poor and could not afford to buy an alarm, they sometimes rose either before or after the time. To remedy this inconvenience, Father Champagnat had a bell put up, on the front of the house, and by means of a wire stretched from it to his own room, in the Presbytery, he rang it himself, every morning, precisely at five o'clock.





CHAPTER VII.

THE BROTHERS TAKE CHARGE OF THE PARISH SCHOOL OF LAVALLA—
FATHER CHAMPAGNAT GOES TO LIVE WITH THEM.

THE parish of Lavalla had no schoolmaster, and Father Champagnat longed for the time when his Brothers would be able to conduct the school; but they were not yet sufficiently trained for such an undertaking, so he engaged a secular master for the purpose. This teacher had lived with the Christian Brothers, and was well instructed; but, what was still more to the purpose, in Father Champagnat's views, he thoroughly understood the simultaneous method used in the Institute of the Venerable de la Salle, a method which Father Champagnat wished to adopt for his Congregation. The Brothers assisted in the class; they saw how he conducted the school, and learned his method. Out of school hours, he gave them lessons in the different subjects connected with school work. They were soon in a position to conduct the school themselves, and they made the proposal to Father Champagnat; but he would not consent, for he wished them to make a more humble beginning. 'My friends,' said he, 'it may be somewhat rash on your part to believe yourselves fit to take charge of the school of Lavalla; besides, we must remember that the spirit of our Congregation must be a spirit of humility, therefore, we ought to begin with something more lowly; now, since you desire to devote yourselves to the Christian instruction of youth, which is indeed the object of your vocation, I wish you to consecrate the first fruits of your

zeal to the most ignorant and most neglected children. I therefore propose that you go and teach classes in the hamlets of the parish.' This proposal was accepted, not only with respect and submission, but with joy. The hamlets of Luzernaud, Chomiol, and a few others were selected. The Brothers went to these places in the morning and returned home in the evening. These first efforts were blessed by God, and produced the most happy results. The good country people expressed to Father Champagnat, how much they were edified by the Christian simplicity, the zeal, and devotedness of the Brothers.

A year had scarcely elapsed when the teacher's irregular conduct obliged Father Champagnat to dismiss him, and to confide the school to Brother Jean-Marie, Director of the House. By wise and prudent firmness, he was able to maintain the order and discipline already established, and the school suffered nothing by the change. Brother Jean-Marie's reputation for piety and virtue contributed very much to establish his authority over the children, whose parents were much pleased to see him take charge of the school. Hitherto, the people of Lavalla knew very little about the new Congregation, they scarcely knew how the Brothers lived, or what they intended to do; but when they saw the zeal and devotedness with which the Brothers instructed their children, and witnessed their success, they were loud in their praises. The number of scholars increased considerably. The indigent children were taught gratuitously, and only a small charge was made for the others.

Father Champagnat, who was always the soul of the House, who directed the Brothers and induced the parents to send their children to be instructed, now resolved to put the school on a more extensive footing. The room being too small for so many pupils, he fitted up another apartment which enabled him to classify the children according to their capacities, and thus to facilitate their progress. The want of accommodation in the Brothers' own house, obliged many parents to place their children in lodgings in private houses, where they could not be properly looked after. To remedy this state of things, he so enlarged the school premises that the Brothers were able to lodge all those who had been placed in private houses, besides several indigent children who were received and provided for, though the Brothers were entirely destitute of funds.

Father Champagnat, who had unlimited confidence in God, took charge of some orphan children, clothed them, fed them, and had them instructed. When they grew up, he placed them with respectable families, and continued to watch over, and guide them as a father. During the first year, he had twelve of these poor children, whom he supplied with everything necessary. As some people blamed him for what they considered overtaxing the resources of his house, he replied : ' It is a long time since I first heard, that alms-giving does not impoverish a man, and that hearing Mass does not hinder his business ; we are now going to try the experiment.' Then he added, in a tone of deep conviction, ' God, who sends us these children, and gives us the will to receive them, will also send wherewith to feed them.'

Although Father Champagnat devoted all his spare time to the direction and formation of his followers, he found this to be insufficient ; for, as they were still only novices in the religious life and in the art of teaching, they stood in constant need of advice, so he, therefore, resolved to go and live with them. He mentioned the matter to the Parish Priest, who left nothing undone to dissuade him from the project. ' What will you do,' said he, ' among those young men, good and pious though they be, but rude and poor ; not one of them knows how to attend to you or prepare your meals ?' These reasons, plausible as they were, made no impression on Father Champagnat. He knew that in community one must put up with poverty, privations, and all the sacrifices of the religious life, but this of itself increased his desire to be with the Brothers. He knew well, that the best means to attach them to their vocation, to inspire them with a love for the religious life and for all the virtues of their holy state, was to put himself at their head, to cast in his lot with theirs, and to be, as it were, one of themselves. Besides, he loved the Brothers as his children, and his paternal heart felt that he should be with them, live with them, share their poverty, take part in their work of instructing children, and submit, like them, to all the observances of the religious life. From the beginning, he devoted himself entirely to the work of the Brothers, for which he relinquished every comfort, and was ready, if necessary, to sacrifice his very life, and it required all the good Father's devotedness to enable him to succeed in the undertaking.

Having obtained permission to leave the presbytery, he

definitely fixed his abode with the Brothers. He carried his own furniture over to his new dwelling, and, to prevent people from talking, he removed during the night. He occupied a small low room, which, however, was the best in the house. His food was the same as the Brothers', though he ate alone. It was a great consolation for him to be in the midst of his adopted children, to live with them, and be able to devote all his time to their education and religious training. Like the Good Shepherd, he was always with his little flock. He worked with them, took his recreations with them; he often visited the classes to encourage the children and to direct the masters in their training and superintendence, and in all other branches of school work. The Brothers entertained the greatest respect for him; they loved him as their father; but, as they were simple, uncouth, country youths, they knew little of the rules of etiquette, so that, while they venerated him as their Superior, they treated him almost as an equal, and scarcely thought of giving him the care and attention due to his character as a priest and Superior, as is evident from the fact, that Father Champagnat had lived four years with them, before any of them thought of making his bed or doing up his room. He attended to both himself, and never complained, notwithstanding his numerous occupations. When, at last, in 1822, Brother Stanislaus offered to do him that service, it was only with great reluctance the Father consented.

In taking his place, at the head of the little Community, Father Champagnat did not undertake the direction of the House, as the functions of his ministry did not permit him to do so, and it was more properly the duty of the Brother Director. He, therefore, left to him the details of all temporal affairs, and, far from restricting or diminishing his authority, he always strove to fortify and increase it. The good Father's presence in the Community, animated the zeal and fervour of all the Brothers; the children became more pious and better behaved, while the parents, delighted to see him at the head of the school, were loud in expressions of satisfaction. Although Father Champagnat abstained from interfering in domestic concerns, he observed the Brothers in the most minute details of their conduct, with a view to train them solidly in virtue and to make them good teachers. To accomplish this two-fold object, he laboured continually to

correct their defects and to shape anew their dispositions, to inspire them with love for prayer and zeal for the Christian instruction of children, to make them good catechists, to teach them how to superintend and discipline a class, and to form the hearts and consciences of their pupils.

One day, remarking that the Brother in charge of the boarders, paid but little attention to them, and was quite absorbed in the recital of his Office, the Father said to him:— ‘Brother, you should never lose sight of your scholars.’ ‘But, Father,’ said the Brother, ‘if I don’t keep recollected, I cannot pray, and, consequently, cannot reap much fruit from saying the Office.’ ‘Your first duty,’ answered the Father, ‘is to watch over your children, and keep them from mischief. By doing this, your prayers will be more pleasing to God and more meritorious for yourself, even though you had some distractions caused by your employment. Do you know,’ said the Father, ‘what is meant by reaping fruit from the exercises of piety? It is to obtain, by prayer, the grace to practise the duties of one’s state of life, and to act well on all occasions. This is what caused St Augustine to say, that ‘he who prays well, lives well,’ which means that such a person knows how to sanctify all his actions, by performing them in the spirit of faith, and making a continual prayer of them. The best fruit you can reap from your exercises of piety, therefore, is to be faithful in the exact performance of all your duties, and to be for your children, a model of charity and patience, of regularity and modesty.’

Father Champagnat often recommended the Brothers to be discreet and prudent in explaining the Catechism, and to be careful not to say, that such and such a fault is a mortal or a venial sin, for fear of causing the children to form a false conscience, and, thereby, expose them to commit sin. On one occasion, he reprimanded a Brother very severely for neglecting this advice, and said to him: ‘Be satisfied with inspiring your children with a great horror of sin, and let God and their confessor judge of the gravity of their fault.’ On another occasion, having learnt that a young Brother had imposed very strict prohibitions on his scholars, the Father sent for him, and said: ‘What have you forbidden your children?’ ‘To talk; to lose their time and the like.’ ‘Go back,’ said the Father to him, ‘and tell them that, if they do happen to talk a little, or not to follow exactly what

you have laid down, they do not thereby commit sin.' We see here how far he carried his delicacy in this matter, and how much he feared to expose the children to act contrary to conscience. He often listened to the Brothers teaching Catechism, and pointed out what was defective in the lesson, and what they ought to have done to suit the intelligence of the children, to captivate their attention, and to inspire them with a love of Religion. In a short time, he had several Brothers, who quite surpassed his expectations, as catechists. To inspire the Brothers with a spirit of zeal, and to make them understand that the object of their vocation was the sanctification of souls, he wished them to extend their labours beyond the school. So he sent them, two by two, on Sundays and certain other days, to teach Catechism in the different hamlets of the parish. Here the Brothers assembled the children and grown-up people in a barn or some such place. After a short prayer, they sang a hymn, asked questions from the Catechism, then developed the meaning of the text by a series of short, clear, simple questions, and ended the instruction with a moral, or an appropriate story. As they carefully prepared their instructions, spoke with simplicity and energy, and practised the precepts which they taught, people came from all parts to hear them, and their audience frequently comprised all the inhabitants of the neighbourhood. Father Champagnat often went to these places, to hear the Brothers teaching Catechism, and to see how they discharged their duty; but he would never let them know when he was going, and he was careful to get into a place where he could hear and see all, without being noticed by them.

During the evening recreation, he would make his comments on the Brothers' manner of catechising, correct any mistakes that had been made, and point out what was wanting to give completeness to their explanations. He praised those who had done well, and always ended with a few words of encouragement, showing the excellence of the function of catechist, the great good that the Brothers might do, if animated with the spirit of their state, and with zeal for the mission committed to them.

These discourses had such an effect upon the Brothers, that they considered it a special favour to be sent to teach Catechism in the villages. This favour, though earnestly solicited, was granted only as a reward for constant piety, regularity, and great humility. For a long time, Brother Laurence had asked the

favour of being allowed to teach Catechism at Bessac. As this was, in every respect, a very difficult mission, he had to merit it by numerous acts of zeal, of abnegation, and humility. Bessac, situated on the heights of Mount Pila, at a distance of about six miles from Lavalla, is covered with snow, during at least six months of the year. There was no priest stationed there, so that the children and the grown-up people were in profound ignorance as regards religious matters. Brother Laurence, having obtained his desire, took up his lodging in a private house at Bessac, prepared his own food, which consisted of soup, made in the morning for the whole day, some potatoes and a little cheese. Twice a-day, he went round the village, ringing a little bell to gather the children. His virtue inspired the inhabitants with such veneration for him, that all respectfully saluted him, whenever he passed. He taught the children to read, to say their prayers, and the Catechism. On Sundays, he gathered all the people of the village into the chapel, made them say evening prayers, recite the Rosary, and sing a hymn; he then explained the truths of Religion, instructed them in the dispositions requisite for receiving the Sacraments worthily, taught them to sanctify their actions, their sufferings, and their poverty, by offering them to God, and by submitting, without a murmur, to His holy will. It would be impossible to express the happiness he felt in instructing these poor people, and in devoting his life to the education of their ignorant children. Some idea of his feelings may be formed from what follows:—Every Thursday, which is a school holiday in France, Brother Laurence went to Lavalla to spend the day with the Brothers, and to get his week's provisions. He was returning to Bessac, on one occasion, with Father Champagnat, who was going in that direction to visit a sick person. The roads were slippery, and the snow lay two or three feet deep on the ground. Brother Laurence was carrying a sack containing a big loaf, some cheese, and a quantity of potatoes, his provision for the next week. Although he was strong, and the day very cold, yet the bad state of the road rendered walking so difficult, that the poor Brother was soon in a state of perspiration, upon which Father Champagnat remarked: 'It is not very pleasant to carry such a load on a day like this, Brother.' 'I beg pardon, Father, it is not unpleasant at all, but very agreeable.' 'I don't see anything agreeable in scrambling over these mountains, every

Thursday in frost and snow, with a heavy load on one's back, and exposed, at every turn, to tumble over some precipice.' 'It is the perfect certainty I have that God counts all our steps, and that He will repay, with an immense weight of glory, all the labours and fatigues that we endure in his service.' 'Then you like to come here to teach Catechism, to conduct the school in this miserable part of the country, and to carry your provisions on your back like a beggar.' 'I like it so much,' said the Brother, 'that I would not give it up for all the wealth in the world.' 'Certainly you esteem your employment very much; but do you deserve such a mission?' 'Oh no, Father, I am convinced that I am not worthy to teach Catechism at Bessac, and I am solely indebted to the goodness of God for that favour.' 'Indeed, what you say is very true; but you will surely admit, at least, that this is a very bad day.' 'On the contrary, Father, it is one of the best days of my life.' In saying this, the Brother's face beamed with delight as tears of joy stole down his cheeks. Father Champagnat, touched at seeing so much virtue in one of his disciples, found it difficult to repress his own feelings.

Happy the Little Brother of Mary who, with such heroic examples before him, covets being sent to a poor establishment, who esteems it a favour to teach the poorest and most ignorant children, who loves the interior life, and seeks to do good unknown and unnoticed by men. Such a Brother has truly the spirit of his vocation; God will bless his labours and will bestow on him His choicest gifts and consolations; he will be the glory of his Brothers, and a pillar of the Institute.





CHAPTER VIII.

FOUNDATION OF ESTABLISHMENTS AT MARLHES AND ST SAUVEUR,
TARANTAISE AND BOURG-ARGENTAL.

THE school at Lavalla was a complete success. The tidy appearance of the children, their progress, their piety, and their attachment to their teachers, attracted public attention, and caused the Brothers to be spoken of in the neighbouring parishes. Some Parish Priests, anxious to procure such teachers for their schools, applied to Father Champagnat for Brothers. M. Alliot, Parish Priest of Marlhes, claimed the privilege of being first attended to. Several Brothers being now sufficiently trained, Father Champagnat promised two to his Parish Priest. The first establishments, like the Mother House, were founded in poverty. The house, which M. Alliot bought for them, was small, damp, and unhealthy. This establishment was opened in 1819, under the direction of Brother Louis.

On arriving at Marlhes, the two Brothers, finding neither furniture nor provisions in their house, were obliged to stop for a few days at the Presbytery, where they were scrutinised very closely. Everyone declared that they were good, pious, and modest, but that they were too simple and not sufficiently learned. One day, the two Brothers, being in a room adjoining the one in which the Parish Priest and the curate, his nephew, were discoursing, Brother Louis heard the curate say to his uncle, 'These two young Brothers will never do here; they are not sufficiently learned and have not sufficient experience to manage a school.'

They are only boys themselves; how can they teach and govern a school? I am afraid that, before long, we shall regret having brought them here at all.' 'Certainly,' said the Parish Priest, 'they are very young, and very deficient in experience and knowledge; it is very doubtful if they will succeed.' 'Do you hear what they say of us?' said Brother Louis to his companion. 'Let us at once leave this house, where we are so severely criticised. Better be at home with our bare walls and dry bread to eat than stay here. Let us open our school, begin work in earnest, and prove to them, that we are fit for the work imposed on us by our Superior.' Next day, the school was opened. They directed all their efforts to establish good discipline, to keep silence among the pupils, to make them contract habits of order and cleanliness, to train them in piety, modesty, and politeness, and to establish emulation among them. In less than a month, the children were completely changed. It appeared as if the piety and modesty of the young masters had passed into their scholars. The parents, the authorities, and the entire public were delighted at seeing the children so docile, so respectful, so anxious to learn, and so much attached to the Brothers. When the children were dismissed in the evening, the people went out to see them marching home, two by two, in perfect order and silence. All were loud in praise of the two young Brothers. The Parish Priest and the curate, not a little astonished at the result obtained, saw that they had been rather premature in their judgment. However, they were the first to rejoice at the Brothers' success, and to eulogise them as teachers; moreover, they did all in their power to second the Brothers' efforts, and to induce parents to send their children regularly to school.

Brother Louis, who was animated with the spirit of his state, and who understood the importance of the mission confided to him, did not govern his school simply as a schoolmaster, but rather as a Religious, as an apostle. Of course he did not neglect secular instruction, for he knew it was his duty to teach the branches of secular knowledge usually taught in elementary schools, and that good secular teaching was a means of attracting the children to the school, and thus afford them an opportunity to learn their Religion. But his great ambition was not to make great scholars of them, but good Christians. He often said to his companion: 'Brother, we have a hundred children attending our

school ; well, these are a hundred souls whose innocence is confided to us, and whose salvation, in a great measure, depends on us. These children will be during life, what we make them ; their future is in our hands. If we instil good principles into them, if we can make them love virtue, they will become good Christians. If, on the contrary, we neglect their religious instruction, if we teach them only profane science, the greater number of them will be bad Christians, that is to say, men full of vice and void of virtue. In proportion, therefore, as we neglect or fulfil our obligations towards them, we shall be for these children a great cause of ruin or a great means of salvation ; and of us, it may be said in all truth, what holy Simeon said of the child Jesus : “ *They are set up for the salvation or for the fall of many,*” for the salvation of all those whom we instruct and bring up in a Christian manner ; for the ruin of those we leave in ignorance of our holy Religion and in the slavery of their faults and passions. The parents send us their children to learn reading and writing, but God sends them to us to be taught piety and virtue, to know Jesus Christ and to gain Heaven ; this is our object, let this be our constant aim, without, however, forgetting the rest.’

With such just views and such religious principles, Brother Louis could not fail to bring up his scholars properly. His class was a real school of virtue. The religious exercises were performed with piety and fervour. Catechism held the first place among the subjects taught, and every child in the school learned and recited it twice a-day. Brother Louis knew so well how to captivate the attention of the children, that they listened with the utmost attention to the religious instructions which formed the greatest attraction of the school. In the evening, the children repeated at home the little stories which the Brother had told them in his instructions, and the practices of piety he had recommended, so that the instructions were almost as beneficial to the parents as to the children. Brother Louis had great devotion to our Blessed Lady ; he chose her as the Superioress of his House, and looked upon himself merely as her steward. He was indefatigable in his zeal for promoting love of her and for inspiring others with devotion to her. He gave a special instruction on the Blessed Virgin once a-week, and seized every occasion to speak of her. Under such a master, the school could

not fail to prosper. On arriving at Marlies, the Brothers found the children in profound ignorance; but, before a year had elapsed, the greater number of them could read, write, and do a little arithmetic; but, what was much better, all were good and pious and well conducted, and could recite by heart the four parts of the Catechism. They were the consolation of their parents and the edification of the whole parish.

M. Colomb de Gaste, mayor of St Sauveur-en-Rue, who came to spend a few months at Coin, near Marlies, observed the Brothers and the children at Mass, on Sundays, and was particularly struck with the piety of the masters and the good behaviour of the scholars. 'Who are those schoolmasters you have here?' said he, one day, to the Parish Priest, 'I have been much edified by them. Where did you get them?' 'They are Brothers,' answered the Parish Priest, 'whom Father Champagnat has trained. They do very well, and give us every satisfaction. They are much liked by the people, and have wrought a complete change in the children, since they took charge of them.' Pleased with what he heard of the Brothers, M. Colomb immediately resolved to endow a similar foundation for his own parish of St Sauveur, and, forthwith, applied to Father Champagnat for two Brothers. This application was acceded to, and the opening of the new school fixed for the feast of All-Saints, 1820. Brother John-Francis, a man of great zeal and earnestness, was appointed Director; but, being somewhat deficient in knowledge, a well-instructed young Brother was sent with him to teach the advanced class. This school, like those of Lavalla and Marlies, was a complete success.

At Marlies, the Brothers had gained the esteem and confidence of the people to such an extent, that the parents were all anxious to have their sons at the school, and many children came from the neighbouring parishes. But the great success of this school was partly the cause of its ruin. As we have already said, the Brothers' house was small, irregularly built, and unhealthy; the school was too small for the number of children in attendance. Space, light, and air were deficient. As this state of things endangered the Brothers' health, Father Champagnat requested that the premises should be enlarged and repaired. The Parish Priest admitted that the dwelling was in a bad state and needed improvements, but whether it was that he

had no funds, or that he was displeased at the removal of Brother Louis, which had been effected against his will, he was very slow in acceding to Father Champagnat's request. Although at that time, all were satisfied with the Brothers, and all proclaimed their success, admired their conduct, and approved their method of teaching and conducting the schools, still they were far from counting on the stability of the work, or placing full confidence in the Congregation. On the contrary, they considered it as something new, as a building without a foundation, which the first blast of tribulation would overthrow. The success of the schools was not looked upon as an effect of the spirit of the Congregation—as the result of the grace of state—but as the personal work of the Teacher. They considered all as the result of his talents; whence it happened that they thought all was undone, when a change of Teachers took place; it was believed that the prosperity of the school departed with the Brother who had taught it. M. Alliot, more than any other, seemed to be impressed with this idea; for, though he asked Father Champagnat for Brothers, he sent to the Novitiate of the Christian Brothers in Lyons, all the young men who consulted him on the subject of a religious vocation. He believed that he would compromise the interests of these postulants and jeopardise their vocation by sending them, or even allowing them, to join the Little Brothers of Mary. To make matters worse, he openly avowed, even to the Brothers, his sentiments on this point. 'Do not imagine,' said he one day to Brother Louis, 'that your Society will be able to maintain itself; a work of that sort, to be solid, must be built on a rock, and your Congregation is built only on sand, it must have resources which you have not, and never will have.' 'The rock,' said Brother Louis very calmly, 'which should be the foundation of a Congregation, is poverty and contradiction, and, thank God, we have these in abundance. This makes me believe that we build solidly, and that God will continue to bless us.' 'You do much good here, Brother,' said M. Alliot, on another occasion. 'Why, then, are you going away?' 'I am going away,' said the Brother, 'because Obedience calls me.' 'But you see that you will ruin the school by going.' 'I think not, for the Brother who takes my place, will do much better than I.' 'You are liked here, you succeed in everything; stay with us, and I will take care of your future.' 'Never! Father.' 'You are wrong.' 'I must do my

duty. My Superior commands ; I obey.' 'Your Superior is a man without experience, capacity, or intelligence. His removing you from here, in spite of my remonstrances, is a clear proof of it ; besides, I have known him a long time now.' 'That is not the opinion they have of Father Champagnat at Lavalla. Everyone looks upon him as a wise, clever man, and we, Brothers, believe him to be a saint.' The Curé could say no more. Brother Louis asked his blessing, obtained it, and left the place.

The conduct of Brother Louis, on this occasion, is truly admirable, and shows us all the great virtues which adorned his soul. Full of humility, he places his Brothers far above himself, and believes them more competent and more virtuous than himself. Obedience is so natural to him, that he is as docile as a child ; this virtue appears to him so necessary for a religious, that he simply calls it his duty. 'My Superior commands—I must obey.' He does not say, 'I will see ; I must explain matters to the Superior ; they do not know how displeased the Managers will be.' No ; he says simply, 'I must obey.' For this Superior, who sends him a command that causes so much displeasure ; for this Superior, whom he hears blamed and vilified, he manifests the utmost respect and veneration. Firm as a rock in his vocation, he cares so little for the worldly advantages proposed to him, that he does not even express his contempt for them ; when spoken to on the subject, he does not condescend to answer. May all the members of the Institute bear in mind the lesson here given them by their eldest Brother, and may they, in similar circumstances, ever imitate so noble an example.

The first reward which God granted Brother Louis, in return for his faith and obedience, was perhaps what he most desired, the prosperity of the school which had cost him so much anxiety, so much labour, and so many sacrifices. His successor gained the affection of the children, the confidence of the parents, and the esteem of the Parish Priest. Nevertheless, the house was quite unfit for human habitation, so that Father Champagnat went to the Curé and said : 'I am taking the Brothers away.' 'You will send us others instead ?' said M. Alliot. 'No ; for I have none to sacrifice : your house is in so wretched a condition that one cannot, in conscience, leave either the Brothers or the children in it.' A few days afterwards, the Brothers returned to Lavalla,

and the establishment was abandoned, or rather suspended, for it was re-opened in 1833, under the new Curé, M. Duplaix.

About the time that the Brothers withdrew from Marthes, the school of Tarantaise was founded. Brother Laurence had charge of it, without any one to assist him. His schoolhouse was a barn, his furniture of a primitive description, but at least, space and fresh air were not wanting. The Brother had no fixed dwelling, he slept sometimes in one house, sometimes in another; prepared his own food and lived much in the same way as he had done at Bessac. The care of the class at Tarantaise did not prevent him, however, from going to Bessac to teach Catechism, every Sunday and Thursday. To assemble the children, he went round the village, ringing his bell. He went into the houses and claimed the very little ones, and even the grown-up people, who did not know their Catechism. He took them all to the chapel and would keep them there for hours, praying, singing hymns, and listening to his instructions. Brother Laurence had a particular talent for explaining the truths of Religion, in a manner which captivated the attention and made his instructions interesting. The grown-up people listened to him with as much attention, and received the divine truths with as much respect from him, as from the lips of their Curé.

The success of the school of St Sauveur was the topic of conversation in the surrounding villages. M. Pleyne, mayor of Bourg-Argental, a village a few miles distant from St Sauveur, inquired of M. Colomb, mayor of the latter place, where he had got these teachers so highly spoken of by the people. M. Colomb, knowing better than anyone else, the good that the Brothers were doing, took the most lively interest in them and their Founder. He told M. Pleyne all about them; the object of their Institute, their mode of life, and the conditions necessary for obtaining their services. M. Pleyne was long desirous of founding a Brothers' school in his village, but was deterred through want of funds. He was now delighted to find that the conditions proposed by the Little Brothers of Mary, permitted him to realise his long cherished project. He immediately wrote to Father Champagnat, asking for three Brothers. He obtained a favourable reply, and being very energetic, he had a house furnished and ready for their reception within a few weeks.

Father Champagnat addressed the following advice to the

Brothers, before their departure for Bourg-Argental : ‘ My dear Brothers, in uniting together to found this little Society, our object was to give a Christian education to the children of small rural parishes, but now, large and important populations wish us to confer the same benefit on them. No doubt, it is our duty to comply with their demand, since the charity of Jesus Christ, which we should take for the rule of our charity, extends to all men, and since the children of towns have been purchased by the same Precious Blood ; but on this point, I shall make two observations. First, that we should never forget that our Congregation has been established principally to supply the educational wants of rural parishes, and that we should have a predilection for these schools. Second, that religious instruction, in towns and populous parishes, ought to be more thorough, because the spiritual wants are greater, and secular instruction is more advanced. In our schools, established in towns, we should see that Catechism and religious practices hold the first place ; and the Brothers should consider it their duty to bestow more care on the Christian education of such children, because of their being more neglected by their parents.

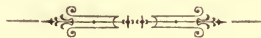
‘ Go, my dear Brothers, and go with confidence ; cultivate the field which Providence confides to you ; if your task seems difficult, remember that it is God who imposes it upon you, and that His help will never fail you, so long as you remain faithful to Him. The authorities, who give you charge of the school, and the parents who are anxious to send their children to you, expect you to give them sound secular instruction. Religion has more elevated views in the matter ; she expects you to teach the children to know, love, and serve their heavenly Father ; she expects you to make them good Christians, and to make your school a nursery of saints. She sends you to destroy sin and to establish virtue, to preserve the innocence of the children, to prepare them for their first Communion, to make Jesus Christ known to them, and the immense love which He has for them, to inspire them with devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and to teach them to love God. Such, my dear Brothers, is the most important part of your task and the object of your vocation. God will bless you and make your school prosper, in proportion to the zeal with which you will endeavour to obtain these results. On arriving at Bourg-Argental, you will go straight to the

church, to adore our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, to offer yourselves to Him, and to ask His blessing on the work confided to you. From the church, you will go to the presbytery, to present your respects to the Parish Priest, and to ask his blessing, to beg him to be a father to you, and to assure him that you will be his devoted children. You will pay a visit to the mayor, who is your benefactor, and you will intimate your readiness to open the school whenever he thinks proper. In fine, my dear Brothers, do not forget that the first lesson you should give your scholars, and all the faithful of the parish, is good example ; be therefore models of piety and virtue to all.'

The Brothers arrived at Bourg-Argental towards the end of the year, 1821, and opened the school on the 2nd of January, 1822. A few days after the opening, there were two hundred scholars present. Brother Jean-Marie was appointed Director, and Brother Louis succeeded him at Lavalla.

It may be asked why Brother Jean-Marie, the first Brother of the Institute, was not retained at the head of the Novitiate. The reason was, that Father Champagnat had not found in him an entire readiness to obey, and judged it advisable to remove him from that position. Brother Jean-Marie, like many who enter Religion at an advanced age, was virtuous in his own way. His love of self, which he had not sufficiently overcome, impelled him to extreme courses and towards an imaginary perfection. He would be neither more nor less than a saint, and a saint of the first class, and, consequently, a saint after his own fashion. He wished, besides, that others should follow his example. Father Champagnat endeavoured, but with little success, to make him understand the danger of such a course.

Finding more obedience and more of the religious spirit in Brother Louis, Father Champagnat thought, with good reason, that he was better suited to train the novices and imbue them with the spirit of the Institute ; he, therefore, placed him at the head of the Novitiate.





CHAPTER IX.

FATHER CHAMPAGNAT PRAYS TO GOD TO SEND HIM POSTULANTS—
HOW GOD HEARS HIS PRAYER.

THE foundation of the schools of St Sauveur and of Bourg-Argental, had emptied the Novitiate. There were neither novices nor postulants left. Father Champagnat who, on the one hand, was greatly consoled at the general success of his children, and the eagerness with which their services were sought, was, on the other hand, much grieved at the scarcity of vocations. During the last three years, he had received but three or four subjects, and there was no appearance of others coming, at least in numbers, corresponding to the number of applications that were received.

This scarcity of subjects, which seemed to threaten the very existence of the infant Congregation, was a great trial for its Founder; but this very trial, far from discouraging him, served only to excite his zeal and increase his confidence in God. Fully convinced that the religious vocation must come from God, that He gives it to whom He pleases and brings souls of His choice to the Communities which He intends to bless, Father Champagnat placed all his trust in Providence, and offered up many fervent prayers to obtain new disciples.

Neither did he fail to apply to Mary, in whose protection he had unbounded confidence. He celebrated Holy Mass, performed many novenas in her honour, and, with childlike simplicity, reminded her that, being the Mother Superioress and Protectress

of his Community, she was bound to take care of it and prevent its failure. 'It is thy work,' said he, 'thou hast assembled us here, in spite of the world, to procure the glory of thy divine Son. If thou dost not assist us, we shall perish; we shall die out like a lamp without oil. But, if this work perish, it is not our work that perishes, it is thine, for thou hast done everything here; we, therefore, trust in thee; we trust in thy powerful protection, and will trust in it for ever.'

The Mother of Mercy, touched, no doubt, by the unlimited confidence of her servant, heard his prayer, and soon proved to him that his hope had not been vain. In fact, the Congregation which had hitherto been languishing, and was in danger of perishing for want of subjects, now made such a sudden start, that it can scarcely be considered other than miraculous.

But what appeared most extraordinary in this, was the means employed by Providence to make the Society known, and to bring subjects to it. In His divine hands, all instruments are useful for His work, as may be seen here; for, in order to accomplish the merciful designs which He had in view regarding the infant Congregation, and to procure vocations to it, He made use of an unworthy subject, an apostate Religious, who, soon after, had to be expelled from the Institute.

About the middle of Lent, in 1822, a young man came to Father Champagnat and begged to be admitted into the Community. His manner and appearance did not please the Father, but rather made him suspect the motives that brought him to Lavalla. He inquired, somewhat coldly, whence he came and what business or profession he had followed. Then, finding that he had left the Christian Brothers, with whom he had been for six years, he said to him: 'If you cannot succeed in the Congregation of the Venerable de la Salle, or if their mode of life does not suit you, you would be useless to us. I cannot admit you.' The young man, who was most anxious to remain, made extraordinary efforts to be received. After collation, he entertained Father Champagnat, a long time, with talk about his native place, and the numerous recruits obtained there by the Christian Brothers. Perceiving that this subject interested the Father, he added: 'If I am received, I promise to bring you several postulants of my acquaintance.' The next morning, he still begged so earnestly to get a trial, that he was permitted to stay in the house

for two or three days. The trial did not fully satisfy Father Champagnat. The young man's conduct seemed rather suspicious, and the Father sent for him and told him to leave. The ex-Brother, failing in all his endeavours to be received, said to Father Champagnat: 'Will you receive me if I bring you half-a-dozen good subjects?' 'Yes, when you shall have had the good luck to find them,' said the Father. 'Well, give me a letter of obedience that I may be authorised.' To get rid of him, Father Champagnat wrote a letter, couched in very guarded language and handed it to him, saying: 'Go home to your parents and remain with them; or, what is better still, return to the Community you have left; as for us, our mode of life does not suit you.' Provided with his letter, the young man set out for his native place, which was at a distance of about forty miles from Lavalla. Before eight days had elapsed, he had persuaded eight young men to follow him to Lavalla, or rather to Lyons, for he carefully avoided speaking of Lavalla. As everybody believed him to be still a Christian Brother, and as he never once mentioned the Little Brothers of Mary, no one ever suspected that he was going to bring them to Lavalla; even in the agreement made to fix the pension and the time for payments, it was stated, that the postulants were going to the Novitiate of the Christian Brothers at Lyons, and there was no mention of either Father Champagnat or the Little Brothers of Mary.

This pious band of youths, with the ex-Brother at their head, left their homes towards the end of March, 1822, in the full conviction that they were going to the Novitiate of the Christian Brothers at Lyons. After two days' journeying, they arrived at the summit of the mountain, in front of Lavalla. 'There!' said their leader, 'there is our journey's end.' 'What!' exclaimed the postulants; 'but that's not Lyons, is it?' 'No, it is not Lyons, but we have a Novitiate here; you will spend a few days in it first, and then go to Lyons.' As they entered the house, no one could have been more surprised than Father Champagnat was, at this sudden return of the ex-Brother, with such a number of young men. He was digging in the garden at the time; when he saw them, he dropped the spade and went to speak to them. 'I can imagine I see him still,' said one of the party, afterwards, 'examining us from head to foot with an air of surprise, which showed clearly, that he had not expected us. After questioning

us as to our dispositions and the motives that had led us thither, he simply declared that he could not receive us. This decision surprised us exceedingly, and grieved us so much, that, by way of consoling us, Father Champagnat added, "I will pray to God and examine this affair before Him ; you may remain till to-morrow."

Father Champagnat was much pleased with the appearance of these young men, but he hesitated to admit them, because he did not know them sufficiently ; he suspected that they had been unduly influenced by their leader, and that, if one of them proved inconstant and dissatisfied, others would follow his example, and they might all go as they had come. Besides, the number was too great for the size of the house ; there was neither room nor bedding for them, so they were obliged to sleep on straw in a barn. Finally, funds were also wanting, for most of them could pay only a small part of the pension, and the house being scarcely able to maintain itself, could not incur fresh expenses.

Father Champagnat, therefore, would not impose this heavy burden on the Community before consulting the principal Brothers. Next day, he sent for the postulants, and said to them : ' I cannot promise to receive you yet ; I must first consult the Brothers. However, you may stay with us a few days, but as it is very doubtful if I can receive you at all, those of you who wish to return home, may do so at once.' He then wrote for the Brothers of Bourg-Argental and St Sauveur, and, having assembled them several times in his room, he explained to them the designs of God which seemed to be clearly manifested in this matter for the good of the Congregation, and expressed his opinion that they should receive these young men as being visibly sent to them by Providence. The Brothers agreed that the eight postulants and the ex-Brother should be received, but should be submitted to exceptional trials to test their vocation.

Father Champagnat's friends strove, by every means, to induce him to dismiss the new-comers. They alleged the most specious reasons, all based on human prudence, in support of their arguments, but it was to no purpose. His mind was made up and nothing could make him change it ; but, he very wisely employed all the means which prudence and the spirit of God suggested, to try these postulants, and to make sure, whether or not, they suited his Congregation. Instead of putting them to study, he sent them to work in the fields, from morning till night, and obliged them to

observe a rigorous silence. Reprimands and public penances were inflicted for the least faults ; nothing, in fact, was spared ; but their resolution was not to be shaken. Father Champagnat, delighted and edified at this constancy, wished to submit the youngest ones to a final trial. He assembled the new-comers in the presence of all the Brothers of the house, and said to them : ‘ My friends, since you are so determined to remain here and become children of Mary, I have made up my mind to keep you all, but as some of you are rather young to judge of your vocation, I intend to place you with some good country people to herd cattle. If you satisfy your masters and still resolve to enter the religious state, I will receive you into the Novitiate, at the Feast of All Saints. Now,’ said he, turning to the youngest, ‘ do you agree to this ? ’ ‘ I agree to it, Father, since it is your will,’ answered the admirable youth, ‘ but on condition that you will surely receive me at the time you mention.’ This answer filled the good Father with admiration, and, after a moment’s reflection, casting a look of tenderness on the postulants, he exclaimed, ‘ Come, I admit you all this moment.’

But whence came these youths ? They came from the Haute-Loire, from the mountains of Velay. It was our Lady of Puy who had prepared them and sent them to Lavalla. What motives had they to be so attached to an Institute, which seemed to think so little of them, and which made so many difficulties about admitting them ? One of themselves will give us the answer in his own words. ‘ They had no reason,’ he says, ‘ to distrust us so much, or to suspect the motives which brought us to the Society. Had we been actuated by human motives, we could not have remained a single day. What could have induced us to stay in a house which had only poverty to recommend it, a straw bed to lie upon, in a barn or a garret, where our food consisted only of vegetables, cold water and barley bread, so badly baked that it was falling to crumbs, where we were kept at hard work, from morning till night, and received, in return, nothing but reprimands and punishments, which we had to accept with profound respect ? If I am asked what could have reconciled us to a position so repugnant to human nature, and what could have attached us so strongly to a Society that would have nothing to do with us, my only answer is, that it was the great devotion which it showed to the Blessed Virgin. The day after our

arrival, Father Champagnat gave each of us a Rosary, and spoke several times to us, of devotion to Mary, in that persuasive tone which was so natural to him. He related to us such striking examples of the protection of our most Holy Mother, that we were all very much affected by them, and nothing could have made us abandon our vocation.'

Let us add, in concluding this narrative, that the ex-Brother, about a fortnight after being received, was banished for the very same faults of immorality, for which he had been expelled by the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

Here naturally arises a reflection which may be useful to those who doubt the genuineness of their vocation, because it had its origin in human motives ; or had man for its promoter. Vocation to the religious life, says St Thomas, though it should come from the devil himself, ought to be followed as an excellent counsel given us by an enemy. And, besides, adds the holy Doctor, should the attraction to the religious state come from the devil, it does not follow that it may not, at the same time, come from God who often turns the malice of Satan against himself, and to our advantage. God made use of the envy of Joseph's brethren to raise him to be governor of Egypt. He made use of the treason of Judas and the perfidy of the Jews, to effect our Redemption. Thus, love for the religious life, whatever be the principle or the cause of it, can come only from God. Our eight postulants, though brought to the Society by a Religious who profaned the sanctity of his state and lost his vocation, received, nevertheless, a true call from God. Some of them became excellent Religious, one of them an Assistant, the same who laboured, during fifteen years, to collect the documents from which the present life of our pious Founder is compiled.

As we have already said, the progress of the Institute dates from this period. Hitherto, it was scarcely known beyond the limits of the parish, and nearly all the Brothers were from Lavalla or its neighbourhood. As soon as it was definitely settled, that the postulants should be received, Father Champagnat sent one of the principal Brothers to their parents and guardians, to get some information regarding them, and to receive payment of their board during their Novitiate. The Brother saw the Parish Priests of the young men, and thus the Congregation became known. Letters from the postulants to

their parents expressing contentment and happiness in their vocation, induced four others to come and join them ; shortly afterwards, three more followed their example, and before six months had elapsed, the Novitiate reckoned upwards of twenty postulants from the same district.





CHAPTER X.

FATHER CHAMPAGNAT ENLARGES THE NOVITIATE—GREAT
FERVOUR OF THE NOVICES AND BROTHERS.

POSTULANTS had now become so numerous, that Father Champagnat found it necessary to repair the garret of the Brothers' house, and convert it into a dormitory ; but this garret was so low that one could not stand upright in it, and there was only one small window to give light and air. The house was evidently too small for so many persons ; a new building had become indispensable, and Father Champagnat did not hesitate to undertake the work. But, as he had neither funds nor friends, he and the Brothers set to work and erected the new building, without external aid. The Community rose at four o'clock in the morning, made half-an-hour's meditation together, assisted at Holy Mass, and then worked till seven in the evening.

Father Champagnat was the architect of the new building ; he ordered everything and directed everyone. He and the Brothers, with some of the strongest and cleverest of the postulants, did the mason work ; the others carried the stones and made the mortar of rich clay, without either sand or lime. They all laboured with a will in constructing, what they considered, the cradle of the Institute. Father Champagnat was always the first to begin, the most indefatigable at work, and the last to leave off. To gain time, he said his Office during the night, so that he was the whole day with the Brothers, except

when prevented by the duties of his sacred Ministry. The priests, his friends, and others, who came to see him, always found him on the scaffolding, trowel in hand, amidst stones and mortar. 'I think I see him yet,' said a Brother who had shared the work, 'bareheaded and covered with clay and mortar, receiving visitors and speaking to them with a happy and cheerful countenance, though often worn out with fatigue.'

One day, a priest of his acquaintance, finding him in this state, said to him: 'Decidedly, M. Champagnat, you have turned mason!' 'More than that,' answered the Father, 'both mason and architect.' 'But, are you aware,' said the priest, 'that the tradesmen are complaining and plotting against you for depriving them of their work and forming a nursery of young masons?' 'They may say and do what they like, I don't heed them,' answered the Father, 'and if you wish, I will take you on as an apprentice.' Assuming a more serious tone, the priest said, 'My friend, you are going too far; besides, this sort of work is not suitable for a priest, and it injures your health.' The Father replied: 'This work does not dishonour my Ministry, and many priests spend their time less usefully. I do not feel that it injures my health very much; besides, I work not for pleasure but through necessity, we are overcrowded in that hovel, we have no money to pay workmen, who then can blame us for building a house for ourselves?'

Silence was observed during the work; signs were used instead of words, and, from time to time during the day, some one of them read aloud to those who were at work. 'The silence and the reading were interrupted only by the few words of edification or encouragement our good Father would address to us. His words, and above all, his example, animated the faint-hearted and inspired all with courage. Never did we hear him complain, see him give way to impatience, or hear a harsh word from his lips, although our defects and awkwardness were often unbearable. He would kindly show us how to do again what we had done badly. If we did not succeed, he would do it himself and was satisfied with our good will.'

In a few months, the house was built. Father Champagnat and some of the Brothers made the doors and windows, laid the floors, and did all the carpenter work.

But temporal affairs did not prevent him from instructing the

novices. He took advantage of Sundays and holidays, and of all the time not given to work, to train them in piety, to teach them Catechism, to give them lessons in singing, and in all the branches of primary education. His instructions were fervent, short, but pathetic, and nearly always on piety, obedience, mortification, the love of Jesus, devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and zeal for the salvation of souls.

A summary of his most familiar maxims will be found in *The Principles of Christian and Religious Perfection*, page 417.

Father Champagnat continued to send the Brothers two by two, a trained Brother with a novice, to teach Catechism in the hamlets of the parish, and usually followed them himself to see how they discharged their duty.

One day, a little Brother, of thirteen or fourteen years of age, was gravely teaching Catechism to some little children and grown up people. Father Champagnat happened to come upon them, and finding the number of hearers rather small, threatened that he would not send the Brothers any more, if the people did not attend better. A good woman rose and said, 'Father, don't scold us, if you had been here a little sooner, you would have found a greater number, but the instructions are long and many had to go away.'

The heavy work and all the inconveniences attending the building of the house, did not in the least degree weaken the novices' attachment to their vocation, or affect the good spirit and piety that reigned in the Community. On the contrary, there never was, at any time, more fervour or zeal for the acquisition of virtue and the spirit of the Institute. Father Champagnat and the Brothers were greatly edified at it. The following description, left us by one of these good novices, will give a fair idea of the religious state of the Novitiate at that time:

'The Community, although composed of simple, ignorant young men, soon began to imitate the virtues of their Superior. Their love of prayer, their recollection and fervour were really astonishing. They found the time allotted to the exercises of piety too short, and looked upon it as a special favour to be permitted, sometimes, to prolong their prayers, to visit the Blessed Sacrament, to say the Rosary, or perform some other acts of devotion during the recreations, or at night, after the reading of the subject of meditation for the next day.

‘ During all the time that I had the happiness of living in the Novitiate, I never knew a single novice who did not rise in the morning and make his meditation with the Community. If any one happened to commit a fault, or fail in any point of Rule, he knelt down, in presence of the whole Community and asked a penance for it, without waiting to be admonished. Union, peace, and charity flourished ; disputes and harsh words were not known amongst us. We loved one another as brothers ; there were no particular friendships, no antipathies, no singularities ; we had but one heart and one soul. If anyone stood in need of assistance, all the others were ready to help or relieve him. The time of recreation was spent in singing hymns, or in edifying conversation. Cheerfulness, holy joy, and modesty, were visible on every countenance. The most tender love and profound respect for our venerated Father, and for the Brothers who directed and instructed us, ready obedience, and perfect submission to their wills, together with simplicity and humility, were the virtues that shone most conspicuously in the conduct of the novices. O ! happy times, to which I look back with delight ! The very recollection of them brings tears of joy to my eyes.’

The fervour of the Brothers in the establishments was not less remarkable. As they had not yet any Rule to guide them in all the details of their conduct, they yielded freely to their zeal in working for their own perfection, and for the sanctification of their neighbour. Their food was of the coarsest description, their frugality and self-denial were often excessive. Not satisfied with their ordinary school duties and the care of the children, they undertook many other good works.

At St Sauveur, they made various collections in the year, one of wheat and potatoes, another of butter and cheese, and a third of clothing, bedding, linen, and money. The object of these collections was to provide for the poor children of the parish, who were boarded and lodged by the Brothers, till after their first Communion. Sometimes, the number of these poor children was over twenty. These collections also enabled the Brothers to make, every week, a great quantity of bread to be distributed among the poor. Moreover, they visited the sick, attended them during the night, made their beds, and procured them whatever they stood in need of.

On one occasion, there was a sick man in the village, so

covered with sores and vermin, that no one would venture near him. On hearing this, the Brother Director hastened to the place, and found the poor man lying on a handful of straw, with only an old torn blanket to cover him. The Brother procured him a bed, food, and clothing, took care of him, bathed his sores, combed his hair, washed him, and visited him several times a-day during a whole year. To the care of his body, he did not fail to add that of his soul; he instructed the sick man in the truths of Religion, got him to make a good confession, taught him to sanctify his sufferings, spoke a few words of consolation to him every day, and assisted him to prepare for death. He had not, however, the satisfaction of attending the poor man in his last moments, for the vacations came to separate them; but he must have felt happy when he learned that, during his agony, his dear patient pronounced his name often and affectionately; the last words he was heard to utter, being: 'My God, my God, I love Thee, and I recommend to Thee the good Brother who has done so much for me. Bless him, O Lord, and repay him a hundred-fold what I owe him.'

Every evening, during winter, the Brothers taught Catechism to the young people and children of the village. These instructions were well attended and lasted an hour-and-a-half. Thus, these good Brothers taught Catechism three times a-day, once at the forenoon meeting of the school, then at the afternoon meeting, and lastly, in the evening. Another of their works, which God blessed in a special manner, was finding out the men who did not approach the Sacraments and inducing them to comply with this all-important duty. A great number of men were thus brought back to the right path by their entreaties, prayers, and winning ways. Their ingenuity in gaining over these people and inducing them to fulfil their religious duties, was so well known, that it became a common saying, 'The only way to escape is to run and hide.'

The Parish Priest and others, who knew the good that the Brothers were doing, wrote to Father Champagnat congratulating him on having, in so short a time, trained men so pious and so devoted to the interests of Religion.

In the course of the years, 1822 and 1823, there were many applications for Brothers, and the establishments of St Symphorien-le-Château, Boulieu and Vanose, were founded. The school at

Boulieu was so crowded, that Brother Jean-Pierre, the Director, broke down and died, a victim of his zeal and devotedness. At the last retreat, which he made in 1824, he felt a presentiment of his approaching death, and, while taking leave of Father Champagnat and receiving his blessing, he said: 'Excuse me, Father, if I weep, for I feel that I shall never again see you in this world.' This Brother was so much loved by the children, that one of them, having died on the same day with the Brother, his parents begged earnestly that he might be buried in the same grave with his good master.

It was about this time that the Brothers requested M. Champagnat to allow them to call him Father, a request with which he willingly complied.





CHAPTER XI.

CONTRADICTIONS AND PERSECUTIONS WHICH FATHER CHAMPAGNAT
MEETS WITH—MONSEIGNEUR DE PINS TAKES THE INSTITUTE
UNDER HIS PROTECTION.

ONE would think, that the establishment of the Brothers should have elicited only praise and approval for Father Champagnat ; but it was by the Cross that God saved the world, and He wishes that His works should all be marked with the same sacred sign. The Institute of the Little Brothers of Mary was founded in poverty, nurtured in humility, and, till the death of its Founder, it remained under the shadow of the Cross. We may say, that it has ever remained there, and it is from this Tree of Life, that it derived prosperity and the grace to produce fruit. Father Champagnat met with opposition from the very beginning of this work, and, if hitherto, we have not spoken of his trials, it is because we thought it proper to make them the subject of a special chapter. Worldly-minded people, who trust in human means alone for success, could not understand how the poor humble Priest could found a Community ; they looked upon the work as a chimera, the outcome of pride and rashness. ‘What does he mean to do?’ said they. ‘How can he, without either money or talents, think of such an undertaking. He is guided only by pride, by vanity, and the desire of applause. It is his silly ambition to be called the Founder of a religious Congregation, that urges him on to such folly. What will he make of these young men, taken from the fields to pine over books ?

Conceited, worthless creatures, who, after having passed their youth in idleness, will return home to be a burden to their families, and perhaps pests to society.' Such were the opinions formed of Father Champagnat and his work ; and it was not only a few evil minded persons who thus disparaged him, even good laymen, virtuous priests, and some of his own friends, spoke in the same strain. They imputed to him a multitude of conflicting projects. At one time, he was founding a college in opposition to that of Saint Chamond ; at another, he was forming a brotherhood of Teachers, of farming Brothers, a Community of hermits, etc. They even accused him of forming a sect of Beguins, a sort of fanatics, the outcome of Jansenism.

They criticised and censured the Rules he had given to his little Community, their mode of life, their occupations and their costume.

In fine, clamorous reports spread far and wide, till they reached the Archbishopal Palace. M. Bochard, Vicar-General, summoned Father Champagnat, and, having repeated the charges brought against him and his work, requested him to give explanations. 'It is true,' said the Father, 'that I have assembled a few young men to teach the children of Lavalla. They are eight in number, and live in community ; they spend their time in manual work or in study ; strictly speaking, they have no religious habit, neither have they contracted any religious engagements ; they willingly remain there because they love retirement, study, and teaching.' 'But,' said the Vicar-General, 'it is reported that you want to form them into a religious Community and establish yourself their Superior !' 'I direct them,' said the Father, 'and train them, but I do not wish to be their Superior. They have chosen their own Director from among themselves.' 'Come,' said the Vicar-General, 'speak plainly. Do you not entertain the idea of founding a Congregation of Teachers ?' 'Yes ; I have been thinking of training Teachers for the country children, and it is with this object that I have brought these young men together. God will do with them what He pleases, for I desire nothing but His holy will.' 'But,' said M. Bochard, 'you have given them the name of Brothers of Mary ; it is therefore a Congregation you want to establish, and as we have already a similar Institution in the Diocese, I don't want to see any others crop up.' After this explanation, M. Bochard proposed that

Father Champagnat should unite his Brothers with those that he himself had founded in Lyons. Father Champagnat, without directly rejecting the proposal, prudently evaded the main question, and, as soon as occasion offered, took leave of M. Bochard in the full conviction that the Vicar-General would return to the charge or raise up new difficulties.

On leaving M. Bochard, Father Champagnat called on M. Courbon, senior Vicar-General, who knew all that the Father was doing. He gave M. Courbon a full account of the little Community, of all the oppositions he had met with, and concluded by saying: '*M. le Vicaire-Général*, you know my project and all I have hitherto done for it; kindly give me your candid opinion of it. I am ready to abandon it if you advise me to do so; I desire only the will of God, to which I will submit as soon as it is made known to me.' M. Courbon answered: 'I don't see why they should annoy you in this way. You are doing a very useful work in training good Masters for our schools; go on as usual; don't mind what people say.' Father Champagnat was extremely satisfied with this reply and called on M. Gardette, Superior of the *Grand Séminaire*, to let him know the position of the Community and what the Vicars-General had said to him. From the beginning, M. Gardette had been Father Champagnat's adviser. He now encouraged him to continue the good work, and cautioned him against the union of his Brothers with those of the Diocese. 'Be prudent,' said he to Father Champagnat, 'put your confidence in God; be not disheartened because your work meets with opposition; such trials will make it the more solid.'

Shortly afterwards, M. Bochard again proposed the union of the two Societies of Brothers; but finding Father Champagnat opposed to the project, he spoke harshly, threatened to have the Brothers' house shut up, and to remove the Father himself from Lavalla. The good Father returned from Lyons, much distressed, but not the less confident in God, and perfectly resigned to His holy will. These trials were all the more painful to him as they came from his Superior. He felt obliged to keep them concealed within his own breast, or at least, to mention them only in a general way, so as not to frighten or discourage the Brothers.

In this emergency, he ordered special prayers to be said by

the Community, and imposed a novena of fasts on bread and water. He, himself, went on a pilgrimage to the tomb of St Francis Regis at Louvesc, to obtain, through the intercession of this great Saint, the necessary light and strength in his trials. But the Blessed Virgin was his assured refuge. Several times a week, he went, accompanied by the Community, to offer the holy sacrifice of the Mass in a little chapel dedicated to her honour, near Lavalla. On each of these occasions, he consecrated his work to Mary, and besought her to protect and defend it, if it was for the glory of her Divine Son.

M. Bochard, however, persisted in his proposals to unite the two Communities, but, failing to convert Father Champagnat to his views, he treated him as headstrong, proud, rebellious, and narrow-minded; he concluded by threatening to have the Brothers' house closed, and the Community dispersed. He appears to have written, in this sense, to Dean Dervieux, of St Chamond who, having sent for Father Champagnat, a few days afterwards, spoke to him in the same strain as M. Bochard. 'What!' said the Dean, 'you, a poor country curate, pretend to found a Congregation! You have neither funds nor talents, and you go contrary to the advice of your Superiors, to undertake such an important work. Don't you see that pride is blinding you? If you have no concern for yourself, at least pity those young men whom you place in so awkward a position; for, sooner or later, your house will be closed, and they left without means of support.'

M. Bochard's opposition to the Community of the Little Brothers of Mary, soon became public, and brought down a perfect storm of blame and reproach on the head of Father Champagnat. The Curé of Lavalla, who had been one of the first to criticise and condemn him, and who kept M. Bochard informed of all that was going on in the Community, now became still louder in his invectives and unjust denunciations.

Two things in particular gave Father Champagnat much pain; the first was the Curé's ostensible opposition to himself and his Brothers, and also his blaming and reprehending him in public. On many occasions, the Curé gave him much annoyance, which was all borne with invincible patience.

The second was that the Curé abused him in presence of the Brothers, and tried to withdraw them from the Society. He proffered to employ one of them himself, and to find situations

for others, or to procure their admission into other Communities. In 1823, Brother Louis, being sent to Bourg-Argental, the Curé made every effort to retain him at Lavalla, and prevent him from obeying. 'I am your Parish Priest,' said he, 'you are one of my parishioners, and I don't want you to go. Let your Father Champagnat say what he likes. He does not know what he is doing.' The Brother, who never trifled with duty and knew no voice but that of obedience, acted in this case as he had done at Marlihes.

Even the good Father's confessor abandoned him in his trials. Vexed and prejudiced by the false reports that were uttered against his penitent, he declined to act any longer as his confessor. As the Father never undertook anything without consulting his confessor, he was extremely grieved to find himself blamed by one who had hitherto been his friend and guide. The Father besought him to continue to direct him, but in vain, so he was obliged to seek another confessor.

Father Champagnat was now in a very critical position. Though he was not discouraged, he could not conjecture how all this opposition would end. To save his work from persecutions, which threatened its very existence, he thought of asking to be sent to the Missions in America. Several times, he spoke on the subject to his Brothers, and asked them if they would like to follow him. All declared that they would go with him to the ends of the earth.

A few days afterwards, other reports were carried to the Curé of St Peter's at St Chamond. Father Champagnat, hearing of it, called at St Peter's with a view to prevent further mischief, but the Curé commenced by heaping reproaches upon him, and telling him, that the police would be sent to Lavalla to disperse the Brothers and shut up their house. In vain did the Father humbly beg to be heard in his own defence, and to give an explanation of his own and the Brothers' conduct; the Curé would not listen, and abruptly dismissed him. This was in the beginning of the year, 1824. Father Champagnat and his Brothers were plunged in grief, expecting every moment the arrival of the police; the least noise alarmed them, and made them believe that the dreaded officials were come. Such was the state of things, when news came that Monseigneur de Pins, Archbishop of Amasia, had been named administrator of the Diocese of Lyons.

This news raised the hopes of the pious Founder, and gave promise of better days for his Congregation. After consulting God in prayer, the Father wrote to the new Prelate, giving him a detailed account of his Community, its origin, its object, and its present position. He concluded by saying that he placed his work at his Grace's feet, and himself at his service, perfectly resigned to abandon the work or continue it, according as his Grace might be pleased to direct.

As Father Champagnat had all along followed the advice of M. Gardette, superior of the *Grand Séminaire*, he sent him the letter intended for the Archbishop, requesting him to read it, and, if approved, to present it himself to his Grace. M. Gardette presented the letter, and passed a high eulogium on the author and on the work that had cost him so much labour and trouble. The venerable Archbishop, whom the Little Brothers of Mary ought ever to remember with filial affection, did not hesitate for a moment to promise his protection to the new Congregation. 'Write to Father Champagnat,' said he, 'and tell him that I wish to speak to him concerning his work, and assure him of my friendship.' Father Champagnat accordingly went to Lyons and was introduced to the Archbishop by M. Gardette. On approaching the Prelate, Father Champagnat threw himself at his Grace's feet, and asked his blessing. 'Yes,' said the Archbishop, 'I bless you and all your Brothers. May God increase your little family, and may it spread, not only through my Diocese, but through the whole of France.'

After conversing a long time with the Founder, and hearing an exact account of the origin, progress, and present state of the Congregation, the Archbishop said to him: 'I authorise you to give your Brothers a religious costume, and allow them to make vows; it is necessary to do so, in order to bind them irrevocably to their vocation,' then he added, 'Since your house is too small, you must build a larger one, and I will give you a contribution towards it.' On leaving the Archbishop, Father Champagnat went to Fourvières to offer thanks to God, through Mary, for so many favours. He remained, for a long time, at the feet of the divine Mother, absorbed in the thoughts of his own nothingness, and, with a heart overflowing with gratitude, he renewed the consecration of himself to her service.

It is our duty to acknowledge here the important services

that M. Gardette rendered to the Congregation ; for it was principally owing to him, that it obtained the protection and friendship of the Archbishop. This holy priest, not only directed and encouraged Father Champagnat, but helped him with his own money ; never did the Father go to the *Grand Séminaire* without receiving advice, encouragement, and pecuniary help wherewith to maintain the work. The Little Brothers of Mary owe an eternal debt of gratitude to this venerable ecclesiastic.

On his return to Lavalla, Father Champagnat found the parish in commotion. The people, who had lost all confidence in their Parish Priest, had drawn up a petition to ask for his removal. Although Father Champagnat had much reason to be dissatisfied with his Curé, still he did not hesitate a moment to take his part on this, as he had done on many former occasions. He sent for all the principal men of the parish who had signed the petition, publicly condemned their attitude towards their Pastor, and advised them to withdraw their names from the document. They readily listened to his words, and followed his advice. However, as the conduct of the Curé of Lavalla was very different from what it should have been, his ecclesiastical Superiors thought proper to have him removed from the parish. He was succeeded by M. Bedoin, a good and pious priest, whose prudence and rare virtues, soon gained the confidence, the esteem, and the sympathies of all his parishioners. The Archbishop had offered the parish to Father Champagnat, but he declined it, and even besought his Grace to relieve him of the functions of curate, that he might give himself up entirely to the work of the Brothers. In the course of a few months, his request was granted. The inhabitants of Lavalla, who were much attached to the good Father, made every effort to have him for their Curé ; but seeing him determined, not only to refuse the offer made him by the Archbishop, but even to leave the parish for the purpose of building a new house, in a more suitable and more accessible place, they made very advantageous proposals to induce him to remain with them. One person went so far as to offer him a considerable property if he would stay, but nothing could induce him to change his resolution.



CHAPTER XII.

FRESH COMPLICATIONS CAUSED BY THE REMOVAL OF THE NOVIATE—BUILDING OF THE HOUSE AT THE HERMITAGE.

ON his way to and from Saint Chamond, Father Champagnat cast many a long look on the valley where the Hermitage now stands; many a time did he say to himself: 'What a capital place for a Novitiate! so solitary, so perfectly quiet, and so well suited for study; with God's help, we may have it there yet.' However, before fixing on a site, he went all over the neighbourhood with two of the principal Brothers, without finding any place that seemed more suitable. The valley of the Hermitage, divided and watered by the limpid stream of the Gier, bounded on the east and west by an amphitheatre of mountains, covered almost to their summits with verdure, or with oak and fruit trees, is a most delightful spot, especially in the summer months.

To the eye of the worldly wise, folly must have been visible in Father Champagnat's undertaking; to build a costly house without having a penny even to pay for the ground! When the report spread, that the Community was to be removed, and that a vast building was to be erected, there arose a perfect storm of criticism and blame against him. The Archbishop's approbation, his esteem and friendship for the pious Founder, could not calm the outburst of passion, or silence the malignity of slanderous tongues. Even his friends blamed him and used every means in their power to make him abandon the undertaking. Alas! the world cannot understand the works of God, its comprehension is



N. D. DE L'HERMITAGE (Loire). Built in 1824.—Page 80.

darkened by passion. It treats them as folly and their promoters as fools. 'The world,' says St Paul, 'treats us as fools.' Our Lord Himself was treated as a fool at the court of Herod, and the servant need not expect better treatment than his divine Master.

Contrary to the advice of relatives and acquaintances, the Venerable de la Salle, Founder of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, distributed his wealth among the poor, and resigned his canonry in the Cathedral of Rheims, that he might teach his Brothers a lesson of poverty, of entire self-sacrifice to God, and of renunciation of the goods of this world. On this account, the inhabitants of the city treated him as a fool. When worldlings met him in the streets, they shrugged their shoulders and said, 'See what fanaticism and obstinacy have brought him to.' Before definitely resigning his canonry, the pious Canon went to his church, prostrated himself before our Lord, and was absorbed in prayer, when two friends of his entered the church. One of them, full of worldly wisdom, said to the other with an air of feigned compassion, 'Pray to God for this poor M. de la Salle, he has lost his wits.' 'You are right,' said the other, 'he has really lost his wits, but the wisdom he has lost is that of this world, and in its place he has found the wisdom of God.'

The two pious Founders, whose life and labours are so similar, have so many striking traits of resemblance that we cannot help remarking them. 'That M. Champagnat must be crazy,' said several of his fellow-priests and others. 'What does he mean? How will he be able to pay for that large building? He must have lost all common-sense to entertain such a project.' A bookseller of Lyons, who had borrowed a sum of nearly £480 for Father Champagnat, was dining with a number of clergymen at a priest's house, near St Chamond. 'Well,' said one of them, 'it appears that you don't know what to do with your money.' 'Why?' asked the bookseller. 'It is reported that you have lent twelve thousand francs to that silly Champagnat.' 'I have not lent him any money at all,' said the bookseller, 'but I borrowed it, and became surety for him.' 'It was very wrong of you to do so; he is a rash, obstinate man, led on by pride to undertake a work that has not the least element of success.' 'I have a much better opinion of M. Champagnat; I believe him to be an excellent man, and I am confident that God will bless him.' 'No, no; it is impossible. The man is wanting in everything. He

neither understands what he is doing nor has he the means of carrying it out ; how then can he succeed ? One of these days, his creditors will come down upon him, and he will be obliged to give up all and run away ; therefore you do very wrong in thus encouraging him in his folly, and running the risk of losing your money.' 'I esteem M. Champagnat, I have full confidence in him, and I am convinced that his work will succeed. If I am mistaken, so much the worse ; but up to the present, I don't regret having rendered him such a service, and I am confident that I shall never have to repent of it.'

Father Champagnat knew very well what the public said of him ; but, moved by the spirit of God, far beyond the narrow considerations of human prudence, he was actuated by that faith and confidence which remove mountains ; and so, without any money in hand, he undertook to build a house and chapel capable of accommodating one hundred and fifty persons. The building and the purchase of the ground cost over £2400. This certainly was something to puzzle human calculations, and it is not at all surprising, that so much clamour was raised against him. However, to lessen the expenses as much as possible, the whole Community, even the Brothers engaged in the schools, as well as the weak and infirm, worked at the building ; none would remain inactive, for all were eager to take part in a work so dear to all. At Lavalla, no tradesmen had been engaged, the whole work was done by the Father and the Brothers, but here, masons alone were employed in building, while the Brothers quarried and carried the stones, dug sand, made mortar, and served the builders.

In the beginning of May, 1824, M. Cholleton, Vicar-General, came to bless the foundation stone of the new building. Such was the poverty of the House that the Brothers could not give the Vicar-General his dinner. The cook, who had revealed his difficulty to Father Champagnat, was sent to M. Basson to say that the Vicar-General and Father Champagnat were going to dine with him that day. M. Basson, who was wealthy, and a great friend of the Brothers, received the two priests with great pleasure. This was not the only occasion on which M. Basson rendered a similar service to the Brothers.

To lodge the Brothers, Father Champagnat rented an old house on the left bank of the Gier, and facing the one which was

being built. They slept in an old garret. Their food was simple and frugal, and consisted of bread, cheese, and vegetables, sent them by charitable persons from St Chamond ; their only drink was pure water. The good Father shared food and lodging with the Brothers, and usually took for himself what was worst. As there was no room in the house for his bed, he was obliged to place it on a sort of balcony, exposed to the night air, and sheltered from rain only by a projection of the roof. He slept there during the whole summer, and in winter, he took refuge in the stable. While the new house was being built, the Brothers rose at four o'clock in the morning. Father Champagnat himself rang the bell, and, when necessary, lighted the lamps in the garret. In a wood, close by, Father Champagnat arranged a little chapel, and dedicated it to the Blessed Virgin. A chest of drawers served for both credence-table and Altar ; the bell was suspended from the branch of an oak. The chapel was only large enough to admit the celebrant, two servers, and the principal Brothers, and the others had to remain outside. Here, before an image of the Mother of God, and undisturbed by any sound, save the rustling of the leaves, the singing of the birds, and the murmur of the neighbouring brook, they poured forth their souls in prayer to their heavenly Father. Each morning, the Community went to the chapel, and, after saying morning prayers, they made half-an-hour's meditation, and assisted at Holy Mass. Many a time, the people passing along the road that skirts the wood, stopped to listen to the voices that issued from among the trees ; it was the Brothers assisting at Holy Mass, and singing the praises of Jesus and Mary. After dinner, they went again to this chapel to make a visit to the Blessed Virgin, they closed the day by another visit, followed by night prayers and the Rosary.

After Holy Mass, all went to work in silence. Every hour, at the sound of the bell, they all recited together the *Gloria Patri*, the *Ave Maria*, and the invocations to *Jesus, Mary, and Joseph*. We need hardly say that Father Champagnat was always first at work ; it was he that ordered and superintended everything ; but this, according to the testimony of the workmen themselves, did not prevent him from doing more work than the cleverest among them. As we have already said, the Brothers did not build, but the workmen allowed the Father to do so, because he was a skilled hand. And very often he could be seen building all alone during

the mid-day siesta, and again in the evening, when the others were gone. During the night, he said his Office, made out his accounts, marked the workmen's time, the materials brought during the day by the contractors, and examined what was to be done the next day; one may judge from this, that his time for rest was very short.

One thing worthy of remark, which may be looked upon as a special favour of God to the Community, is, that during the twenty years that Father Champagnat was almost constantly engaged in building, there never occurred the least accident, either to himself or any of his Brothers or workmen. Many a time the Community was startled by the most imminent dangers, but these were always averted by Providence, through the intercession of Mary.

A workman, building at a great height on the side of the house next the river, fell, and would have been dashed to pieces on the rocks below, had he not had the good fortune to seize, in his descent, a branch of a tree, and hold on to it until aid reached him. He did not receive the least injury, not even a scratch, although the scaffolding and materials upon it fell with him, and what was more remarkable, the tree was of a brittle kind of wood, and the branch so slender that naturally it could not have supported so heavy a weight.

A young Brother, attending the masons on the third storey of the building, was walking along a rotten plank which gave way under him. In his fall, he recommended himself to our Blessed Lady, and instantly found himself hanging by one arm. He was in such a dangerous position that the first man, who ran to his aid, was afraid to touch him; but another mason, more courageous than the first, managed to seize the Brother's hand, and pulled him on to the scaffolding, so that he escaped uninjured, but with a great fright.

About a dozen Brothers were carrying stones to the second storey. One of them, with an enormous stone on his shoulders, had reached the top of the ladder, when, his strength failing, he let go his hold and down came his load. In falling, it struck the Brother who followed him, and threw him to the foot of the ladder. Father Champagnat, looking from the scaffolding above, saw the accident, and, considering the death of the Brother as certain, gave him absolution. The only injury he sustained, was a slight bruise of the skin; but his fright was so great that

he began to run about in the field as if he had lost his senses. This fright was shared by the Brothers, and particularly by Father Champagnat himself, who, immediately after recovering from it, returned thanks to God for this visible protection of the Brother. Next day, the Father said a Mass of thanksgiving for the same intention.

Although overburdened with work, Father Champagnat found time, both in the evenings and on Sundays, to instruct the Brothers and train them in virtue and piety. During that summer, he thoroughly instructed them on the religious Vocation, on the end of the Institute, and on zeal for the Christian instruction of children. That the Brothers might more easily remember these instructions, he left them, in writing, the substance of the principal things he had told them. The following is a short abstract of his teaching:—

‘The object of the Brothers, in joining this Institute, must be, in the first place, to secure the Salvation of their own souls, and to render themselves worthy of that immense weight of glory which Jesus Christ has merited for them by His Passion and Death on the Cross.

‘The principal means that God has given them to acquire virtue, to sanctify their souls, and gain heaven, are prayer and meditation, frequentation of the Sacraments, daily assistance at Holy Mass, visits to the Blessed Sacrament, spiritual reading, the Rule, and fraternal correction.

‘Fraternal correction is the great exterior mainstay of the Society, and one of the most efficacious means for keeping the Brothers in the spirit of their state, for preventing abuses and averting, from the Institute, everything that might compromise it. The Brothers should never forget, therefore, that, in coming to live in Community and to form one family, they have engaged to love one another as brothers, to admonish one another of their faults, and to aid one another in the great work of their salvation. Charity, which Jesus Christ calls His own Commandment, ought to be one of their principal virtues, and they must practise it towards all men, but particularly towards their Brothers and their children. Towards their Brothers, by assisting them on all occasions, by concealing or excusing their faults and shortcomings, by charitably admonishing one another when necessary, and by acquainting the Superior of it, when the fraternal correction does

not have the desired effect; lastly, by praying for them and giving them good example. Fraternal charity towards the children, consists in giving them a good Christian education. In order to render this education thorough and effective, the Brothers should keep the following points constantly in mind :—

‘(1.) Teach Catechism morning and evening, explaining and developing, according to the intelligence of the children, the mysteries and truths of our holy Religion, the Commandments of God and of the Church.

‘(2.) Make the little children go to confession every three months; prepare them with great care for their first Holy Communion; teach them how to make their confessions properly; instruct them thoroughly on the dispositions required for receiving profitably the Sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist, and induce them to have frequent recourse to these two sources of salvation.

‘(3.) Take every means that zeal may suggest to make them understand the necessity of prayer, to give them a love for it; and endeavour to make them contract the habit of praying always with attention, modesty, respect, and piety; teach them morning and night prayers, and the other prayers usually said in our schools.

‘(4.) Speak to them frequently of the Blessed Virgin; try to inspire them with an unlimited confidence in her powerful protection; for that purpose, giving them familiar instructions suited to their capacity, and calculated to inspire them with that sound devotion to Mary, which is a mark of predestination.

‘(5.) Inspire them likewise with devotion to their Guardian Angels, to their Patron Saints, and recommend them to pray often for the souls in Purgatory.

‘(6.) Make them sing hymns every day, train them in the singing of plain-chant, teach them how to serve Mass and to take part in the ceremonies of the Church; use every means to make them assist regularly and with piety and recollection at the services of the church.

‘(7.) Teach them how to sanctify their actions, their labours, and their sufferings, by offering them to God, and by being resigned to His holy will; make them understand that virtue and sanctity consist chiefly in avoiding sin, in being faithful to the

duties of one's state of life, and performing all one's actions from supernatural motives.

'(8.) Exercise great vigilance over the children, never leaving them alone in school, in the playground or elsewhere; superintending them everywhere so as to preserve their innocence, to discover their good dispositions in order to develop them, their faults to correct them, to prevent scandal and the contagion of evil; make the school attractive and agreeable to the children in order to retain them at it as long as possible, and keep them away from bad example and the occasions of offending God.

'(9.) Inspire them with respect and reverence for the clergy, and submission to the civil authorities; strive always to destroy the spirit of independence, which is the great evil of the day, and make them understand that obedience to both the spiritual and temporal authorities, is a commandment of God, and a duty which is binding at all times and in all places.

'(10.) Inspire them with a love for work, making them look upon idleness as a vice most dangerous to both body and soul, and a source of innumerable faults.'

'(11.) Train them to be modest and polite, inspire them with a love for order and cleanliness, obliging them to practise the lessons given them on these points, and to behave respectfully towards all persons, but particularly towards those of exalted rank.

'(12.) In fine, the Brothers should be models of piety and virtue for the children, in order to lead them to God more by example than by precept.'

Sustained and animated by these instructions imparted to them during the building of the house, the Brothers were remarkably pious, modest, industrious, and active. The workmen themselves were struck with the spirit of mortification, humility, and charity that reigned amongst the Brothers, and, on more than one occasion, gave public expression to their feelings on this point. And their good example was not lost on the workmen themselves, who, after admiring them, began to imitate them as closely as they could, so that they too became silent, modest, reserved in their words, and full of charity towards one another.

As the feast of All Saints was approaching, the Brothers had to return to their respective schools. Before sending them off,

Father Champagnat preached to them a Retreat of six days. He suggested to each Brother such resolutions as were in keeping with his wants and character, but to all, he strongly recommended the continual remembrance of the presence of God.

Two new schools were founded during this year; one at Charlieu, which was opened at the request of his Grace the Archbishop. The Brothers found the children of this place in a deplorable state of ignorance. For some time, their task was exceedingly difficult, but their zeal and devotedness were rewarded at last with complete success; and the school of Charlieu became one of the most flourishing of the Society.

The other school founded at this time, was that of Chavanay whose inhabitants evinced the greatest eagerness to secure the services of the Brothers. A deputation of the principal men of the place was sent to the Hermitage to accompany the Brothers to the parish; the school, having the cordial support of the whole population, was attended, from the first, by all the children of the parish.

About the feast of All Saints, 1824, Father Champagnat was released from parochial duties at Lavalla. Up till this time, and while the building was in course of erection, he went every Saturday evening to Lavalla to hear confessions, and to say Mass on Sunday. But now that he was free from every other duty, he devoted himself exclusively to the Community.

The winter season was spent in finishing the interior work of the house. As usual, the Father was always at the head of the workmen, carpenters, plasterers, etc., and the work was prosecuted with such vigour, that, in the summer of 1825, the Community could be installed in the new house. The chapel also was finished, and furnished with everything necessary for divine service. M. Dervieux, Curé of Saint Chamond, was delegated by the Archbishop to bless it; the ceremony took place on the 15th of August, the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin. The pious priest, M. Dervieux, now better disposed towards Father Champagnat and his Brothers, made him a present of a set of candlesticks, which were used for the first time on the day of the consecration of the chapel.



CHAPTER XIII.

M. COURVEILLE JOINS FATHER CHAMPAGNAT—DANGEROUS ILLNESS OF THE LATTER.

To tribulation and persecutions from without, and all the complications attendant on the erection of a vast building, was added a cross of another kind, more painful to the pious Founder than any he had hitherto suffered. At this time M. Courveille, Curé of Epercieux, and M. Terrailon, chaplain to the Ursulines at Montbrison, came to live with Father Champagnat. These were two of the little band who, at the *Grand Séminaire*, formed the project of founding the Marist Institute. M. Courveille pretended that he was the first who thought of founding the Society, and, therefore, sought to constitute himself Superior-General of the Brothers. Father Champagnat, still ignorant of the designs of God on the Society, and having a high esteem for M. Courveille and a very low opinion of himself, willingly yielded to him, and allowed the Brothers to look upon M. Courveille as their Superior.

As the Society of the Marist Fathers and that of the Brothers seemed, to the minds of all, to be one and the same project—that there was to be but one Society, under one head—the Brothers showed no displeasure at the new state of things. Besides, they expected that Father Champagnat would always be at their head, and that M. Courveille would have only a general direction over them, while devoting himself specially to the Priests. Hence,

they continued to apply to Father Champagnat in all their wants. M. Courveille was offended at seeing the Brothers apparently ignore his assumed rank of Superior-General, and always having recourse to Father Champagnat. He therefore conceived the idea of having himself specially and exclusively appointed to direct the Brothers. Before taking any step in that direction, he endeavoured to gain the confidence of the Brothers, and to attach them to himself, using every possible means to this end.

During the vacation of 1825, believing his plan sufficiently matured, he assembled the Brothers, and the better to conceal his designs, he spoke to them at considerable length, of the good which the Society was called to do, and of the different works it embraced. He concluded as follows: 'As the fathers who are here may soon be called away to different places, it is necessary that you choose some one of us to direct you; we are all at your service; it is for you to make the choice. I am ready to sacrifice myself for you; M. Terrailon, as well as M. Champagnat, takes great interest in you. However, as each of us must have his special work, it is fitting, for greater unity amongst you, that some one of us should have special charge of you; I wish you to let me know which of us you desire to be your Director. Pray God to enlighten you; reflect seriously before taking a decision; be not influenced by feelings inspired by flesh and blood, but keep in view the glory of God, the interests of the Congregation, and the good of your own souls. When you have made your choice, you will write down the name of him whom you have chosen. In a few minutes, I will come round to collect your billets.'

The Brothers, not suspecting anything, did simply what he had told them; they never thought that there was any question of separating them from him who had brought them together—from him whom they looked upon as their Father. After a few minutes' reflection, and without consultation, or even speaking a word to one another, each wrote his billet. M. Courveille came into the room again, read the billets, on nearly all of which was written the name of Father Champagnat. M. Courveille cast a look on Father Champagnat, and said to him, with a feeling which he could not suppress, 'One would say they had agreed together to give you their votes.'

Father Champagnat, feeling only his own unworthiness, and far from being offended at the ungraceful compliment paid him,

easily entered into the views of M. Courveille, believed that the Brothers had not sufficiently reflected on the matter, and asked that the votes should be annulled and a new election made. But, before the second election, he addressed the Brothers thus: 'My friends,' said he, 'I am much afraid that you do not fully understand the importance of the matter in hand. The choice you have just made is an evidence of it. If you really desire, as I am sure you do, that the election be according to the will of God, you ought to divest yourselves of self-will, discard human motives, and leave out of account any sympathies you may have for me. Think not that because we have known each other for a long time, I am better qualified than any other to direct you; on the contrary, I believe these gentlemen much more capable than I am to direct and train you. Instead of being occupied with manual work, they have devoted themselves exclusively to the cultivation of piety and the study of Religion, and have, on these matters, much knowledge which I have not. I have not the least intention of leaving you, but you see very well that temporal affairs occupy all my time, and that I cannot do all that I would for you; it is therefore necessary that someone else should undertake the charge of instructing and directing you in piety. Consequently, you are going once more to implore the light of the Holy Ghost and the protection of Mary; you will think more seriously than you have done, you will divest yourselves of every human motive and consideration, and then proceed to a new election.'

Through obedience, the Brothers conformed to all that had been prescribed. The last election, like the first, was made with the greatest seriousness, the Brothers acting with such simplicity that it never occurred to them to consult one another. Each wrote his billet and deposited it, as before, in the appointed place. M. Courveille, after having counted the votes, exclaimed, 'It is the same again.' Then turning to Father Champagnat, he added, 'You shall be their Superior, since they will have none but you.' They showed that they really would have no other, for he had again obtained nearly all the votes. The conduct of the Brothers, on this occasion, is an undeniable proof of their good spirit, and their sincere attachment to their pious Founder.

During this year, 1825, the establishment of Ampuis was founded. M. Herard, formerly on the American mission, built a school, and guaranteed £25 a-year towards paying the Brothers.

Father Champagnat now resolved on visiting all his establishments in order to see the condition of each house and to advise, with the municipal authorities, on many things for the good of the schools, that could not be settled without him.

At this time, the Institute had the direction of ten schools ; viz., St Sauveur, Bourg-Argental, Vanosc, Boulieu, Chavanay, St-Symphorien-le-Château, Tarentaise, Lavalla, Charlieu, and Ampuis. Father Champagnat made all these visits on foot, in very bad weather. The visit to Charlieu was rendered the worst of all, by heavy rains which made the roads almost impassable. Besides, Father Champagnat was very austere, and never spared himself. Some idea may be formed of his mode of travelling, from his conduct during a later visit, which he made to Charlieu. He took a conveyance at St. Etienne, at nine o'clock at night, got to Roanne at eight next morning, said Mass, and proceeded on foot, to Charlieu, where he arrived at one o'clock, without breaking his fast. He left Charlieu at four o'clock, next morning, said Mass at Roanne, took a little soup, and travelled to Vandranges, a distance of about eighteen miles. After dinner, he took the road again, travelled several hours, and feeling thirsty, went into a house, and asked a drink ; the good woman of the house offered him some wine which he refused, but he took a little water instead. During the short time he rested in this house, he questioned the children on the Catechism, and distributed a few medals among them. He arrived at Balbigny in the evening, slept at the Presbytery and started at four o'clock next morning, walked twelve miles, said Mass and continued his journey to Fouillouse, where he took some soup and fruit, and did not stop again till he arrived at the Hermitage, at about seven o'clock in the evening.

These details were given by a workman who accompanied him, and who declared, he never suffered such hunger as during that journey. 'Several times,' said the man, 'I was tempted to leave him, and to enter an inn to get something to eat.' Such being Father Champagnat's way of living during his journeys, it is not astonishing that he soon wore out his strong constitution, and died at an early age.

On his return to the Hermitage, he had other difficulties with M. Courveille. That gentleman could not conceal his disappointment at the result of the election, and looked upon the Brothers' attachment to Father Champagnat, as a slight upon his own

character. He manifested his bad feeling, even to Father Champagnat himself, and found fault with everything he did. In his opinion, the Brothers were not well directed, the novices, not well trained in piety and learning; the discipline of the house was neither strict enough nor sufficiently monastic, temporals were neglected and expensive; in a word, he said that Father Champagnat was a bad administrator, and, therefore, he took the purse from him. But the purse, in his hands, was not better supplied, indeed, very often empty, and then his bad temper found vent in invectives against Father Champagnat.

These trials and vexations, which the pious Founder carefully concealed within his own bosom, joined to the fatigues of long and painful journeys, caused an illness which brought him to the brink of the grave. In his journey to Charlieu, he was already suffering; but, making no account of his indisposition, he not only neglected remedies, but, on his return, entered upon very toilsome labours. Though he felt himself wasting with a burning fever, he would assist at midnight Mass, at High Mass, and Vespers, on Christmas Day. It was only next day, feast of St. Stephen, that, unable to keep up any longer, he took to his bed, after having said Mass. The illness gained rapidly upon him, so that, in a few days, his life was despaired of.

It is due to M. Courveille to say that he seemed very much afflicted at the illness of Father Champagnat, and wrote to all the establishments, asking the Brothers to pray and to ask prayers for his recovery.

When the report went abroad, that Father Champagnat's life was despaired of, his creditors came in crowds to press for payment. As their demands could not be satisfied, they threatened to seize the furniture and sell the house. They would have done so, had not the worthy Curé, of St. Pierre, M. Dervieux, called them together and agreed to become responsible for all the debts. A few days later, he actually did pay £240 in favour of the Society. But Father Champagnat's illness was only a beginning of tribulations. The profound sorrow into which the critical state of the good Father's health had plunged the Community, was followed by general discouragement. Brothers and novices were persuaded that if he died, all would be lost, and the community dispersed. M. Courveille's conduct, indeed, was little calculated to dispel their

fears. Instead of calming and encouraging the Brothers, inspiring them with confidence and resignation, he alienated their affections by excessive rigour and unnecessary severity. The least infractions of Rule were visited with severe repression, which created general discontent. Levity and disaffection increased from day to day, and M. Courveille thought that the most vigorous measures were the only means of repressing the evil.

He therefore began to impose severe penances, to threaten and expel subjects. This course, far from curing the evil, only increased it; for, the Brothers, not being used to such treatment, imagined that it was but another way of telling them to withdraw, and they were irritated accordingly. But their feelings became exasperated, when M. Courveille assembled them in community, bitterly reproached them, and wound up by saying, that he cared very little what turn things might take, as he intended giving up his connection with the Society, and requesting the Archbishop to appoint him to a parish. This declaration excited general murmuring and discontent, and dispelled the last ray of hope, discouraging even many of the old Brothers who had hitherto been proof against the general contagion.

Each one now gave full scope to his thoughts and words, each one began to think of his future, to concoct his plans and to communicate them to others. This one intended to return home, and notified his intention to his parents; another intended to join some other Congregation; a third, to enter some business or profession. In fine, all were prepared or resigned to quit a Congregation which they loved, but in which they no longer found that peace, union, happiness and contentment which they had formerly enjoyed.

In these trying circumstances, Brother Stanislaus was the only one that proved himself to be a man of resources, steadfast and devoted. Alone and unaided, he bore up against the discouragement of the Brothers, and against the excessive rigour and imprudence of M. Courveille; he alone never lost confidence, he alone stood true to the Institute, and proved himself a worthy son of Father Champagnat. Night and day, he was at the bedside of the good Father, lavishing attentions upon him. It was he who went to the Curé of St. Chamond, told him of the deplorable state of the Community, of the creditors' threats, and by tears and supplication, persuaded him to become

responsible for its debts. By his good counsels, exhortations and entreaties, he retained the Brothers and novices, and prevented them from carrying out their project of leaving the Society. Nor was he afraid to speak to M. Courveille, and respectfully to remonstrate with him, regarding his course of action towards the Brothers, and, in particular, his threats to abandon them. M. Courveille, instead of softening down and yielding to the Brother's remonstrance, coldly replied: 'I did not incur the debts; if things go wrong, so much the worse, I will not answer for the future. Yes, if M. Champagnat dies, I will leave, and everyone else will do the same.' Certainly, if Father Champagnat had died, all was lost; but God who had chosen him to found and establish the work of the Brothers, watched over his life, and, contrary to all human expectations, restored him to health and strength.

When Father Champagnat began to improve, and there was some hope of his recovery, the Brothers felt greatly relieved, and joy beamed on every countenance. Brother Stanislaus told him everything that had taken place during his illness. Father Champagnat earnestly begged M. Courveille to be more paternal in his direction of the Brothers, more indulgent towards them, and, above all, not to be so hasty in sending away subjects, who, in spite of all their failings, might, in time, become good Religious—but, all to no purpose. M. Courveille was persuaded that most of the subjects in the novitiate were not qualified to be Religious, and he was not the least sorry to see them abandon a vocation for which he believed them unsuited. On the other hand, exaggerating the excellence and the duties of the religious state, he required of young novices a perfection which could hardly be expected even in men who had grown old under the yoke of religious discipline, he imposed intolerable burdens on the Brothers and dismissed those who sought to lay them aside. In spite of all this, when it became known for certain, that Father Champagnat was out of danger, joy and confidence gained the upper hand, order and discipline re-appeared, and everyone was resigned to bear the yoke, in the hope that all would soon change, and things would go on as formerly.

The scene that took place when Father Champagnat made his first appearance in community since his illness, may give some idea of the attachment and affection the Brothers had for him, and of

the pleasure and happiness they felt at his recovery, for which they had so fervently prayed to God. Having learnt that one of the novices was to be severely reprimanded at the *Chapter of Faults*, which was about to take place, though he could scarcely walk, he begged of Brother Stanislaus to take him by the arm and help him into the Chapter-room. As soon as he entered, there was a transport of joy, which it would be impossible to describe; all suddenly rose as one man, happiness beamed on every countenance, all turned towards him and exclaimed: 'Tis Father Champagnat! 'tis our good Father!' These exclamations of delight were immediately followed by loud and prolonged cheering and clapping of hands. Tears of joy stood in the eyes of nearly all present. The *Chapter of Faults* was suspended. M. Courveille, who presided at the exercise, feeling hurt at this extraordinary demonstration of love and attachment for the Father, left the Chapter-room and never afterwards entered it. The good Father addressed a few words of encouragement to the Brothers, which restored their confidence and dissipated their fears.

The events we have just related were not known beyond the precincts of the novitiate, so that the good Father's illness caused no trouble in the establishments. A few days afterwards, a young man applied for admission into the Institute, and was brought to Father Champagnat's room. M. Courveille, who was present at the time, examined the postulant very closely, and represented the obligations of the religious life to him in such dark colours, that he was inclined to abandon his project. Father Champagnat, who had listened in silence all the while, perceived the sad effect produced by this conversation, and taking the young man aside, invited him to see the chapel. He was still so weak, that he could only, with considerable difficulty, ascend the forty steps leading to it, and was quite out of breath when he reached the door. After adoring the Blessed Sacrament, he showed the statue of the Blessed Virgin to the young man, and said: 'Behold this august Virgin; she is our good Mother, she will be yours also, if you come to live in this house which is consecrated to her, and she will help you to overcome the difficulties of the religious life. After leaving the chapel he continued: 'Can anyone say that the yoke of Jesus Christ is hard to bear? No; the Divine Saviour, who is truth itself, declares that His yoke is sweet, and His burden

light. I assure you that you will experience more consolation, more joy and happiness in the service of God, than in all the pleasures the world can give you. Make a trial of it and you will see. The religious life has nothing hard in it for those of good will; be not afraid; I promise you the protection of our good Mother. She will take care of you, as her child. I'll expect you here in a day or two; don't fail.'

This discourse dispelled the fears of the young man, and inspired him with joy and courage. 'Yes,' said he, 'I will come; I give you my word for it.' In a few days he was in the novitiate, and as the good Father had promised him, he experienced very little trouble, but great consolation. To obtain the gift of perseverance, he often went to pray before the statue of his divine Mother, who never ceased to protect him as her child. This young man never once wavered in his vocation, and became a good Religious.

As soon as Father Champagnat was able to leave the house, the Curé of St. Pierre took him to the Presbytery, and provided him with all necessaries during his convalescence. His kindness and delicate attentions were such that Father Champagnat remembered them ever after with gratitude. Till his death, the venerable Curé showed himself the protector and benefactor of the Brothers, and the friend of their pious Founder, thus proving that if formerly he had caused them any pain, he had done so through ignorance, and because he had been wrongly informed.





CHAPTER XIV.

FURTHER TRIALS OF FATHER CHAMPAGNAT—WITHDRAWAL OF
M. COURVEILLE AND SEVERAL BROTHERS.

THE scene that M. Courveille had witnessed in the Chapter-room, neither cured his ambition, nor inspired him with better sentiments towards Father Champagnat. He still continued his vexatious criticisms, and even went so far as to write all sorts of false reports to the Archbishop. Providence, however, put an end to these petty persecutions, and amply justified Father Champagnat's conduct, by the sudden and forced withdrawal of M. Courveille, who retired to the Trappist monastery of Aiguebelle, and did not again return to the Hermitage.

The persistent opposition of M. Courveille, and more particularly, his harsh treatment of the Brothers and novices during Father Champagnat's illness, had been a source of great affliction to the latter, but Almighty God had other trials still in store for him.

About the same time, Brother Jean-Marie, the first subject who joined the Father at Lavalla, the first whom he withdrew from the world, and, whom he loved and esteemed so much, left the society, or rather, was expelled from it. This Brother not finding the rule severe enough, asked permission to join the Trappists.

Father Champagnat neglected nothing to divert him from

his design ; but Brother Jean-Marie did not heed his advice or remonstrances, and, leaving 200 children in charge of two young Brothers at Bourg-Argental, where he was Director, he set out without waiting even for his successor, although he knew that Father Champagnat had no Brother, at that time, sufficiently trained to take his place. After spending three weeks at La Trappe, he repented of his fault, and returned to the Hermitage. He cast himself at the feet of the good Father, and begged to be admitted once more into the Society. Father Champagnat received him with kindness, and was glad to see him back again, thinking that he would be for ever cured of his illusions ; but he was deceived. Brother Jean-Marie, who, to great tact in school-management and the direction of a Community, united, in the beginning, fervent piety and solid virtue, afterwards went astray, through pride and want of submission to his Superior. He took it into his head to imitate Saint Louis Gonzaga, in everything, and with inconceivable blindness, which seemed to be a chastisement of his pride, he could not understand that all are not expected to do what saints have done. Pursued by the idea of a chimerical perfection, he carried everything to excess, deprived himself of food so as to ruin his health ; wore hair shirts, took the discipline, practised poverty to an extent that rendered him ridiculous ; kept solitary and silent in order to be always united to God. Father Champagnat employed every means that his charity could suggest, and used all his authority for the purpose of dispelling the Brother's illusions, and bringing him back to the right path ; but he would listen to no advice, and, in the end, rebelled against his Superior. He soon met with the punishment of his obstinacy. The life of constraint which he led, and the long meditations he made, troubled his mind, and brought on a nervous malady, so severe that, occasionally, he could endure neither himself nor others, and abused anyone that came near him. At other times, he gave way to incredible levity and distractions, particularly in presence of the young Brothers. When seized with a fit of this kind, he could not restrain himself, keep silence, or observe the modesty befitting his state ; so that even during prayers, he amused himself, and disturbed those about him. He became, at last, a cause of continual disorder in the house, and Father Champagnat, who had done so much for him, was obliged to send him away. On closing

the door on the unfortunate Brother, the good Father uttered the following words, which the Little Brothers of Mary should never forget, 'Thus shall be treated all those who will abandon the path of obedience to follow their own wills.'

The withdrawal of Brother Jean-Marie, was followed by that of Brother Stephen Roumesy, who was scarcely less dear to the heart of Father Champagnat. He was also one of the first Brothers of the Institute. In the beginning, he was pious and attached to his vocation, and did much good in the establishment to which he was sent. His zeal for the religious instruction of the children, and his charity to the poor and orphans, were above all praise, and gained for him the respect and esteem of all who witnessed his labours. But, as virtue, when not regulated by obedience, soon degenerates into vice, the very inclination which the Brother had for this sort of work, was the cause of his ruin. Father Champagnat found it necessary to remove him from his class, and to give him charge of the works and temporal concerns, at the Mother House. The Brother felt so annoyed at this change of occupation, that he actually fell sick in consequence. Besides, he discharged his new duties very badly, not from the want of talents, for he had rare tact for the management of affairs, but simply through want of interest and good will.

While he was in this state of mind, an ecclesiastic, with whom he had frequent intercourse, conceived the idea of founding a Congregation which should undertake the instruction and education of orphans and abandoned children. He had, long before this, communicated his designs to Brother Roumesy, and proposed to place him at the head of the Community he intended to found. The Brother, who was quite taken up with this project, begged of Father Champagnat to be allowed to follow the inclination he felt for this new undertaking. The Father answered him : ' Brother, if God had destined you for this new Community, He would not have sent you into ours. The will of God is that you remain where you are, for the change you contemplate is a dangerous temptation of the devil, which you are bound to resist. To leave your holy vocation, even under pretext of embracing one more excellent, requires extraordinary, I may say, miraculous proofs that such is the will of God ; and these proofs ought to be acknowledged as such, not by the subject himself, but by his Superior ; for the actions of a Religious, to be agreeable to God,

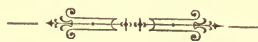
ought to bear the stamp of obedience. Whoever departs from this rule and follows his own will, becomes the sport of the devil, is deceived and lost. Seeing that his wise counsel made no impression on him, the Father added: 'Brother, I forbid you to think wilfully of abandoning your vocation. If you give way to this temptation, God will withdraw his protection from you; He will abandon you to your own conceit; you will fall into blindness; you will lose your vocation, and end badly.'

After this prohibition the Brother became sad and melancholy, and a few days afterwards, he quitted the house without acquainting Father Champagnat, and joined the priest above referred to, who received him with open arms. That same day, they began their undertaking; but, as they labour in vain that build, unless the Lord build with them, a misunderstanding soon arose between them, and two years had scarcely elapsed when they had to abandon their work; and, as Father Champagnat had predicted, Brother Roumesy led a wretched life, and died overwhelmed with grief and affliction.

The loss of these two Brothers was a great trial to Father Champagnat, as they were the only ones who could assist him in the government of the Institute. Having acquired much experience in the schools, and great tact for the management of affairs, they had become fit to render very great service to the Congregation; but they were unfortunately led astray by the illusions of self-love; both lost their vocation through the same cause,—namely, disobedience. Our Lord, who wished to try the virtue of his servant, struck him in the most sensitive part; his two best subjects, the only two who could be trusted with the management of affairs, left at the same time, to return to the world. And this loss, he felt all the more keenly, as he stood in such great need of them, had taken such trouble with their education, and loved them so tenderly. But Almighty God permitted these trials, in order to teach the good Father that he ought to trust in His Providence alone.

At the same time, the good Brother Louis was also attacked by a violent temptation against his vocation. His aptitude for learning, and his love for our Lord, inspired him with a desire for the priesthood, that he might more effectually promote the greater glory of God and unite himself more frequently with our Lord Jesus Christ. Father Champagnat, whom he consulted on the

matter, told him plainly that it was a snare of the devil who tried to deceive him, by the appearance of a more perfect life, in order to hinder the good he was doing. 'My dear friend,' added the Father, 'to love Jesus Christ and gain souls to him, it is not necessary to be a priest. In your holy vocation, you can study to love and imitate our Divine Saviour, as perfectly and even more easily than in any other state. Nowhere else can you do more good, for there is no more excellent work than that of instructing little children in Catechism, training them to piety, and preparing them for their First Communion.' Notwithstanding this wise counsel, the violence of the Brother's temptation still increased, and he would assuredly have been overcome by it, had he not been a child of obedience. The Father, who knew the Brother's docility, seeing that he was constantly occupied with this thought, said to him: 'Brother Louis, I am convinced that you are in your vocation, and that God wants you to remain where you are; consequently, I forbid you to think of the priesthood.' Brother Louis humbly submitted to this prohibition, and a remarkable fact, an evident reward of his obedience is, that, from that day forward, he was entirely freed from the temptation. The good Brother experienced the truth of these words of the Holy Ghost: *the obedient man shall speak of victory*. Not only did he regain his former peace of mind, but he received such a love of his vocation, and such abundance of grace, that he made most rapid progress in the way of perfection and in the practice of all the virtues of his state. It was thus, that the obedience of Brother Louis preserved him in his vocation, drew down on him great consolations during the remainder of his life, and obtained for him the grace of dying the death of the just, as we shall see further on; whereas the pride and disobedience of Brothers Jean-Marie and Roumesy, made them lose their vocation, rendered their lives miserable, and imperilled their salvation.





CHAPTER XV.

FATHER CHAMPAGNAT ALLOWS THE BROTHERS TO
MAKE VOWS—NEW FOUNDATIONS.

THE loss of Brother Jean-Marie and Brother Roumesy, and the dangerous temptations of Brother Louis, convinced Father Champagnat, of the need for strengthening the vocation of the Brothers by vows, and of thus steadying, as much as possible, the inconstancy of human nature. From the very beginning of the Institute, the Brothers made a promise to be faithful to God and their vocation. These promises, of course, were not a sufficient guarantee of perseverance; still, seeing the importance attached to them, and the solemn manner in which they were made, they greatly tended to attach the Brothers to the Society. The following is the act of consecration as drawn up by Father Champagnat himself: 'For the greater glory of God and the honour of the august Virgin Mary, Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ. We, the undersigned, certify and declare that we freely and willingly consecrate ourselves to God in the humble Association of the Little Brothers of Mary for five years, beginning from this day, for the purpose of labouring continually, by the practice of every virtue, for our own sanctification and the Christian education of country children. We therefore purpose:—

'(1.) To seek only the glory of God, the honour of the august Virgin Mary, Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the good of the Holy Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church.

‘(2.) We engage to teach gratuitously all the poor children whom the Parish Priest may send us; and to instruct them, and all the other children confided to us, in Catechism, prayers, reading, writing, and the other branches of primary instruction, according to their needs.

‘(3.) We promise implicit obedience to our Superior, and to all those who shall be appointed by him to guide and direct us.

‘(4.) We promise to observe Chastity.

‘(5.) We shall share everything we have in common.’

Each Brother signed this engagement, kneeling in presence of the assembled Community. It will be seen that it contains, in principle, all the obligations of the Religious life, and Father Champagnat did not fail to draw the Brothers' attention to this fact, before allowing them to make it. When this engagement was first proposed to the Brothers, in 1818, Brother Louis, who had an extremely timorous conscience, and was a strict observer of all that he promised to God, was frightened at the serious nature of its obligations, and refused to sign it, notwithstanding the advice of Father Champagnat, and the friendly invitation of his Brothers. Brother Jean-Marie was surprised, and even scandalised, at this refusal, and asked Father Champagnat, what he thought of Brother Louis, and what would become of him? Would he not go astray and lose his vocation? ‘I know Brother Louis,’ answered the Father; ‘he is a sound Religious, and firm in his vocation; if he has not signed the engagement it is owing to his delicate conscience; he will sign it later on, and in the meantime, he will faithfully practise all the obligations of our engagement. The Father then repeated twice, ‘Brother Louis is an excellent young man; he has still his baptismal innocence. He is one who will never trifle with his duty, I give you my word for it; he will persevere in his vocation.’ Splendid eulogy! which has all the more weight from the fact that the good Brother never once belied it, but most fully realised it. When Father Champagnat forbade him to think of entering the priesthood, he put an end to the temptation by asking at once to make his profession—a favour that was not denied him.

To the end of his life, Brother Louis was remarkable for his spirit of mortification, his regularity, his attachment to the Institute, and above all for his great love of God. Speaking of the divine love to a Brother, his intimate friend, a few months

before his death, he said that, in his meditations and Holy Communions, he felt so inflamed with ineffable delight that he was quite enraptured. 'You make your meditation on the love of God,' said the Brother. 'Not only my meditation, but all my other exercises; I can scarcely think of anything else, and the only thing I desire, is to contemplate and love our divine Lord.' It was in these dispositions that he died on the 3rd of August, 1847, after a long and painful illness, during which he did not miss one of his customary Communions.

It was at the close of the retreat in 1826, that the Brothers made the first vows. They were of two kinds:—Temporary vows, made for three years, and the perpetual vows. As the vow of Chastity might give rise to difficulties, this vow and that of Poverty were delayed afterwards, until the Brothers made profession; and the Novices, after the two years' probation, were admitted to make the temporary vow of Obedience only. At first the vows were made without any ceremony, and immediately after receiving Holy Communion. Later on, a special form was drawn up and inserted in a register kept for the purpose. This form was signed kneeling, by the Brothers who made the vows.

In spite of the great trials, to which the Institute was subjected this year, it continued to prosper. The subjects who had left or had been dismissed during Father Champagnat's illness, were replaced by others who were animated by better dispositions. At the close of the annual retreat, three new houses were founded, namely: Saint-Paul-en-Jarret, Mornant, and Neuville-sur-Saône. M. Tripier, a man of great faith and piety, bore all the expenses of the foundation at Neuville. He, moreover, requested the Brother Director not to be backward in asking him for anything he might require, adding that he would be displeased, if, through timidity, the Brothers did not take advantage of his readiness to supply all their wants. The Brother Director profited largely by the generous offer of M. Tripier. On all occasions, he had recourse to his benefactor, either for the wants of the Community, or those of the school and the poor children who frequented it, and he was never disappointed. One day the Brother Director, having asked him for a sum of £20, M. Tripier placed the money on the table, then clasping his hands, and raising his eyes to heaven, exclaimed:—'My God, I thank Thee for giving me the grace to bestow, in works of charity, this money

which Thou hast given me. I know that of myself, I am incapable of such an act of virtue.' Then turning to the Brother Director, who seemed surprised at these words, he said :—' Yes, Brother, I consider it a special favour on the part of God to permit me to give you this money, and to devote all I have to the interests of Religion, and the relief of my brethren, the poor. How many there are, more wealthy than I, who give little or nothing, because they have not received the gift of Charity and detachment. My God !' he added, ' grant that I may be ever grateful for this benefit, and never permit me to become unworthy of it, and so perhaps to lose it.' This worthy gentleman was the father of the poor, among whom he distributed his great wealth. Towards the end of his life he had to depend on his friends for support, and at his death, there was not left so much as would pay his funeral expenses. Father Champagnat frequently visited the establishment of Neuville, not only because of his affection for the Brothers, but also to have the pleasure of seeing M. Durand the Parish Priest, his intimate friend and counsellor. M. Durand, formerly Superior of the Little Seminary of Alix, was an ecclesiastic of great learning, of rare piety, and profound judgment. Father Champagnat said that no one ever understood his work so well, or gave him better counsel, than this gentleman, in all matters connected with the Institute. M. Durand, who was thoroughly instructed in the principles of the religious life, was moreover a wise and prudent Director for the Brothers. He was equally opposed to rigorism and to relaxation. ' Keep to your Rule,' he would say to the Brothers, ' and be convinced that, without it you can do no good. Were you to work miracles, if you do not observe your Rule, you will be bad Religious. A captain at sea, who has neither chart nor compass, must necessarily go astray and be wrecked ; in like manner a Religious who neglects his Rule will fall into the snares of the devil, and will not persevere.' On two or three occasions, perceiving a Brother appearing to have good qualities, but who was irregular, and inclined to idleness, this good priest said to the Brother Director : ' You will not retain this subject, and I warn you that he will end badly.' A few days afterwards, having caught this Brother eating some fruit between meals, he said to him, ' Your want of mortification will make you lose your vocation ; and your idleness will cause you one day to have to beg your bread.' ' I am not thinking of abandoning my

vocation,' answered the Brother, somewhat piqued ; ' but, even if I should do so, I could live comfortably at home.' ' I tell you,' said the Curé, ' that you will yet have to beg your bread.' It was not long before the prediction was fulfilled. The Brother abandoned his vocation ; in a short time he squandered a fortune of £1200, and was, at the end of his days, obliged to live on alms.

The rules regarding visits and intercourse with seculars, appeared so essential to M. Durand, that he believed a Brother could not persevere in his vocation if he did not observe them. One day, meeting a Brother, who was taking a walk alone, he went up to him and said : ' Brother, I would rather meet a wolf, than meet a Brother alone ;' and as the Brother sought to excuse himself, M. Durand added : ' You might be accused of any crime here, and you could not defend yourself, being alone, contrary to your Rule.'

This year, some abuses occurred in the way of visits and excursions. Father Champagnat was informed that in several establishments, there had been rather large gatherings, that the Brothers of two or three houses had met, by appointment, for a pic-nic in the country, and that others travelled about alone, without necessity. He admonished all these Brothers, and wrote to them in touching words, to remind them of their duty, and to enforce the regular observances ; but his charitable remonstrances had little effect. Deeply grieved at this state of things, which might easily have led to the worst consequences, he resolved upon the most energetic means to repress the growing abuse. As soon as the Brothers had arrived at the Mother-House for their vacations, he assembled them in the Chapter-Room, and having condemned in the severest terms, the irregularities of the past year, he ordered the culprits to confess their fault in the presence of the whole Community. The severe reprimands which he addressed to them, made a salutary impression on the minds of all present, and each Brother declared that, for the future, he would faithfully observe the Rule on this point, as well as on every other. The abuse was thoroughly corrected, and had it not been for the evil dispositions of two or three Brothers, who, by their irregular intercourse with seculars, had imbibed the spirit of the world, and compromised their vocation, the matter would have ended here ; but these Brothers, piqued at this public reprimand, and not having sufficient humility to bear it in silence,

murmured against Father Champagnat, and even taxed him with tyranny in their regard. One of them, in particular, who, during several years, had been a pious and careful Director, felt exceedingly irritated; he openly failed in the respect due to the good Father, and allowing himself to be overcome by pride and the evil spirit, asked permission to leave the Society, and, in the end, abandoned his vocation. When he was on the point of leaving, a Brother, who took great interest in him, and with whom he had made his novitiate, took him aside and said to him: 'Brother, have you seriously thought over what you are doing? Do you know that your salvation may depend on your vocation?' 'Yes, I know it.' 'How, then, does it happen that you, who have been brought into the Society by Providence, now leave it, at the instigation of the devil?' 'What can I do? I have made up my mind; I cannot help it.' 'You can do otherwise, if you wish.' 'No; I cannot; for, besides having lost my vocation, I feel an irresistible power dragging me away in spite of myself.' 'It is the devil that drags you.' 'Let it be the devil, or whatever else it may, I must go, for I suffer horribly, and can remain no longer.' 'But don't you see that you are going on the way to hell?' 'I know; I understand.' 'What! you are convinced that you are on the road to hell, and you won't turn back!' 'No, it is impossible for me to turn back, though I believe I am going straight to the abyss. Unfortunate man! Your blindness and obduracy make me tremble.' 'You may well tremble, for you may fall like me. As long as I kept the Rule, I loved my vocation as much as you love yours, but now I detest it, as much as I loved it once.' 'You admit then, that you did wrong to violate the Rule?' 'Certainly I admit it: I never denied it.' 'Why then do you blame the Father Superior for reprimanding you; and why do you return to the world, instead of repenting of your fault, and atoning for the evil you have done?' 'I return to the world because God has abandoned me, and I am a reprobate!' Uttering these words, he turned round and walked off. During this dialogue, of which only the substance is given here, his countenance and his tone of voice were frightful, and the Brother who tried to reclaim him, was actually terrified. The wretched apostate Brother went away, in spite of all that was done to keep him, thus affording another proof of the saying of St. Bernard: 'You will more frequently see seculars converted, than bad Religious

reclaimed to virtue.' And these others of Cassian : 'It is easier to convert a great sinner than a lukewarm Religious.' Why? Because, as St. Augustin says, 'God rejects careless souls that openly violate their engagements and abuse His grace.'

After the retreat of 1827, Father Champagnat founded two new houses, that of Saint Symphorien d'Ozon, at the request of M. Dorzat, the Curé, who defrayed all the expenses of the establishment ; and that of Valbenoite, at the request of the Parish Priest, M. Rouchon. M. Rouchon had tried to establish a Congregation for the instruction of youth ; but, having learned that Father Champagnat had already founded one for the same object, he proposed a fusion of the two Communities. For this purpose, he and about ten of his subjects visited Father Champagnat at Lavalla. But when the Brothers of the two Communities met, it was evident to both that union was impossible. The Novitiate of Lavalla was composed of simple, illiterate, and coarsely attired young men ; the building, the furniture, the food, all denoted poverty, privation, and sacrifice. The Brothers of Valbenoite, on the contrary, appeared to be well instructed, were respectably clad, they had an air of refinement, and all the manners of good society. After having seen the Brothers of Lavalla occupied in building their house, and inspected the dormitory, the kitchen, and refectory, they went away without even mentioning the object of their visit. Five years later, M. Rouchon came to ask Father Champagnat for Brothers, because his own, having disagreed among themselves, had left the schools and gone away. The good Curé paid all the expenses of the new foundation, and four Marist Brothers were sent to Valbenoite.





CHAPTER XVI.

FATHER CHAMPAGNAT COMPLETES THE COSTUME OF THE BROTHERS—
CLOTH STOCKINGS—NEW PRONUNCIATION OF CONSONANTS.

IN 1828, Father Champagnat completed the costume of the Brothers. When, in 1824, his Grace, Archbishop Gaston de Pins, was nominated to the diocese of Lyons, the Father gave the Brothers the soutane, the mantle, the three-cornered hat, and the white rabat. When they made their vows, he added a cord, for the vow of Obedience, and a brass cross, set in ebony, for those who made Profession. He also arranged that the soutane, which, up to that time, had been buttoned, should be fastened with hooks and eyes, to about midway down, and that the remainder should be sewed. Several reasons induced him to make this alteration, the principal of which were that, arranged in this manner, it was more modest, and consequently more befitting their state; it was more easily kept neat and tidy; for the buttons, after some time, becoming worn and soiled, disfigured the soutane. Heretofore, the Brothers wore either worsted or cotton stockings, which they bought when necessary; but Father Champagnat soon perceived the abuses which this might give rise to:—

(1.) If ordinary stockings were used, they could not conveniently be supplied at the Brothers' store, and uniformity, in this part of the Brothers' costume, would become impossible.

(2.) In allowing the Brothers to purchase their own stockings, they were exposed, notwithstanding all the precaution that could

be taken, to depart from the spirit of simplicity, humility, and poverty, prescribed by their Rule. Experience proved that the Father's fears were well founded, for several Brothers had already begun to wear silk stockings; some bought stockings of bad quality, others got them as presents, and some were at a loss how to procure them.

(3.) Another still greater inconvenience was, that the knitted stockings had to be mended by women, which necessarily caused the Brothers to have frequent communications with them. Such were the principal reasons that induced Father Champagnat to give his Brothers monastic or cloth stockings. Nevertheless, he effected this change with caution and prudence; he did not withdraw the ordinary stockings all at once, but was content to establish the principle that cloth stockings should be worn, and he gave a pair to each Brother, with an injunction to wear them on Communion days, and not to approach the holy Table with knitted or woven stockings.

These changes in the costume of the Brothers, were followed by a modification of the method of teaching. Up to this time, the Brothers, in teaching the children to read, had followed the ordinary method, that is by spelling the words according to the old pronunciation of the consonants. Father Champagnat, being convinced that this method increased the difficulty of teaching to read, adopted the new names given to the consonants and prescribed the old system of spelling. But the Brothers, not being accustomed to this, unanimously rejected it as an innovation. After having explained the unquestionable advantages of the new method, and proved the inconvenience of the old, seeing that the Brothers did not enter into his views on the matter, Father Champagnat proposed that they should make a proper trial of the new method during the year, that, at the next vacations, they might know by experience whether it was preferable or not. They should then decide accordingly. The good Father, distrustful of his own light, proited by this delay to consult many competent persons, who, after a serious examination of the question, unanimously advised him to adopt the new pronunciation of the consonants, as being more rational than the old, and better calculated to further the progress of the children. The Brothers, who were prejudiced against the new method, did not give it a fair trial, and were only half satisfied with it, so that, when the

vacations came, they almost unanimously pronounced against its final adoption. The Father, having assembled them in council, to deliberate on the matter, each one brought forward a host of objections, with the greater force and energy, as he believed them to be perfectly well founded. When the Father had heard the objections and observations of each, and had clearly shown the advantages of the new method, he decided that it must be adopted. 'But,' said a Brother, 'nearly all the Brothers find this new method defective; how then are we to believe that it is better than the old one? and besides, are we justified in adopting a measure which the majority reject?' 'My dear Brother,' answered the Father, 'there are cases in which opinions should be weighed rather than counted. You, Brothers Directors, who have not charge of the lower classes and are prejudiced against this method, have neither sufficiently studied it nor given it a fair trial. The few who have done so think well of it, and do not experience the difficulties that you mention; on the contrary, they find it much superior to the other method, and well calculated to accelerate the progress of the children. All the competent persons whom I have consulted on the subject, are of the same opinion; we therefore act very wisely in adopting it, even against the decision of the majority, who are prejudiced against it, and judge without knowledge of the matter.'

But the new method did not occupy the mind of the Brothers so much as did the cloth stockings, against which several Brothers felt great repugnance, especially some who were deficient in the religious spirit, and considered that they should have their way in everything; they took advantage of this state of affairs, and tried to turn the Brothers against Father Champagnat, and to compel him to sanction the use of ordinary stockings. They appointed their spokesman, and had their proofs all ready.

According to them, these stockings had every imaginable defect; for some, they were too warm, and caused excessive perspiration of the feet; for others they were not warm enough, and brought on colds; for the greater number, they were uncomfortable, hurt the feet, and made it impossible to travel any distance; a few thought that they did not fit well, and exposed them to the sarcasms of seculars. Finally, their price was declared to be of itself a sufficient reason for rejecting them. It was argued that being much dearer than the ordinary stockings, their adoption would be a violation of holy Poverty. The Brothers

urged these reasons very earnestly and persistently, both in private conversation among themselves, or with Father Champagnat, and in the council meetings.

After hearing all the objections, Father Champagnat said: 'My friends, don't you see the inconsistency of your arguments against cloth stockings? They cannot be at the same time too warm and too cold. As to the price, the objection is not well founded; for, although a pair of cloth stockings costs more than a pair of knitted ones, they last twice as long, and therefore, in reality, are cheaper and consequently more in keeping with the spirit of poverty. But even though the cloth stockings were dearer, the objections to the others are such that I shall never consent to their use. Besides, I understand perfectly that the principal reason, or to speak plainly, the only reason, of your preference for the worsted stockings, is because they fit better, or, let me say the word, because they are more worldly. But, I ask you, is it not a shame to object to cloth stockings, from such low motives,—motives which you could not publicly avow without blushing? During the whole year, I have recommended this matter to God; I have examined, and weighed all the advantages and all the inconveniences of the two kinds of stockings; I have consulted wise and enlightened persons on the subject; I have tried them myself, and have worn them in my journeys; everything confirms me in the belief that it is God's will that we should wear cloth stockings, and I am determined to adopt them.'

After this declaration, the question of the stockings appeared to be settled; for, by far the greater number of the Brothers had thoroughly acquiesced in the reasons given by the good Father; but two or three turbulent characters, who had made up their minds to leave the Society, no matter what the result of the debate might be, were irritated at Father Champagnat's determination, and the submissiveness of the Brothers. They tried to form a party in the Community, for the purpose of protesting against the decision of the Superior. They gained over a few of the young Brothers; then, they tried some of the older ones, and finally, they enlisted one of the chaplains on their side. He promised to urge the matter on the consideration of Father Champagnat. This was a great victory for the intriguers, who did not fail to give public expression to their joy, believing that

their point was gained. Relying on the authority and character of the priest who had taken their part, the most forward of them, the chiefs of the intrigue, now boldly declaimed against the cloth stockings. During their recreations, they formed into groups, and spoke of nothing but the hooked soutane, the stockings, and the new method of teaching to read.

They were discussing how they might compel Father Champagnat to recall his decision, when they learned that the Vicars-General, who were just then at St. Chamond, purposed visiting the Hermitage next day. Immediately a plan was formed to lay their grievances before them, and to ask for the maintenance of established usages. A petition was drawn up, and signed by all the members of the opposition; but, seeing the small number of signatures, one of the party went boldly through the class, and presented the petition for signature to the Brothers who were at study. By this means, he obtained a good number of names, for several Brothers signed the paper, without even reading its contents, and, unfortunately, the Brother who presided took no notice of what was going on. One of the senior Brothers felt indignant at this proceeding, and left the study. He immediately assembled a few of the most pious and devoted members of the Community, and said to them: 'Are we not going to oppose that spirit of insubordination which is raising its head amongst us, and threatening to carry all before it? Can we allow a few intriguers to disturb the Community and pervert the Brothers? My opinion is, that we should crush this revolt, and put an end to the scandal.'

The Brothers thus addressed, admitted the gravity of the evil, and agreed that it should be stopped at once. The first thing they decided upon was to go to Father Champagnat, to express their grief at this state of things, and ask his advice how to act in the matter. They, therefore, went in a body, into his room and addressed him as follows:—'Father, we are deeply grieved at what is taking place in the House; we come to express our entire submission to you in everything, and especially in the matters of the cloth stockings, the soutane hooked and sewed in front, and the new method of teaching reading; and, as the opposition party are presenting a petition to the Vicars-General, laying their pretended grievances before them, we beg that you will permit us to draw up a counter petition.'

Father Champagnat was extremely consoled by the conduct of these Brothers. He expressed his entire satisfaction, with the steps they had taken, praised their devotedness and submissiveness, and after a moment's reflection, added :—' Leave me alone, for a few hours, that I may examine before God, what you ought to do. In the meantime, pray yourselves to the Holy Ghost that He may direct me aright.'

On leaving the Father's room, the Brother, who had started this reaction, met an old Brother, who had allowed himself to be seduced, and who had written and signed the petition ; and addressed him thus : ' What ! Brother, are you also on the side of the rebels ! Do you not blush for shame ; you, one of the oldest amongst us, who should be a model of perfect submissiveness and obedience ! Do you want to break our good Father's heart ? If you knew the pain you cause him, you would not act as you are doing. Take my word for it, you will have to render an account to God for all the scandal you are giving.' These words were like a thunder-clap for the guilty Brother, whose simplicity and good nature had allowed him to be dragged into the party. ' But, inquired the Brother, is the Father-Superior so greatly displeased then ? ' ' Certainly, he is so much afflicted that he can neither eat nor drink. Did you not remark his absence from dinner ? ' ' Where was he ? ' ' He was in his room, weeping over the scandal that is being given.' The good Brother was startled by this conversation, and did not delay a minute to repair his fault. He went straight to Father Champagnat, cast himself at his feet, begged his pardon, and offered to give any satisfaction he might deem necessary. A few hours afterwards, he asked pardon of the Community assembled in the refectory for supper, and promised entire submission to the will of his Superior.

This unexpected change and public reparation surprised everyone and more particularly those who had signed the petition ; but the leaders, instead of being moved by this example, only laughed at him ; they looked upon it as a meanness and weakness of character, and became all the more obstinate in their insubordination. However, this conversion produced a division in their party ; those who, through weakness, had joined the opposition and, above all, those who signed the petition without knowing its contents, separated from the rebels, and several of them publicly asked

pardon for their fault. At the same time, word came to the Brothers that the Vicars-General were suddenly called back to Lyons, on urgent business, and could not make the intended visit to the Hermitage.

Such was the state of things when Father Champagnat, who had taken a day to examine the matter before God, sent for the Brothers who had remained faithful and had promised their entire submission to him. He once more reminded them of his reasons for the intended changes, and expressed his firm determination to have them carried out. 'This opposition,' he said, 'has grieved me very much, but I have not for an instant thought of yielding to it; on the contrary, I am resolved to dismiss all those who will not submit. This is what I want you to do. You will erect an altar in the chapel, against the wall on the south side; on this altar which you will carefully and tastefully decorate, you will place the statue of the Blessed Virgin, and surround it with a great number of candles. You will keep the chapel door closed, and take care that no one be informed of these preparations. When we go to the chapel for the visit to the Blessed Sacrament, after night prayers, you will have all the candles lighted on the altar, and, as soon as the Brothers have taken their places, one of you, in the name of all the others, will ask me in a loud voice for the cloth stockings, the hooked soutane, and the new method of teaching reading. Write out what you propose to say and show it to me, before reading it.' All was done as the Father had directed, and so discreetly that no one in the House knew what was going to take place. In the evening, after the subject for next day's meditation had been given out, the Community, as usual, went to the chapel to adore the Blessed Sacrament. All were surprised to see the new altar and the lighted candles on it. Each one asked himself what the meaning of this might be. When the Brothers had adored the Blessed Sacrament, Father Champagnat, who was kneeling on the steps of the principal altar, rose and turned towards the Brothers. Then one of the Brothers advanced, knelt before the Father and made the request as agreed on, in the following terms:—

'Reverend Father, profoundly grieved at what is going on in the house, and wishing to walk always in the path of obedience and perfect submission, we beg to express our lively sorrow for the scandal existing in our midst, and we desire to give a public

proof of our entire submission to your will. Therefore, prostrate here before our Lord Jesus Christ, and in presence of Mary our divine Mother, we ask you to give us the cloth stockings, the soutane with hooks and eyes, and we promise to wear them all our lives. We further promise to follow in our teaching no other rules than those you have given us, and, in particular, to adopt the new pronounciation of consonants. Finally, in what relates to these and all other matters, we promise entire conformity to your will.'

When the Brother had finished, Father Champagnat said, in a loud voice: 'Let all those who wish to be good Religious, and true children of Mary, come over here beside their divine Mother,' pointing at the same time to the altar before which he invited them to go; he repeated: 'Let all the children of Mary come over here, beside their Mother.' Almost all rushed over to the altar, and crowded round it, so that there remained behind only a few Brothers, who, owing to their surprise, had not clearly understood what was said. But Father Champagnat having added: 'The place for the Children of Mary is here, beside her altar; the place for the rebels is over there, against the wall.' In an instant there were only the two rebel leaders remaining; they watched with anxious eyes the scene that was passing before them. Father Champagnat then addressed them personally, saying: 'Will you remain there?' They coldly answered: 'Yes.' Next day both were sent away. On the same day, all the other Brothers who had joined the opposition, begged pardon before the whole Community, and manifested great sorrow for their fault. However, it may be remarked here, that, of all those who signed the petition, only two persevered in their vocation; all the others left the Society. The perversity, obduracy, and blindness of the two Brothers who persisted in their revolt, and were expelled from the Institute, may well furnish matter for serious reflection. It may be asked, what brought them to this? These two Brothers, as well as the greater number of those who joined them and lost their vocation afterwards, were clever subjects. For a long time, their piety, their zeal for the Christian instruction of children, and their attachment to their vocation, had been subjects of consolation to our pious Founder, and of edification to the Brothers. The sole cause of their ruin was the violation of the Rules concerning intercourse with seculars. These Brothers were among those who, the

previous year, had incurred a severe reproof for their irregular visits. Their intercourse with the world, and their too frequent visits, even from one establishment to another, gradually weakened their piety and the love and spirit of their holy state. These Brothers had almost imperceptibly contracted the defects of the persons whose company they frequented; their thoughts and affections, and their whole conduct had become worldly. Is it any wonder then that they could not bear the trial of the cloth stockings? One abyss leads to another, says the prophet. The first faults of these Brothers were only slight and insignificant; but, by degrees, they fell into graver ones, this led them to acts of insubordination, into blindness and obduracy, which ended in the scandal just narrated.

‘For a Religious,’ said Father Champagnat, ‘even necessary intercourse with the world is not without danger; it is one of the great rocks on which vocations are wrecked. It is one of the gates by which the religious spirit leaves the monastery, and the spirit of the world enters into it, with its train of abuses and vices. It is by intercourse with seculars that friendship and dangerous connections are formed, that the heart is corrupted, the mind filled with worldly ideas, and devotion smothered.’

It was his profound conviction of these truths that caused Father Champagnat to draw up those wise and prudent rules, which he has left us, to regulate our intercourse with persons of the world. In explaining these rules, to which he attached the greatest importance, he constantly repeated:—‘Be faithful to them, if you wish to preserve the spirit of your state and your vocation; for you cannot violate them without exposing yourselves to lose both the one and the other. There is one fact, which we must state here, in confirmation of the teaching of our pious Founder: it is this, of all the Brothers Directors, who, up to the present, have had the misfortune to lose their vocation, there are more than four-fifths, whose unfaithfulness can be attributed to no other cause than the violation of the rules concerning intercourse with seculars.





CHAPTER XVII.

FURTHER PROSPERITY OF THE INSTITUTE—FATHER CHAMPAGNAT
TRIES TO OBTAIN ITS AUTHORIZATION BY THE GOVERNMENT.

THE commotion recorded in the preceding chapter was not known outside the house, nor did it retard the progress of the Institute. The number of subjects still increased, and this year two new houses were opened ; that of Millery and that of Feurs. The same year, the Civil Authorities of the Department, who were always friendly towards the Brothers, gave them a public mark of sympathy and satisfaction on account of the successful manner in which the Brothers conducted their schools. M. de Chaulieu, who was then Prefect of the Loire, wrote to Father Champagnat, telling him that the Council-General had voted a grant of £60 to help the Novitiate of the Little Brothers of Mary. This mark of kindness was the more pleasing to Father Champagnat as it had never entered his mind to ask the like. The grant was paid regularly and unsolicited every year until 1830.

For some time past, Father Champagnat had resolved upon applying to Government for the legal authorization of the Society. The favour just received from the Council-General and the Prefect of the Loire, made him think that the time was then favourable for proceeding with this important matter. The changes, affecting primary instruction brought about by the famous Ordinances of 1828, made this authorization absolutely necessary,

in order to dispense the members of the Society from military service. Previously to 1828, primary instruction was under the control of the Bishops, and the Brothers could easily obtain dispensation from the conscription. Moreover, the Society not being numerous, had only a few postulants subject to the law. Father Champagnat drew up his petition and framed the Statutes of the Congregation for the purpose of submitting them to the Royal Council of Public Instruction. When these documents were ready he brought them to Monseigneur de Pins, Archbishop of Lyons, who had just then been created a Peer of France, and who undertook to press the matter upon the attention of the Government. As this illustrious Prelate had great influence with the Heads of the Department for Public Instruction, and had gained the confidence of the King, the Father's application met with complete success. The Ordinance, approving the Society of the Little Brothers of Mary, had been drawn up and presented to the King for his signature, when the events of 1830 put a sudden stop to the proceedings.

Accustomed as he was, to judge of all things by the spirit of Faith, Father Champagnat was neither frightened nor discouraged by the events of this period. Whilst everyone else trembled at the thought of what might happen, he remained calm and secure. 'Be not frightened,' he wrote to the Brothers. 'Be not disturbed; fear nothing for either yourselves or your houses. It is God who permits and controls these events. He directs them and turns them to the good of the elect. The wicked have no power but what He is pleased to give them. He can say to them, as to the waves of the sea:—"Thus far shall ye go, but no farther." Some Brothers asked him if it would not be well to be prepared, in case of a surprise, and be provided with secular clothes; the Father answered:—"The precautions that you ought to take, are to fear nothing, to be wise and circumspect in your intercourse with the people and with the children, to have nothing whatever to do with politics, to be closely united to God, to redouble your zeal for your perfection and for the Christian Instruction of the children, and, lastly, to put all your trust in God. Your religious habit is your best safeguard. Let alone the livery of the world; it can no more preserve you from danger than a cobweb can. No doubt, you see many people who are alarmed and haunted by fears for the future of religious Societies; do not share their

anxiety, and be not troubled by what they may tell you. Call to mind these words of the Gospel:—*The very hairs of your head are numbered, and not one of them will fall without the permission of your Heavenly Father.* Do not forget that you have Mary for protectress, and that she is terrible as an army in battle array.' Far from permitting the Brothers to lay aside the religious habit, he gave it to a few postulants on the fifteenth of August, Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin. Having written, as usual, to the Archbishop for leave to give the habit to these postulants, his letter caused the venerable Prelate and his Vicars-General no slight astonishment. 'What a wonderful man is this Father Champagnat!' they said; 'whilst others are quaking with fear, he dreads nothing; when other communities hide themselves and send away their novices, he only thinks of enrolling new subjects in his Congregation.'

At that time, when Father Champagnat was preparing to invest his postulants with the religious habit, there was great agitation in the country. Bands of idle workmen paraded the streets of the neighbouring towns, singing impious and revolutionary songs, and insulting and threatening respectable people. Several times, they prepared to go up to the Hermitage to pull down the cross from the spire, and destroy every other emblem of Religion. One Sunday afternoon, some persons ran in haste to tell the Brothers that these miscreants were coming. One of the chaplains advised Father Champagnat to send the Brothers out of the house, that they might not witness the scandal that these wretches might cause: 'If you like, I will take them out to walk in the woods till evening.' 'Why take them to walk?' inquired the Father, 'what have they to fear here? Come, let us sing Vespers, and recommend ourselves to our Lord; these people can do us no harm without God's permission. The Brothers very quietly chanted Vespers, and were not in the least disturbed.'

Alarming reports, however, tending to compromise the Community, were circulated among the public. It was said that the house was filled with arms, that there were vaults full of them, and that the Brothers had military drill every night. It was also reported that a certain marquis lay hidden in the house, for the purpose of raising a counter revolution, and that he taught the Brothers the use of arms. These calumnies reached the Government and a domiciliary visit was immediately ordered. This visit

was made by the *Procureur du Roi* assisted by a company of gendarmes. The *Procureur* said to the Brother who opened the door: 'Have you not got a marquis here?' The Brother, who was a good simple soul, answered, 'I don't know what you mean by a marquis, but Father Champagnat will be able to tell you if there is one; just wait a moment till I bring him in.' 'Yes! yes! you *have* a marquis concealed in the House,' and instead of waiting in the parlour, he followed the Brother who went to the garden for Father Champagnat. 'Here, Father, is a gentleman who wants a marquis.' The *Procureur*, without giving the Father time to speak, said to him: 'M. l'Abbé I am the *Procureur du Roi*.' 'A great honour certainly for us,' answered the Father, and, seeing the gendarmes surround the house, he added in a firm tone, '*M. le Procureur*, I see you're not alone. I know what you want. Well, you must make a thorough search, that you may know if there are any nobles or other suspected persons hidden here, or any weapons. You have been told, I suppose, that we have cellars, let us visit them first.' He then invited the *Procureur* and two gendarmes to a cellar which contained a well to supply the house with water. 'Examine well, gentlemen,' said he, 'and see if there be anything here to alarm the Government.' From the Father's manner of speaking and acting, the *Procureur* understood that the reports about the house were pure inventions, and he would have proceeded no further, but Father Champagnat said: 'No, sir, you must see everything, otherwise it will still be maintained that we keep arms and suspected persons concealed.' The *Procureur* then ordered two gendarmes to follow M. l'Abbé to continue the search, and he himself retired to the parlour. Father Champagnat took the gendarmes to every part of the house, telling them, as they entered each apartment, to look for arms. At length they came to the chaplain's room, which was locked, the chaplain being out, the gendarmes wanted to pass on, but Father Champagnat said: 'No, no, give me a hatchet to force open the door, we must get in, otherwise it will be said that the arms and the marquis are certainly here.' The door being broken open, the search was soon completed, for the only articles in the room were a poor bed, a small table, and an old chair.

The visit over, Father Champagnat kindly invited the *Procureur du Roi* and the gendarmes to partake of some refreshments. They gratefully accepted the invitation, and repeatedly

begged to be excused for the unpleasant business they had been ordered to undertake. The *Procureur* said to Father Champagnat, 'Fear not, M. l'Abbé, I promise you this visit will be for your good.' And noticing a building unfinished, he said :— ' You must finish that building ; ' to which Father Champagnat replied, ' there is very little encouragement, just now, to go on with works of that sort, while they are pulling down the crosses.' The *Procureur* then withdrew, assuring Father Champagnat that the visit, instead of impeding his work, would help to advance it.

A few days afterwards, this gentleman wrote an article in a St. Etienne paper, to contradict all the reports that had been circulated about the Hermitage, and was loud in praise of the establishment and its inhabitants.

Thus reassured, Father Champagnat began to prepare for the annual retreat. The greater number of the Parish Priests, were of opinion that the Brothers should not take their vacations, or, at least, that they should make their retreat in their respective houses, to prevent ill-disposed persons from trying to put secular teachers in their places during their absence. The Father, who feared that the unsettled state of the country might cause some Brothers to become relaxed and be tempted to abandon their vocation, believed, and rightly too, that there was nothing more likely to revive piety and the religious spirit, and, consequently, to insure the success of the schools, than a good retreat : it therefore took place as usual.

At the close of this retreat, the Father made his appointments and the changes which he considered necessary, regardless of the complaints and objections they might give rise to. He considered, above all things, the safety of his Brothers, and he would have preferred a hundred times, to close an establishment rather than tolerate any abuse, or leave a Brother in danger of losing his vocation. By this wise and prudent conduct, he had the consolation of preserving them all. Notwithstanding the excitement that prevailed all over the country, the schools continued to prosper, and the Brothers were not interfered with, except at Feurs, from which place they were sent away. One of the Brothers of this house having, contrary to the Rule, made rather free with a little boy, was accused of serious faults. The calumny was noised through the parish, and the enemies of Religion made

it a pretext to ruin the establishment. The Mayor, who was a disciple of Voltaire, began by annoying the Brothers in every conceivable way, suppressing their allowances, and forcing the children to pay fees, although the school had always been gratuitous. He then sought to oblige the Brothers to make concessions altogether opposed to the Rule. As the Brothers could not yield to these exactions, the school was shut up, and they left Feurs, during Holy Week, 1831. Thus the violation of a Rule and the irregular conduct of a single Brother, were the first and principal cause of the ruin of this house, and did more injury to the Society than was done by the persecutions of the wicked and the efforts of the impious. So true is it that the Rule is the guardian and protector of religious Houses, and that the violation of it always tends to their destruction. Terrible truth! which ought to make every violator of his Rule tremble. Who knows, might such a one say to himself, but that these, my irregularities, may lead to the ruin of this house? One thing is certain; the violation of the Rule, caused the ruin of the first school the Society lost.

The loss of this establishment was amply compensated by the foundation of La-Côte-Saint-André, which took place about the same time. M. l'Abbé Douillet director of the Little Seminary of that town, had formed the project of founding a Congregation of Brothers for the instructing of children. He had already assembled a few young men for the purpose in a house which he purchased, close to the Seminary. But in his great humility, thinking himself not sufficiently virtuous, and talented to carry on such a difficult undertaking, and having met with some difficulties from the Government, after the events of 1830, he offered his little establishment to Father Champagnat. The good Father went to La-Côte-Saint-André to arrange matters, and the union of the small Community with the Little Brothers of Mary, was effected. It was agreed that the Marist Brothers should take charge of the Parish School, and of the Boarding School adjoining it, and that the postulants who were in the house just then, and who had charge of the schools, should all go to the Hermitage to make their novitiate, and be employed afterwards as their Superior should direct.

Before this interview, M. Douillet had formed a high opinion of Father Champagnat's merit and capacity; but his esteem of the Founder increased very much when he came to know him

more intimately. In visiting the establishment, they walked awhile up and down the large hall in which the postulants were assembled. On leaving the hall, Father Champagnat correctly judged the character of each of them, and said to M. Douillet :— ‘The young man who is in such a part of the hall is a very poor subject.’ The young man referred to was certainly the least promising of them all. M. Douillet said, later on, when speaking of this individual : ‘I was greatly astonished to hear him describe so correctly the characters of my young men ; for he appeared to me not to notice them, and nevertheless, his description of each of them was perfectly correct.’

Under the direction of the Brothers, the establishment of La-Côte-Saint-André took a fresh start. The Boarding School increased rapidly, and became a nursery of postulants for the Novitiate of the Hermitage. Considered under this latter aspect, the foundation of La-Côte-Saint-André was a real benefit to the Society.





CHAPTER XVIII.

FATHER CHAMPAGNAT AGAIN ENDEAVOURS TO OBTAIN LEGAL SANCTION
FOR THE SOCIETY—THE BROTHERS OF ST-PAUL-TROIS-CHATEAUX—
PRINTING OF THE RULES.

FATHER CHAMPAGNAT thought it necessary to apply again to the Government for the legal authorization of the Institute. The number of the Brothers, subject to the law of conscription, was yearly becoming greater, and, since the law of 1833, on primary instruction, had passed, it was impossible to exempt them from military service, unless they had a teacher's certificate. He therefore revised the Statutes of the Society, and modified them so as to bring them into conformity with the new law. He then drew up a petition which was presented to the King, by a Deputy devoted to the Society. The Statutes were examined and approved of by the Council of the University ; but M. Guizot, who was then Minister of Public Instruction, answered, in the name of the King, that there was no reason why the petition should be granted. Whilst Father Champagnat was endeavouring to obtain the approval of Government for his Society, he prescribed special prayers to be offered up for the success of the undertaking, and he himself prayed fervently for the same intention. He said to his Brothers, in that spirit of faith and full confidence in God, for which he was so remarkable, ' I am sure that God will hear us and come to our aid. If He does not grant us the authorization we are seeking, He will furnish us with some means of preserv-

ing our subjects from military service.' His confidence in God was not in vain. He did not obtain the desired authorization, as we have already seen, because God wished to bestow this favour on the Community in a much more extensive measure than would have been the case had it been granted at the time it was sought, and in the meantime, a sure means was found to exempt the Brothers from military service.

At the very time that the Government refused to approve the Society, Father Champagnat quite providentially became acquainted with M. Mazelier, Superior of the Congregation of the Brothers of Christian Instruction of the diocese of Valence, the Novitiate House of which was at St-Paul-Trois-Châteaux. This Congregation, although having but very few subjects, was approved by a Royal Ordinance, of the 11th of June, 1823, for the ancient province of Dauphiné, comprising the three departments of Drôme, Isère, and Hautes-Alpes. From their very first interview, the two Superiors understood two things; first, that their Congregations had precisely the same object in view; secondly, that the union of the two Societies would be highly advantageous to both. Father Champagnat expressed to M. Mazelier his opinion on the matter thus: 'We have subjects, you are approved by Royal Ordinance; if we come to a mutual understanding, we can do something.' From that time forward, the project of union was entertained, on both sides, but an affair of such importance required time and serious reflection. Until the will of God should be clearly manifested, the two venerable Superiors promised to assist each other, in every possible manner. Consequently, M. Mazelier extended to the Little Brothers of Mary the benefit of his Royal Ordinance, by receiving all their subjects who fell under the law of conscription, on condition that they should remain at St-Paul-Trois-Châteaux until they obtained their certificate, and were qualified to fulfil the prescriptions of the law. The Rev. M. Mazelier rendered this important service to the Institute during ten years, that is, until the union of the Congregations, which took place in 1842. This union, so advantageous to both Institutes, was not only prepared by their constant intercourse, during these ten years, but it became in some sort a necessity, in order to satisfy the feelings of affection, esteem, and attachment, which had sprung up between the members of the two Congregations. At the time when the

union was finally settled, the two Societies had become so closely united, so completely identified with each other, that the fusion of the two bodies was quite natural and irresistible.

This union contributed wonderfully to the development of the Order, as it prepared the way for the union with the Brothers of Viviers, in 1844, and thereby opened up the whole South of France to the Little Brothers of Mary. It is thus that the refusal of authorization, which obliged Father Champagnat to come to an understanding with M. Mazelier, was a benefit to the Society. The pious Founder was right, therefore, when in prescribing prayers to obtain the authorization, he said to his Brothers, 'I am sure that God will hear us, either by granting what we ask, or by giving us something better.'

The rejection of Father Champagnat's petition, was a consequence of the principles which guided the Government that the Revolution of July had given to France. This Government was essentially hostile to Religious Congregations, and particularly to those devoted to teaching. The law of 1833, relating to primary instruction, was framed with the view of acquiring power over teaching communities, subjecting them to the University, diminishing their influence, impeding their progress, and depriving them, by degrees, of any part in the work of education. This accounts for the petty persecutions, the formalities, the vexations and annoyances of every kind, and the systematic opposition, on the part of the Government, which made it so difficult, and sometimes impossible, to open new schools. After 1830, in several places, the Brothers were compelled to serve in the National Guard; they were obliged to leave their children and give up their schools, to go through military drill and to mount guard. There were some districts in which these vexations continued for several years. Every school in which there was not a certificated Brother was shut up, no matter how clever, how devoted, or how experienced the teacher; and the certificates necessary to qualify a teacher to conduct a school, were granted by the University alone, and could not be obtained without the greatest difficulty.

It was chiefly during the few years immediately following the events of 1830, that these persecutions were most violent. The Government, having become somewhat settled, felt that it was its own interest to put a stop to such proceedings, and to adopt

measures less arbitrary and more conformable to justice, and to the religious spirit of the country.

Notwithstanding all these obstacles, several new houses were founded. In 1832, the school of Peaugres, in the Ardèche, was opened, and that of Marthes was re-opened, having been closed since 1820. In 1833, the school of Viriville was opened; in 1834, those of Saint-Genest-Malifaux, Sury and Lorette, in the Department of the Loire; in 1835, those of Terrenoire, Pelussin, and Sorbier, in the same Department.

The law of 1833, framed for the purpose of fettering Religious Congregations, and withdrawing from them the education of the young, produced a result which the Government did not expect. This law, by means of its godless Normal Schools, soon filled the country with mercenary and, in many cases, irreligious teachers, who became the enemies of the clergy, the plague of the parishes, and the propagators of revolutionary principles. When these teachers became sufficiently known, a general cry of reprobation was raised against them; the people detested them on all sides; they called out everywhere for Brothers, and no sacrifice was deemed too great, provided their services were secured. In one place the Parish Priest wanted Brothers, in order that he might preserve his children from the pernicious example of a scandalous master. In another, it was the Mayor, who, urged by his Council and by the Parents, besought Father Champagnat to accept their school, which was completely neglected by the teacher and deserted by the scholars. More frequently, it was the Priest, the Mayor, and the people who, with one accord, asked for Brothers, sent deputations to Father Champagnat, and were prepared to make every sacrifice to obtain them.

One day, a large parish sent half the Town Councillors to beg Father Champagnat to send them three Brothers. The good Father, who had no available subjects at the time, and who had more than ten times told them that it was impossible for him to comply with their request, not knowing how to get rid of their importunities, lifted from his table a newspaper containing a bitter attack upon the Society and representing the Marist Brothers as ignorant and unfit to conduct schools and to give primary instruction to children. 'Here,' said the Father in handing them the paper, 'read this article, and you will see how badly qualified the Brothers are to take charge of your school.' 'What the papers

say, is nothing to us' answered the Councillors. Give us Brothers, be they what they may, they will do better than our Voltairian Schoolmaster.

The Mayor of a very large parish and member of the Council-General of the Department of the Rhône, was much disappointed and grieved, at a refusal to supply his school, and perceiving in the yard a Brother, who was busily engaged making mortar, said to Father Champagnat, 'You say you have no Brothers to spare. There is one; let me have him, and don't tell me he is not fit to teach, for whatever he may be he will do better than our present teacher; he will take care of our children and will not set them a bad example. Another Mayor accompanied by the Parish Priest, after begging most earnestly for some Brothers, concluded by saying; 'We will not leave this until you grant our request; and since you have no Brother ready just now, give us a novice or even a postulant, for we want someone to take charge of our school, and to enable us to get rid of the godless master they want to saddle us with.'

It is thus that God can frustrate the designs of the wicked, and can draw good out of evil. Here was a law specially designed to deprive religious teachers of their schools, which, more than anything else, caused the people to call in religious communities to educate their children. The Society was never more prosperous than at this time. Vocations were numerous, piety and regularity reigned in the establishments, and in the novitiates. Their schools flourished, and on every side, the clergy bestowed praises on the Brothers for their good spirit, their devotedness, their exemplary lives, and their zeal for the Christian education of children. Studies were prosecuted with vigour in all the houses, and each year, notwithstanding the severity of the examinations, a good number of Brothers obtained certificates. Each annual retreat was followed by numerous professions. The first Brothers now arrived at middle age, had acquired experience, and authority, which they employed in training the others in piety, the virtues of their state, and in promoting regularity, peace, and union, in the different houses. The Brothers cherished their Superior as their Father; they loved their vocation, and confirmed each other in the spirit of the Society, they perfected their method of teaching and were united in virtue and the most perfect family spirit.

It is not without a special design that we give here the exact state of the Society at that time, for it then became suddenly exposed to a greater danger than any we have yet mentioned ; its very existence was threatened. M. X—— who, during several years was chaplain at the Hermitage, disapproved of Father Champagnat's manner of conducting the Society. He censured the Father's administration, and the direction he gave his Brothers. According to him, the Society could not but fail in the hands of Father Champagnat. He was so convinced of this, that he believed himself bound to represent the matter to the Archbishop. 'Father Champagnat,' said he, 'notwithstanding his piety and his virtue, has none of the qualities requisite to conduct a Community with success. He is not fit to carry on a correspondence by letter, to instruct his Brothers, to treat with the managers of the schools, or to direct a novitiate properly. Besides, he does not give much attention to such things, and devotes almost all his time to building and clearing the mountain side ; whence it follows that the Brothers are not sufficiently trained, either in piety or in the religious virtues, and they are not instructed in the branches necessary for teachers, and that many other things are neglected.' The conclusion come to by M. X—— was, that Father Champagnat should be removed from his Superiorship, and the Society amalgamated with that of Saint-Viateur, established at Vourles, near Lyons.

M. X—— was so earnest in urging his views, and manifested so much zeal and devotedness for the Little Brothers of Mary, that credit was given to his representations. The Archbishop commissioned him to treat with M. Querbes, Superior of the Brothers of Saint-Viateur, with a view to amalgamation. In the meantime, the Archbishop sent for Father Champagnat, and said to him : 'You see you have not been able to obtain authorization from the Government, and, judging by the spirit with which it is animated, it will never grant it to you. Moreover, as your Society is becoming numerous, and cannot get on without legal recognition, I wish you to unite your Brothers with those of Saint-Viateur, who are already approved by Government. M. Querbes is willing to receive your Brothers into his Congregation.'

Father Champagnat, who was extremely surprised at the proposal made to him, for which he was nowise prepared, replied, 'My lord, the Brothers and I are at your disposal, and your

Grace may do with us what you please. As to the fusion which you propose, I do not believe it necessary in order to exempt our subjects from military service, since Providence has furnished us with a means to overcome the difficulty. This fusion, in my opinion, would be the ruin of our Society and probably that of the Brothers of Saint-Viateur also, because the two Societies have each an entirely different spirit, a different manner of treating their subjects, different conditions of foundation, and rules which in many points are contrary to each other. To make our Brothers abandon their Rules, their costume, their method of teaching, their mode of life, and to adopt those of any other Society, would be ruin to them and throw them back into the world. From my knowledge of the position of matters, my Lord, I do not think that I can in conscience be a party to the proposed measure. If your Grace commands it to be carried out, I shall not oppose it; I shall resign myself to it, as is my duty, but I tremble for the consequences.' The Archbishop insisted and tried to refute the reasons advanced by the Father, but finding it impossible to change his mind, he allowed him to depart, telling him to think the matter over. Several efforts were made in the same direction by one of the Vicars-General, but with no better success. Things remained in this state, but at the Archiepiscopal Palace, a decided coldness was shown towards Father Champagnat. 'This good Father Champagnat is a holy man,' said they; 'but he holds too much to his own ideas and injures his Society by his singularity.'

Sometime afterwards, the Archbishop having come to a better understanding of the matter, changed his opinions regarding the union, and acknowledged to Father Champagnat, that he was right in rejecting the proposal. Having met the Father at the Secretary's office, the Archbishop invited him to dinner, and he said to him while at table: 'M. Champagnat, I must say, that you gave proof of good judgment, when you opposed the union of your Society with that of Saint-Viateur. I congratulate you on the course you took. I should be very sorry to-day if the proposal had been carried out, for I see, now, that I was misinformed concerning your Society.' Many a time, afterwards, on witnessing the progress of the Congregation, the venerable Prelate thanked God that the union was not effected. 'Of all the Institutions in my diocese,' said his Grace, on several occasions,

‘the Society of Marists is that which gives me most consolation. How sorry I should be now if we had not maintained it as it was founded.’

Father Champagnat had long entertained the project of printing the Rules, after revising them with the principal Brothers. From the beginning, he had conceived the whole plan of the Society and had laid the foundation of it, as we see, in the Act of Consecration which was signed by the Brothers. This Act contains all the essentials requisite to constitute a Community ; the object and the spirit of the Society are there clearly set forth, as also the virtues of Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience, which are the essence of the religious life. But the development of these fundamental principles, the special means, that is, the Rules by which to attain this object, to vivify and perfect this spirit, to practise these virtues, to establish unity of action and Community life, was to be the work of time and experience. This is why the Rules at first were few in number, and given, by the pious Founder, only by way of trial. Being well aware that what the mind conceives, and what appears perfect in theory, is sometimes impossible in practice, he wished to know by experience, what could be constantly practised, before adopting it definitely.

Therefore, in the beginning of the Society, he gave only a few general Rules to regulate the religious exercises of the Brothers, to direct them in their intercourse with each other, with their scholars, and with the public, and to guide them in their daily occupations. Each year, he added to these Rules, the details, which time, circumstances, and the development of the Society showed to be either necessary or useful ; and, although he might have meditated for a long time on any point, and be thoroughly convinced of its utility, he would never adopt it without submitting it to the examination and approval of the principal Brothers, with whom he discussed the merits and demerits of each article. Moreover, he asked each of the senior Brothers his private opinion regarding every article which had been under trial, its advantages and disadvantages, and it was only after hearing all that was to be said, for and against it, and having carefully weighed all the observations of the Brothers, that the article under discussion was finally adopted. He acted in the same manner, and with the same precaution regarding the regulations

of the classes and the method of teaching. His object in acting thus, was that he might first be enlightened by the advice and experience of the Brothers, and then adopt and impose on them such Rules only as they observed voluntarily and with entire good will.

After having practised these Rules for nearly twenty years, by way of trial, and seeing the number of houses increasing, and the difficulty of having exact manuscript copies of the Rules, Father Champagnat resolved to have them printed; but before doing so, he believed it prudent, and even necessary, to submit them to a fresh examination. He assembled, for this purpose, a number of the most experienced among the senior Brothers, and for more than six months, he devoted several hours a day to this most important work. Each article was examined and discussed separately; and some of them occupied several sittings. It sometimes happened, that, after having heard the observations of each Brother, and all the reasons for or against the adoption of a Rule, he would ask more time to pray and reflect before deciding. For example, before finally adopting the article, which permits the beverage at table to be half wine and half water, he took several weeks to consult God in prayer, and to examine, in His holy presence, what was best to be done, for he feared that this quantity of wine was too great, especially since, up to that time, it had been much smaller.

When the Rules had been thus discussed and adopted, he submitted them to wise and experienced persons, with the request that they would examine them, and give him their candid opinion of them. After going over them very carefully, they found no corrections to be made, and only remarked that they appeared to them to be wanting in details and in completeness. The reason of this was, that in this first edition, Father Champagnat did not think it advisable to insert a number of details, which, although observed in the Society, still required to be sanctioned by more time and experience before passing into law, or being finally adopted. He would establish nothing, before submitting it to a long trial, and without being sure that the practice of it was not only possible in, but advantageous to all the houses of the Society. Consequently, he preferred to leave the Rules incomplete, as he declared in the preface to that edition, than to insert several things already practised, but which he considered desirable to

maintain, but which might still require some modification before final and irrevocable adoption. He had not even any intention of giving a character of fixity to the Rules which he had adopted at the time he got them printed. On his death-bed, he made the same declaration, and said to Brother François, his successor, that he left to him full power to complete and to fix irrevocably, with the consent of the General Chapter, the Rules of the Society, which comprise the Common Rules, the Constitutions or Rules of Government, and the School Guide or Method of Teaching. This was not done until twelve years after his death.

The printing of the Rule was a matter of great joy and consolation to Father Champagnat, because this Rule was a pledge of stability to the Society, and a powerful means of ensuring greater regularity, of rendering the Brothers more exact in the discharge of their duties, and of attaching them to their vocation. 'Now,' said he, on one occasion, 'it will be easy for you to study your Rule, to meditate upon it, to acquire a perfect knowledge of it, to know all its requirements, and to observe it faithfully, for it is now in your own hands, and each one should make it his manual.' In sending the Rule to the Brothers, he wrote to them as follows: 'My very dear Brothers, it is in the sweet names of Jesus and Mary, that I ask you to receive this Rule which you so much desired, and which it is our consolation to send you to-day. I do not pretend to bind you under pain of sin to the observance of each article in particular; however, I tell you that you will enjoy the peace and consolation of your holy state, only in proportion to the fidelity and exactitude with which you observe all your Rules. Fidelity to your Rule, by obtaining for you the grace of perseverance, will secure to you an eternal crown in Heaven.' The Brothers received the Rule with the greatest satisfaction and with the resolution to be faithful to it all their lives.





CHAPTER XIX.

FATHER CHAMPAGNAT'S DEVOTEDNESS TO THE SOCIETY OF THE
MARIST FATHERS—ITS AUTHORIZATION BY THE HOLY SEE—
ITS FIRST MISSIONARIES.

IN the year 1836, God granted to Father Champagnat the greatest consolation he could wish for, viz., the authorization of the Society of Marist Fathers by the Holy See. But, that this important event may be properly understood, it is necessary to go back a few years in our narrative. After the departure of M. Courveille, M. Terraillon, who did not like the Hermitage and had serious doubts as to the future of the Society of the Brothers, asked leave to withdraw, and notwithstanding the efforts made by Father Champagnat to keep him, he left about the Feast of all Saints, 1826. The withdrawal of these two ecclesiastics, left the pious Founder in great difficulties, and occasioned some unpleasant talk among the public. The good Father, left thus without help, could not attend to the direction of the Brothers and the government of the Society. Nevertheless, putting all his confidence in God, he laboured with fresh courage to repair the losses he had sustained. After long reflection and prayer he resolved to write to the Archbishop, to request his Grace to send someone to help him in the administration of the Society. In the meantime, he went to M. Gardette, Superior of the *Grand Séminaire*, to acquaint him with the state of affairs, and to ask him to recommend his application to the Archbishop. He applied also to M. Barou, Vicar-General, to use his influence

with the Archbishop for the same purpose. The following is the letter which he wrote to the Vicar-General :—

‘ VERY REV. SIR.—I turn to you with great confidence to inform you of my troubles and the difficult position in which I am placed. I am alone, as you know, and this causes serious uneasiness even to the friends and best supporters of our Institute. The public, which almost always condemns without examining, blames me for the removal of M. Courveille and M. Terrailon. All this grieves me certainly, but does not discourage me, for I have always expected trials and I look forward to still greater ones than these. May God’s holy name be blessed. I am still firmly convinced that God is pleased with this work, but alas! He may want it to be established by other hands than mine. In brief, very Rev. Sir, this is my present situation :— We have now sixteen establishments, which must be visited at least every three or four months, to make sure that everything goes on well, to see if the Rule is observed, if the Brothers are living according to the spirit of their state, if they have no dangerous intercourse with the world, if they give solid religious instruction to the children and train them in piety. These visits are moreover indispensable for arranging with the communal authorities, as to the administration and temporal concerns of our establishments. We have more than two thousand children attending our schools, and this, it appears to me, is a matter deserving serious attention. At the next vacation, we shall have more than eighty Brothers here; accounts, correspondence, payment of debts, in fact, the whole administration, spiritual and temporal, falls on me. See if it be possible for one to do all this. Now that you know my position, I hope very Rev. Sir, that you will come to my assistance and give me someone who loves the work of the Brothers, someone who will ask only the *nutritum et vestitum*. M. Séon would suit us admirably, because he loves our work, has an income of his own, and can do us much good. In conclusion I earnestly recommend myself to your prayers, for, more than ever, I understand the truth of the oracle : *Nisi Dominus, edificaverit domum, in vanum laboraverunt qui edificant eam.*’

Having secured the powerful influence of these two eminent

ecclesiastics, he wrote to his Grace a letter, which reveals the writer's most profound humility and his perfect confidence in God. The following is a portion of what he wrote :—

‘MY LORD ARCHBISHOP,—The ill success which our work has hitherto met with, so far as the Priests are concerned, deters me from coming in person to lay my difficulties before your Grace ; but the fatherly kindness which you extended to me, on your arrival in the diocese, emboldens me to ask you in the names of Jesus and Mary, not to abandon a work which you have already protected and honoured with your patronage. More than ever, I am convinced that God desires this work. The persistent efforts of Satan to destroy it are a sufficient proof of this ; but, alas ! I have every reason to believe that God wants other men to establish it. Be that as it may, my whole confidence is in Jesus and Mary. That I am here, the only priest, grieves me, but does not discourage me ; because He who sustains me is the God of Strength. M. Barou and M. Gardette, superior of the *Grand Séminaire*, have no doubt acquainted your Grace with my position. I feel confident that you will kindly consider it, and will not abandon me.’

Father Champagnat, in his letter to M. Barou, spoke of M. Séon ; because having met this clergyman, who was a professor in the College of St. Chamond, he found him disposed to enter the Society and to devote himself to the service of the Brothers ; but, fearing that the diocesan authorities might not be disposed to part with a subject, who, by his zeal and ability, appeared so well qualified to fill up the vacancies left by M. Courveille and M. Terraillon, the Father called on M. Barou to press the matter, and also to let him know, that M. Séon himself desired to go to the Hermitage. ‘*M. le Vicaire-Général*,’ said the Father to him, ‘I have no doubt that God wills the Society of the Brothers. He has clearly shown His will by what He has already done for it ; I am equally persuaded that He wants to have the Society of the Fathers ; the sad defection of M. Courveille, and the discouragement of M. Terraillon, far from weakening my conviction on this point, only strengthen it. Nevertheless, as I desire nothing but the will of God, in this matter or in anything else, I humbly submit my thoughts and feelings to you, and am resolved

to do whatever you prescribe. If you believe that God wishes the establishment of the Society of the Fathers, give me M. Séon ; if, on the contrary, you think it does not enter into the designs of God, tell me so, and I will think no more about it.'

M. Barou, who listened to the Father with much kindness and attention, said to him : ' This is a very serious affair ; let us pray to God that we may know His holy will in this matter.' They knelt down and prayed very fervently for some time. On rising again, M. Barou said to Father Champagnat : ' You shall have the Abbé Séon ; I will see the Archbishop about it this very day.' Twenty-five years afterwards, in relating this incident, M. Barou said : ' Whilst I prayed as earnestly as I could, I felt suddenly inspired to say to M. Champagnat : Continue to prosecute this establishment of Priests ; I believe that God wills it. Oh, how glad I am to-day, to have given him that advice, seeing the great blessings God has poured down on that Society and all the good He is doing by its means.'

M. Séon, a pious and devoted priest, full of zeal, and a man of sense, had no difficulty in entering into the spirit of Father Champagnat. He was always at one with him, and rendered him the greatest services in the direction of the Brothers, and in the administration of the temporal affairs of the Society. Sometime afterwards, M. Bourdin, M. Pompallier and M. Chanut followed the good example of M. Séon and became members of the Society. M. Bourdin, who was only deacon when he came to the Hermitage, had many obstacles to overcome in following his vocation. When he was ordained priest, several distinguished positions were offered to him, but he generously refused them, preferring the humble and hidden life of the Brothers of the Hermitage to all the temporal advantages promised him elsewhere. Thus was formed the small nucleus of the band of ecclesiastics, who, some years later, along with the pious priests who gathered round the Rev. Father Colin, Superior of the little Seminary of Belley, founded the Society of Marist Fathers.

Father Colin and Father Champagnat laboured together, each in his own way, to recruit subjects for this work. They would have liked to establish a common centre of action and a form of community life ; but by the restoration of the diocese of Belley, in 1823, they found themselves in different dioceses ; and they required to act very prudently, in order to obtain the consent of

the two administrations, without which they would do nothing. Before the year 1830, the question of establishing a centre of unity was raised, and Father Champagnat, who saw the necessity which existed for it, in order to strengthen the work and to attach subjects to it, proposed to Father Colin to establish it secretly, without acquainting the ecclesiastical authorities of it; but Father Colin was not of this opinion, and he said to him: 'We have never done anything in secret and unknown to our Superiors, we should not act in a different manner now. Nowhere, indeed, does our work meet with greater opposition than in Lyons; but,' he added, 'God wills it so that it may be the better tried and consolidated, so let us not be discouraged. You should address a petition to your Superiors, that we may soon be permitted to give a regular form to our undertaking. Father Champagnat therefore made renewed and pressing entreaties to his diocesan Superiors, in order that he might obtain full liberty to live in Community, with his Brethren, that they might follow their Rule, and choose, a common Superior. For this purpose, he undertook several journeys to Lyons, and wrote a great number of letters to the Archbishop and the Vicars-General. In reading this correspondence one is struck by his frankness, his openness of heart and his entire confidence in his ecclesiastical Superiors. In one of his letters, he speaks thus to M. Cattet, Vicar-General: 'The interest which you have always taken in our Society, emboldens me to entreat you again to favour its development. Whilst on all sides, associations are being freely formed, with the avowed object of furthering wickedness, why are those which have only the glory of God in view, subjected to so many difficulties? I am now fifteen years engaged in the Society of Mary, without ever doubting for an instant, that it is the work of God. Still, I repeat what I often said before: if you tell me, the work is not of God, I will abandon it at once; but if you believe it to be His, then help me to further its success. Allow me to remind you of your former promise, to give us all the suitable subjects who might desire to join our Society. There are at present several who have the dispositions necessary for our state of life, and who would render us the greatest service. If you kindly let us have them, it will be a subject of great joy to us all, and we will bless the Lord for the great favour.'

M. Cattet showed this letter to the Archbishop, and having

given his Grace an account of the prosperous state of the Society of the Brothers, and of the earnest desire which existed to constitute and develop that of the Priests, the venerable prelate promised to give to the Institute all the subjects who might feel disposed to join it. His Grace also gave leave to the Fathers of the Hermitage to come to an understanding with those of Belley, in the matter of choosing a superior; and he appointed M. Cholleton, in place of M. Cattet, to direct the affairs of the Society. Although M. Cattet's devotedness to the Society merited every praise, it was nevertheless a great advantage to be placed under the direction of M. Cholleton who had known and protected it from its origin, and who was anxious, not only to be of service to it, but to become one of its members. It may be remarked that, from the date of his appointment, the Society experienced no serious difficulty, but progressed uninterruptedly until it was finally constituted.

The events of 1830 rendered it still more necessary to have a unity which had been so long desired, and for which both branches of the Institute were labouring with equal zeal, devotedness, and generosity. The Fathers who were at the Hermitage went to Belley to arrange this matter with their *confrères*, and, after a few days' retreat, they elected the Rev. Father Colin superior. This election caused Father Champagnat the greatest consolation. For several years he had been working for it, with such zeal and earnestness, that Father Colin, who desired it as much as he, but was more calm, frequently besought him to be less anxious and to allow Providence to act. But the ardent character of Father Champagnat, his zeal for the glory of God, and his devotedness to the Society of the Priests, allowed him no repose, all the more since to labour continually, with all his strength, for this great work, was to him a matter of conscience, for he had promised to God to devote to that object his health, his strength, and, if necessary, his very life.

Whilst the good Father was taking so much trouble to obtain from the Archbishop the subjects who manifested a desire to join the Society, and to get permission to unite with the Fathers of Belley, for the purpose of establishing a common centre of unity, a Brother remarked to him that he was too anxious about that affair, that God did not expect so much from him, that he might confine his zeal to the Society of the Brothers, since Providence

had designed him specially for that work. 'My dear friend,' answered the Father, 'God alone knows how much I love the Brothers, and He is my witness, that for them, I am ready to give my blood and my life : still the work of the Fathers appears to me so important that, were it necessary in order to secure its success, I am prepared to sacrifice all that we have, my labours, my strength, and my very life. I do not yet know the designs of Providence regarding the Society of the Fathers, but I am so thoroughly convinced that God wills it, that, no matter what happens, or what obstacles it may meet with, I am determined to labour with all my strength and to my last sigh for its success.' 'Do you know, Father,' said the Brother, 'that if the Brothers knew your preference for the Fathers they would be jealous?' 'They would be very wrong in that,' answered the Father. 'All the good Brothers, all those who love Jesus and Mary, all those in a word, who have the spirit of their state, think and feel on this point, as I do. Besides, God desires that both Fathers and Brothers should prosper. He will bless both in proportion to their love of each other, in proportion to their union, and their willingness to render each other service. As for myself, I am as much at the service of the one as of the other. Since God has given me the grace to devote myself to the Society of Mary, I have had but one desire, that of seeing it constituted and organized in all its branches. All my labours in the past have tended towards the complete success of this work, and, please God, I shall labour for the same object till my last breath.

The election of a Head, or the establishment of a centre of unity, as it was then called, for this Head was not strictly speaking a Superior, was a capital measure for the success of the work which thenceforth made rapid progress. As yet, Father Colin exercised over the members of the association, only an authority of direction, and of counsel, the Fathers being still subject to their respective Ordinaries of Lyons and Belley ; but this authority, was not, on that account, less effective or less important. The Society had now every prospect of success, and its final and definitive establishment was only a question of time, and of a time not at all remote. Some of the Fathers belonging to Belley were employed as professors in the Little Seminary, the others in giving missions in the country. Those at the Hermitage,

were engaged in preaching, and giving missions, as the direction of the Brothers did not provide sufficient occupation for them.

The Brothers' manner of life and their Rule, not being suitable for priests, whose object and ministry were so different from theirs, Father Champagnat saw the necessity of separating the Priests from the Brothers, and forming them into distinct Communities. For this purpose, he offered the property of Grange-Payre, near St. Chamond, as a residence for the Fathers. The Archbishop and Father Colin approved the project, and it was about to be carried out, when a proposal, made by M. Rouchon, Curé of Valbenoite, caused it to be abandoned. The venerable Curé, who had acquired the old Benedictine convent, together with the gardens and out-houses, proffered to leave them to the Society if the Fathers would engage to live there and help him in the administration of his parish. The Archbishop having placed the Curates elsewhere, the Fathers took possession of the house and became the Curé's auxiliaries. Father Séon was appointed Superior of the Community of Valbenoite. Father Bourdin and Father Chanut went to Belley as professors, and their places, at the Hermitage, were filled up by Fathers Servant and Forest, who in their turn were succeeded by Fathers Matricon and Besson, both of whom rendered very great services to the Brothers.

On his part, Father Colin was working to obtain the approval of the Society by the Holy See. He drew up the Rules which he intended to give his future associates, and submitted them, with a full account of his work, to the Holy Father, Pius VII, the former prisoner of Fontainebleau. The Sovereign Pontiff deigned to answer, on the 9th of March, 1822, by a Brief which commenced as follows. 'We see, by the contents of the petition which you and your two companions have sent to us, that the object of this Institute of which you speak is certainly deserving of praise, and in the presence of Our Lord we earnestly recommend the project which you propose to us.'

Sometime afterwards, the Holy See sought some means of extending the Kingdom of God among the Islands of Oceanica, and Cardinal Franzoni, Prefect of Propaganda, wrote to the Council of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, at Lyons, inquiring if there were not some priests in France who would accept the perilous mission of evangelizing the people of Western Oceanica. Mgr. De Pins, Archbishop of Amasia, and Adminis-

trator of the diocese of Lyons, having been consulted, informed the Marists of the desire of Rome, to which they acceded with eagerness and enthusiasm. Only before engaging in this enterprise, which would evidently be fraught with excessive dangers and sufferings, the Fathers asked for the approbation of the Holy See, which would constitute them a religious Society. This application was too legitimate not to be favourably entertained, and on the 29th of April, 1836, the Holy Father, Pope Gregory XVI, signed the Brief *Omnium gentium*, by which the Society of the Marist Fathers was authorized, and the missions of Polynesia were confided to them.

When this Brief reached Belley, where the Marist Fathers had established their first residence, they received it on their knees, kissed it most respectfully, and listened with deep emotion while it was being read. None, however, experienced greater joy and consolation at this inestimable favour, than Father Champagnat. After returning thanks to God, he wrote to the Rev. Father Colin, requesting his permission to make profession. Father Colin replied to him as follows: 'You know that we are authorized by the brief of approbation, to elect a Superior-General. In the meantime I am far from considering myself such or wishing to act as such. Till the election I am willing, as in the past, to act as a temporary Head, but I shall certainly accept no one's vows. It is not the less true that your dispositions are a source of great edification to me.'

The Marist Fathers, to the number of twenty, assembled at Belley, where, after making a retreat, they proceeded on the 24th of September, 1836, to the canonical election of a Superior-General. The Rev. Father Colin had never imagined that there could be any question of raising him to that dignity; he thought the choice would naturally fall on the Abbé Cholleton, who was disposed to lay aside his title of Vicar-General to join his former pupils, as a member of the infant Society; but in his humility he was greatly disappointed in receiving the unanimous suffrages of his Brethren; he obtained all the votes except his own, which he cast in favour of M. Cholleton, in the hope that the others would do the same.

Father Colin, though quite dismayed at this result, had to submit to the will of God, so clearly manifested by the votes of his Religious. Father Champagnat was appointed assistant,

and in the name of the whole community, he congratulated the new General, and, without underrating the grave responsibility of his charge, assured him that all would strive by their obedience and devotedness to lighten the heavy burden which Providence had imposed upon him.

At the same retreat, the principal Fathers bound themselves to the Society by the vows of Religion, and among them, Father Champagnat was remarkable for the fervour and evident happiness with which he pronounced them. The Society of the Marist Fathers was thus definitely constituted by the authorization of the Holy See, by the canonical election of its Superior-General, and by the Profession of its first Members. After this important ceremony, nothing lay closer to the heart of the Superior-General than to obey the voice of Rome by immediately sending some missionaries to Oceanica. The Rev. Father Pompallier was appointed Head of this mission, and was shortly afterwards invested with the episcopal dignity. He was consecrated in Rome, Bishop of Maronei, and Vicar-Apostolic of Western Oceanica. The first pioneers of the Society of Mary, who accompanied Mgr. Pompallier to his distant Vicariate, were four Fathers, and three Brothers, viz. : Father Chanel, the holy Martyr of Futuna, Father Bataillon, afterwards Bishop of Enos and Vicar-Apostolic of Central Oceanica, Fathers Servant and Bret. The three Brothers who left the Hermitage to accompany the Fathers as coadjutors, were Brother Marie-Nizier Delome, the companion of Father Chanel and witness of his martyrdom, Brother Joseph-Francis Xavier Luzy, and Brother Michael Colombon. They all embarked at Havre, on the 24th December, 1836.

Father Champagnat, who burned with zeal for the salvation of souls, requested the Rev. Father Colin to be allowed to join the Missionaries for Oceanica, in order to consecrate to the instruction and conversion of infidels, the last days of his life and the little strength which remained to him. The Rev. Father Colin, extremely edified by his zealous devotedness, said to him, 'You are doing more good here in France, than you could do in Oceanica. Your mission is not to go in person to evangelize these people, but to prepare for them Apostles full of zeal and the spirit of sacrifice.' Obedience, did not permit the good Father to insist; and, in his humility, he believed himself unworthy of such a favour. Sometime after this, while conversing

with M. Douillet, Director of the Little Seminary of La-Côte-St-André, about the missions of Oceanica, he exclaimed: 'Ah! If I were young and robust, how happy I should feel to be working in that part of our Lord's vineyard, but they don't want me, because I am infirm and good for nothing.' 'It was evident to me,' said M. Douillet, in relating those words, 'that he burned with zeal for the salvation of souls, and was eager for the palm of martyrdom.' If he had not the satisfaction of spending his last days in the missions of Oceanica, he made up for it by preparing good Brothers Catechists for those missions. During the four remaining years of his life, he sent out twelve of his Brothers as coadjutors to the missionaries, and seized every opportunity of praying and obtaining prayers for the success of those important missions.

'My dear Brothers,' he said in a Conference, which he held on the subject, 'we should be very grateful to Almighty God for having chosen us to carry the light of the Gospel to those infidel nations; for this favour will become a source of blessings to the Society. If we correspond with the designs of God in our regard, He will give us all that is necessary to accomplish this difficult work; that is, zeal, the spirit of sacrifice, virtue and sanctity, which are the only efficacious means of procuring the salvation of souls. Yes, I say it with confidence, and it is, for me, a great subject of joy and consolation to think of it, the time will come when we shall have martyrs in the Society; Fathers and Brothers who will be put to death by the people whom they go to evangelize, and who will give their lives in sacrifice for Jesus Christ. Ah! what a blessing to die in such a noble and holy cause! But I repeat it, we must be faithful to God, in order to merit such graces. Let us be firmly convinced, that Providence, in confiding to the Society of Mary, the mission of Oceanica, has entrusted it with the salvation of all those savages who sleep in the shadow of death; and think not, that the obligation rests only on those who are specially selected to go into those distant countries; it is the work of all the members of the Society. If we have not the privilege of devoting our labours, our health and strength to this work, we are all the more obliged to promote its success by our prayers, our good example, and the practice of every virtue. Let each of us, therefore, consider himself bound to procure the conversion of those people, and let him constantly ask it of God,

by prayer and good works. If we are good and fervent Religious, if we faithfully observe our Rule, and the virtues of our holy state ; if we live in union with our Blessed Lord and frequently say to Him, from our heart, *hallowed be Thy name*, He will grant us the conversion of a great number of those savages. Perhaps, at the Last Day, we shall see several of our most pious and most devoted Brothers, who to all appearances, were working only for themselves, having by their fervent prayers, converted more souls to God than those who were actually sent out to the foreign missions. In a word then, I say ; 1st, that one of the principal intentions we should set before us, in our exercises of piety, is the conversion of sinners and the salvation of the people whom the Holy See has confided to us ; 2nd, that we ought to labour continually to acquire all the virtues and qualifications of a good catechist, and thus render ourselves worthy of such a sublime vocation.'

Father Champagnat had succeeded, with much labour and difficulty, in assembling and retaining at the Hermitage, during ten years, eight ecclesiastics—viz : Messrs. Séon, Bourdin, Pompallier, Chanel, Servant, Forest, Matricon, and Besson. He had the consolation, in 1836, of seeing all of them bind themselves to the Society of Mary by the religious vows, and three of these were among the first missionaries who went out to Oceanica ; viz : Mgr. Pompallier, Father Servant, and Father Forest.

M. Terrailon had left the Hermitage in 1826, and was appointed Curé of the parish of Notre-Dame, at St Chamond ; but as soon as the Society was authorized by the Holy See, Father Champagnat, who had always appreciated his talents and rare virtues, induced him to resign his parish, and to return to the Fathers, which he did without regret, and he continued to the end, a model of regularity, humility, simplicity, and obedience.





CHAPTER XX.

ENLARGEMENT OF THE MOTHER-HOUSE—FURTHER EFFORTS OF FATHER
CHAMPAGNAT TO OBTAIN LEGAL AUTHORIZATION FOR THE
SOCIETY—HIS HEALTH IS SERIOUSLY IMPAIRED—
APPOINTMENT OF HIS SUCCESSOR.

ALMIGHTY GOD continued to bless the Brothers' Novitiate ; vocations became more numerous, and not a year passed in which there were not some new establishments founded. The number of Brothers being now considerably increased, Father Champagnat felt the want of increased accommodation to receive them at the retreat. Even the chapel had become too small ; he built a larger one which was blessed by Bishop Pompallier at the retreat of 1836, and he added a new wing to the building. As usual, the Brothers took a large share in the work of erecting these buildings, and Father Champagnat, notwithstanding all his other occupations, was constantly at the head of the workmen, building during a great part of the day. On finishing this addition, which completed the house in the form of a rectangle, he had a presentiment of his approaching death, and exclaimed : ' This is my last building.' He spoke the truth.

Father Champagnat, finding the dispositions of Government somewhat less hostile to religious Societies, was thinking of making another attempt to obtain the legal authorization of the Institute, as he had done in 1829 and 1834. In the month of August, 1836, therefore, he set out for Paris, in the hope that M. Sauzet, Deputy for Lyons, and Minister of Public Instruction,

would readily accede to his request. Unfortunately, when he reached Paris, he found that the Minister of Public Instruction was changed, and he had to return without so much as presenting his petition.

In 1838, provided with letters of recommendation from the Archbishop of Lyons and the Bishops of Belley and Grenoble, he returned to Paris to solicit anew the much desired authorization. The Minister of Public Instruction, M. de Salvandy, appeared at first to be favourable to the Father's petition ; he told him that, although the proceedings might be rather long, there was no doubt of final success. In speaking thus, M. de Salvandy was not sincere, for the sequel sufficiently proved that he never intended to grant the request of Father Champagnat ; he merely sought to exhaust the patience of the good Father, by raising up difficulties, exacting innumerable arbitrary formalities, impossible to be complied with, and by proposing conditions, that could not be accepted, because they would have ruined the Society. In the first place, he took no notice of the petition, and let it lie in the Ministerial Portfolio. The Father soon perceived this, and on the 23rd of January he wrote to the Brothers at the Hermitage : ' It appears that our proceedings here will be long and tedious ; no matter, we are resolved not to desist until we have obtained what we want. The Minister has told us that our request will be brought before the Council of State, and that it will remain there for three weeks. Though it should take three months, we are determined to see the end of it. From morning till night, I am occupied with this business. What trouble, what running about, what visits ! You can have no idea of it. During the six weeks that I have been here, I have done nothing but run from one person to another. For the last two days, I have been driving about to seek an audience of the Minister, but without success ; at one time he is in Council, another time he is absent. Oh ! what trouble and expense !'

When the Minister could not decently delay the audience any longer, he admitted Father Champagnat into his presence, and pretended that there were some documents still wanting. In a few days, the documents were in his hands, but now there was no question of laying the petition before the Council of State, but before the Council of Public Instruction. Probably, the reason that the Minister did not mention this Council at first

was that the Father might not have time to interest the members in his cause, as he had done those of the Council of State; and he was very much surprised when he heard the Council of Public Instruction or the University referred to. 'I have just returned from the Ministry, he wrote,' where I learned that, on Friday, the second of March, my request will be laid before the Council of the University. At present, I am trying to find out what this Council is, which I had never before heard mentioned. Again I have been told that my affair will be ended in three weeks; I answered: let it be a month even.' After a month, affairs were no further advanced than on the first day, and the pious Founder wrote: 'I cannot tell you how things stand now. There is no real difficulty in the way, other than a dead stoppage in the Government offices.' A few days afterwards he added: 'Our affairs are still stationary, and I don't see how I can push them on. Notwithstanding my anxiety and continual travelling, my health is good. Our authorization is the only business I am engaged in, but the excessive slowness of the proceedings is sickening. What shall we do with regard to the conscription this year? May God be praised in all things.'

He was anxious about the conscription, and with good reason, for he had four Brothers this year who came under the law, and reckoning on the authorization being granted, he had not sent them to Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux, to have them exempted; but now, as the authorization was not forthcoming they ran the risk of being drafted into the army. At length, after much delay, the affair was submitted to the Council of the University. The good Father had made so many visits, and had employed so many influential persons to gain over the members of that Council in his favour, that a large majority pronounced for the authorization. When this decision of the Royal Council became known, it was believed that all was gained, and that success was certain. Ministerial functionaries, deputies, and a great number of persons of high position assured Father Champagnat that his affair could meet with no further difficulty, and that the Minister would immediately present the decree of authorization to the King for signature; in fact, the authorization depended on the Minister alone, but he did not wish to grant it, and Father Champagnat began to feel that he had nothing to expect notwithstanding the bright hopes held out to him, for, at this juncture, he wrote to

the Hermitage as follows : ' Although I am told that the decree will meet with no opposition, and that the authorization will be granted immediately, I hesitate to believe it, and more than ever I say : *Nisi Dominus ædificaverit domum*, for I am thoroughly convinced that things will happen as God wills, neither more nor less. If this decree should prove injurious to the interests of our souls, may God keep it from us ! Nevertheless, I neglect nothing, to bring this affair to a favourable conclusion, because I know that Providence wishes us to help ourselves in such cases. Pray, pray, I repeat ; for it is prayers we need to enable us to seek and to do the will of God in all things.'

M. de Salvandy, surprised that the authorization of the Brothers met with no serious obstacle at Paris, sought to raise up difficulties against it in the provinces, and told Father Champagnat, that before formulating the decree of authorization, he required to consult the Prefects of the Departments of the Rhône and the Loire. At this unexpected piece of intelligence, the good Father, nothing daunted, set out to visit these two functionaries, for the purpose of interesting them in his cause. In about two months, the reports of the Prefects reached the Minister, and owing to the means that the good Father had taken, and the exertions he had made, these reports were favourable to his petition ; still things did not move any faster. The Minister, defeated on every side, devised various other difficulties ; he pretended that the Society of the Marist Brothers would clash with that of the Christian Brothers, who were already employed in a large number of towns, and he wanted to confine the Marists to small localities of not more than eighteen hundred souls. The Father having victoriously refuted this objection, the Minister next proposed that the Founder should adopt the statutes of some religious Society which had been already approved. ' Our statutes,' replied Father Champagnat, ' cannot be an obstacle to our authorization, since they are approved by the Royal Council of Public Instruction.' The Minister, who was ignorant of this fact, had nothing to answer ; but he declared that he could do nothing before consulting the General Council of the Department of the Rhône and that of the Loire, that is to say, he would grant nothing ; for, having full authority over the members of these Councils, their decisions would, in all probability, be such as he desired. However, the council of the Loire decided in favour of

the authorization, while that of the Rhône opposed it. This was quite enough to give the Minister an excuse for refusing to grant the Society its authorization.

Father Champagnat now made up his mind to leave Paris ; and, to his great regret, without having obtained anything. Before starting, he wrote : ‘ No doubt you wish to know the state of our affairs. Alas ! I don’t well know, or rather I know it too well ; I mean, that what in my mind, was only a surmise, is now beyond doubt a certainty ; they will grant us nothing. I am much afflicted, but not dismayed. I have still unlimited confidence in Jesus and Mary. I have no doubt that, sooner or later, we shall obtain our authorization, only, I know not when. What remains now, is to do what we can, and leave the rest to Providence. God knows better than we do what is good for us. I am quite convinced that some delay will do us no harm, since it is the will of God. On his death-bed, the pious Founder said to the Brothers around him. ‘ It did not please God to give me the consolation of seeing the Society approved, because I did not deserve such a favour ; but be sure that the authorization will not be wanting ; it will be granted to you when it will be absolutely necessary.’ One cannot help regarding this as a veritable prophecy, for the authorization came just as he had predicted. The refusal to approve the Society, far from being injurious to it was, on the contrary, very beneficial, for if the authorization had been granted, when first sought, it would not have been full and entire as we shall see it given further on. As to the time when it was obtained, it was at the precise moment when the Society could not do without it, in consequence of the Education Act of 1850.

We cannot conclude this subject without saying a few words on the manner in which Father Champagnat lived in Paris. During his stay there, he stopped at the Seminary of the Foreign Missions, where, to use his own words, he was exceedingly happy on account of the regularity and good spirit that reigned in that holy House ; ‘ I am very much edified,’ he wrote to a Brother, ‘ at the good examples, I have constantly before me, and the devotedness of those who are preparing for the Foreign Missions. What admirable charity reigns among them ! They are cheerful, but without levity. Everything that tends to delay their departure annoys them, but does not discourage them.’ If the good

Father was edified by the piety and virtues of those pious Priests, they were no less edified by his exemplary conduct there. They admired his regularity, his piety, his humility, his modesty, his charity and his spirit of mortification. He observed the rules of the House, as much as his business in the city would permit. He rose in the morning with the Community, assisted at meditation, at the spiritual Reading, at the Rosary, and at all the other pious exercises. When he had no special business outside, he was always to be found in his room, engaged either in reading or in praying.

After spending six months in Paris, the monuments and curiosities of that great city were as little known to him, as if he had never been there. 'I am often invited,' he said in one of his letters, 'to visit places of interest in the city; but I cannot go; I feel no interest in anything but what may promote the success of my affair; besides the will of God, I seek nothing else.' Except to a few churches; such as those of Our Lady of Victories, and Our Lady of Good Hope, in which St. Francis de Sales prayed, he made no visits beyond those necessary ones to the Minister, and other persons whom he had to see on business. He had no concern but for the glory of God and the interest of the Society. He spent some of his leisure time in the Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, in order to learn their methods, and to be able to teach them afterwards to his Brothers. In speaking of his object in visiting this school, he said, 'I shall go whenever I can, for I ought not to lose my time in Paris, but should turn it to the advantage of these poor children, little favoured by nature, but not less dear to Jesus Christ on that account, nor the less sharers in the Redemption purchased by the price of His Precious Blood.'

At the Seminary of the Foreign Missions, the pious Founder was regarded as a saint. M. Dubois, Superior of that Institution, a man of great merit and virtue, speaking to one of our Brothers, said: 'Your Father Champagnat is the most virtuous man that I know. What trouble he takes! What visits he has made to obtain the legal authorization of his Community! He did not succeed, but his merit is not less on that account. I have never seen such humility, mortification and resignation to the will of God. Our young Priests were so much edified by his fervour and

piety that they considered it a great privilege to be allowed to serve his Mass.

On leaving Paris, Father Champagnat went to St. Pol in Artois, to arrange with the authorities for the opening of a new school in that town. This foundation had been recommended to him by the Minister of Public Instruction, at the very time that he spoke of authorizing the Society for small parishes only. Father Champagnat readily accepted the proposal, and thus showed the inconsistency of the Minister.

After his illness, in 1825, Father Champagnat never regained his former good health. During several years, he had a pain in the side, which caused him great suffering, whenever he had to work hard, or walk any distance. To this was added, later on, a strongly marked inflammation of the stomach, caused, no doubt, by the daily privations, and long fasts of the good Father. It has been already remarked that in his long and frequent journeys, he often passed whole days on which he hardly tasted food. Moreover, his spirit of penance and mortification made him always choose the commonest food, and what was poorest at table. This manner of living soon brought his gastritis into a chronic state which left no hope of recovery. Before his journey to Paris, he was frequently seized with vomiting, and his stomach would no longer retain certain kinds of food. His wearisome visits in the capital and the vexatious disappointments he met with, completely ruined his health and exhausted the little strength still left him, so that, on his return, it was easy to see that his end was fast approaching.

The Rev. Father Colin, who was the first to perceive the gravity of the good Father's illness, thought it necessary, for the tranquillity of the Brothers, and to prevent all disturbance, to provide a successor to the Founder before his death, and to have a Brother elected for that purpose. In fact, the great wisdom, profound judgment, and extensive experience of Father Colin, had long before convinced him of the insurmountable difficulty there would be in subjecting both the Fathers and the Brothers to the same Rule, the same Government and the same Superior; firstly, because their object, their education, and their employments being quite different, required different regulations in their respective Communities; and secondly, because the administration and direction of each branch, were more than sufficient for one

man. Moreover, he well knew that to govern the Brothers prudently, it would be necessary to have their spirit, their esteem, their sympathies, and their experience of schools; also to know the members and the Rules of their Society; and he thoroughly understood that all this was impossible to one man, no matter how able or how virtuous he might be, if he were not brought up with the Brothers, if he had not lived with them and practised their mode of life. So that while he wished the two branches to have some bond of union between them, in order to assist and support each other, and to preserve the mark of resemblance and family feelings, arising from a common origin, he believed it indispensable for the good of all, that each branch should have its own Rules, its own Government, and its own Superior. Later on, the decisions of the Holy See entirely confirmed this judgment of the Very Rev. Father Colin.

But Father Champagnat, who had laboured all his life in the idea of having a single Society, and who looked upon this union as a guarantee of the preservation of the religious spirit among the Brothers, did not easily enter into the views of Father Colin on this point; and, while conforming to the wishes of Father Colin concerning the election of a Brother to succeed him, he hoped, to the end of his life, as will appear from his Spiritual Testament, that the Brothers would remain more or less dependent on the Superior-General of the Marist Fathers.

Father Colin, who, by his position, was better able to feel and see the inconveniences of the union of the two Societies, seized every opportunity to point out to Father Champagnat, the danger that would arise from this state of things, to both Societies; and, to give our pious Founder clearly to understand that he must not count on the Fathers to direct his Brothers, he wrote to him: 'Alas! I have grave apprehensions of the void that will be made if the Lord calls you to himself, and this fear suggests to me the idea of placing the branch of the Brothers in the hands of the Archbishop of Lyons. It appears to me that this would be advantageous to them. Mention it to the principal Brothers, and let all pray to God to enlighten you on this important matter.'

Father Champagnat never intended to establish a Diocesan Society; on the contrary, he had always declared that he wished his Society to be for every diocese, so that he did not need to

reflect before rejecting this proposal. He desired the Brothers to have the Superior-General of the Marist Fathers for their Superior; but if that could not be, he wished them to be governed by one of the Brothers. Father Colin, seeing that Father Champagnat's health was rapidly failing, went of his own accord to the Archbishop, made known to him the precarious state of Father Champagnat's health, and besought his Grace to grant the necessary powers to have a Brother elected to succeed him. The Prelate having authorised Father Colin himself to carry out the election, the latter went to the Hermitage at the time of the annual retreat, and, after explaining to Father Champagnat the necessity of this matter for the good of the Community and his own peace of mind, it was agreed that the election should take place at the close of the retreat. On the eve of the election, Father Colin assembled all the Brothers, non-professed as well as professed, in the community-room, and, after an instruction in keeping with the occasion, he traced out the order to be observed in the election. In concert with Father Champagnat and the professed Brothers he decided—

(1.) That the Superior to be elected should be chosen from among the Professed Brothers, and that only the Professed Brothers should vote in the election.

(2.) That the Superior, when elected, should not make objections, but submit to the will of God, manifested by the votes of the Brothers.

(3.) That each elector should vote by ballot for the three Brothers who, before God, appeared to him the most fit to discharge the duties of Superior-General.

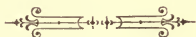
(4.) That of the three Brothers who should obtain the greatest number of votes, one should be named Superior-General of the Brothers by the Superior-General of the Marist Fathers, assisted by his Council, and that the two others should be by right his assistants and councillors.

(5.) That the Superior should be elected for life, but that he might be deposed in the cases provided for in the Constitutions.

(6.) That whosoever should be known to have, either directly or indirectly, for himself or for any other, sought to influence any voter, or intrigued in any way whatever, should be deprived of the right to take any part in the election. Lastly, the Brothers were recommended to implore the light of the Holy Ghost and the pro-

tection of Mary, by fervent prayers, in order that they might know the will of God in the important choice they were about to make, and that they might divest themselves of all human views, of all self-love, and of every idea of ambition and intrigue.

The ceremony of the election began with the singing of the *Veni Creator* and the Mass of the Holy Ghost, at which the whole Community assisted. The Mass ended, Father Colin addressed a short but moving discourse to the Brothers, engaging them once more to make a good choice. He concluded with this Prayer of the Apostles:—*Thou Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men, show which of these Thou hast chosen* (Acts i, 24). After this address the Professed Brothers, numbering ninety-two, went to the Chapter-Room, where, after half-an-hour's meditation, they each wrote on a billet the names of the three Brothers whom they believed to be best qualified to govern the Society. Each one having written his vote, Father Champagnat gathered all the billets into an urn, and the scrutineers counted the numbers for each. The following was the result:—eighty-seven for Brother François, seventy for Brother Louis-Marie, and fifty-seven for Brother Jean-Baptiste. The Rev. Father Colin took these three names, withdrew, and after a short deliberation in council with Father Champagnat and the other Fathers, returned to the Chapter-Room, and, in presence of the whole Community, proclaimed Brother François Superior-General of the Brothers, Brother Louis-Marie and Brother Jean-Baptiste assistants. This done, all the Brothers hastened to acknowledge the Reverend Brother François as Superior, offered him their respectful homage and promised him entire obedience. The ceremony concluded with the singing of the *Magnificat* and a Mass of Thanksgiving, at which all the Brothers received Holy Communion. This election took place on the 12th October, 1839. It was made just in time, and it may be looked upon as a special token of Divine protection of the Institute, for, a few months afterwards the pious Founder, who was ripe for Heaven, died happily in the Lord.





CHAPTER XXI.

FOUNDATION OF THE NOVITIATE OF VAUBAN—FATHER CHAMPAGNAT'S
ILLNESS INCREASES—HE MAKES A GENERAL CONFESSION AND
RECEIVES THE LAST SACRAMENTS—HIS ADDRESS TO THE
BROTHERS ON THAT OCCASION.

ALTHOUGH Father Champagnat felt his strength leaving him, and his illness daily increasing, he could not make up his mind to give up work and take more care of himself. A few days after the close of the Brothers' retreat, he went to La-Côte-Saint-André with another Father, to give a retreat to the boarders. He was so weak, and he suffered so much, that his state excited compassion in the hearts of all who saw him. The evidences of kindness and of sanctity that shone in his countenance made such an impression on the Boarders, that the greater number of them wished to make their confession to him. They never tired of looking at him, and they said to one another 'that priest is a saint.' The instructions and counsels of the good Father produced abundant fruits of salvation; and the remembrance of his piety and virtue made a deep and lasting impression on the minds of the pupils. After the retreat at La Côte-Saint-André, the pious Founder travelled to Autun, whither he was invited by Mgr. d'Héricours, Bishop of the diocese, who wished to found a Novitiate in the old castle of Vauban. The venerable Prelate was so much edified by the humility, modesty, and simplicity of Father Champagnat that, after signing the

title deeds of the property of Vauban, which his lordship made over to the Society, on the sole condition of their keeping there a Novitiate, and establishing schools in the diocese, he cast himself on the neck of the pious Founder, embraced him tenderly, exclaiming : 'Thanks be to God ! behold me now, quite a Marist.'

A few months later, Father Champagnat went to Vauban with a few Brothers, to take possession of the house and commence the Novitiate. The opening took place on the 8th of December, 1839, feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin. This was the last foundation made by the pious Founder. In some respects it differed greatly from that of Lavalla, and he could not help remarking it with mingled tears of joy and gratitude. 'Oh, Brother,' he said to the Religious who accompanied him, 'what a difference between this house and the poor cot which became the cradle of the Society ! See how our blessed Lord grants the hundred-fold to those who follow him. In return for the few trifles we have left, He bestows castles upon us. But is there no fear that in such a dwelling as this, we may lose the spirit of humility, of modesty and poverty ? this is what alarms me here. One thing, however, consoles me : we have not wished to have this house, nor have we done anything to secure it ; we may say that his Lordship has forced it upon us.' Then visiting the premises with the Brother Director, he ordered all fancy articles to be removed, as well as everything that might clash with the spirit of poverty. At last, addressing the Brother Director, he said : 'Remember, Brother, that we are the children of Bethlehem, the Little Brothers of Mary ; preserve carefully in yourself, and strive to inspire your novices with the sentiments of Jesus and Mary in the stable of Bethlehem, and in the lowly house at Nazareth.'

We may add here that Father Champagnat's fears regarding this new foundation were not without reason. The Novitiate was never very prosperous in those grand old buildings, and was finally closed in 1855.

After these painful journeys, the pious Founder was completely exhausted ; the disorder of his stomach had become much worse, and he felt that the end of his earthly pilgrimage was fast approaching. Yet, notwithstanding his continual sufferings, he always followed the rule of the house. He rose with the Brothers at four o'clock, said the Community Mass, went to the

refectory during meals, although for the greater part of the time he took little or nothing, was present at the recreations, and went to work as usual. His greatest consolation was to be with the Brothers, to pray with them, to work with them, and to be with the Community.

Shortly before he was confined to bed, he went to help some Brothers who were quarrying stone, although he was so weak that he could scarcely walk. Seizing an implement with his usual energy, he worked until it dropped from his hands. The Brothers and the workmen who saw this, and who had besought him not to work, but merely to look on, were affected even to tears, and one of them taking him by the arm, helped him back to his room ; from this time forward he gave up manual work, and left the house only a few times to take a short walk.

On Ash Wednesday, he was seized with a violent pain in the back, which never quitted him till his death. This pain became so acute, when he lay down, that he could scarcely remain in bed. During the winter time, his legs had occasionally become swollen ; but now the swelling increased and never abated. Ever calm and cheerful, ever resigned to the will of God, he quietly endured the pains and observed the powerlessness which affected his limbs. One day looking at the Brother, who was rubbing his legs to reduce the swelling, he said to him, smiling :—‘ Many a time, after my death, you will be telling the Brothers how you rubbed my legs. I am exceedingly grateful to you for this act of charity, for it is not a pleasant thing to rub the limbs of a corpse, and still less those of a sinner.’ Notwithstanding the pain in his back and his swollen legs, he still followed the Community exercises, as much as possible. He performed, with great fervour and piety, the devotions of the Month of St. Joseph, to obtain the grace of a happy death. He recited daily the litany of the Holy Spouse of Mary and when, towards the end of his life, he could no longer say it alone, he requested one of the Brothers to recite it beside his bed. On the feast of this great Saint, after giving Benediction, he declared that it was the last time he should ever give it on that feast. He had now a clear presentiment of his approaching death and, laying aside all other business, he thought only of preparing himself for a happy passage into eternity. In the first place he regulated all the temporal affairs of the House, and took every precaution to assure to the Brothers, the peaceable

possession of the property belonging to the Society, all of which he had hitherto held in his own name. To be more safely guided in so important an affair, he sent for a public Notary and other persons fit to aid and direct him in the proper transfer of the goods of the Society. After a long and serious consultation with these persons, on the temporal situation of the Institute, and having conferred at great length with his principal Brothers on the subject, he handed over, by a legal deed, all the property belonging to the Society, to the Brothers of his council, who were constituted into a civil society. He, moreover, made a will by which he constituted these same Brothers his sole heirs.

Shortly after these arrangements were concluded, Father Maitrepierre having come to see him, the pious Founder begged him to remain a few days to help him to make a general confession. He made it with great compunction. His delicate conscience discovered stains and imperfections, even in his best and most holy actions. The fear of the judgments of God sometimes troubled the serenity of his soul ; but his great confidence in the merits of our Divine Lord soon calmed his fears and restored him to his usual tranquillity.

On Holy Thursday, he wished to say Mass at Grange-Payre ; and as they tried to prevent him, on account of his weakness, he said : ‘ Let me go, for this is the last visit I shall be able to pay those good Brothers and their children. He went on horseback, and after celebrating the Holy Sacrifice he went to see the boarders, to whom he spoke as follows : ‘ My children, God has bestowed a great favour on you, in providing you with these pious and virtuous masters, who are constantly giving you good example, and solid instruction in the truths of Religion. Be careful to follow their advice and imitate their virtues, often think of the great love of Jesus Christ for you. He died upon the Cross to redeem and save you, and He is now preparing a beautiful place for you in Paradise. Remember that sin, which is the greatest of all evils, is the only thing that can exclude you from Heaven. Then fear sin above all things, it is your greatest enemy, and every day ask Almighty God to keep you from it. You will obtain this favour and save your souls, if you have great devotion to our Blessed Lady, and if you recite, every day, the *Memorare*, or some other prayer, to merit her protection. Yes, my dear children, if you have great confidence in Mary, she

will certainly bring you to Heaven; this I promise you.' On arriving at the Hermitage, he said, 'I have seen Grange-Payre for the last time. I am very glad I have made this visit, it has been a great consolation for me to see those little children, and advise them to be good. On the last of April, notwithstanding his extreme weakness and great sufferings, he would, himself, open the Month of May Devotions, and give Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, but he felt so exhausted after the ceremony that he exclaimed, 'I am going; the end is fast approaching.' Brother Stanislaus arriving just then, and the good Father seeing him more cheerful than usual, said to him: 'Well, Brother, what makes you so happy?' The Brother answered: 'It struck me, during the devotions, that perhaps our Blessed Lady, moved by our prayers, will restore you to health, before the end of her beautiful month.' 'Be not deceived, Brother,' said the Father, 'I expect great sufferings before the end of this month, but I count on the assistance of my divine Mother to be able to bear them with patience and resignation.' He was right, for his sufferings became excessive; but thanks to the protection of Mary, in whom he had placed all his confidence, his patience never failed him an instant. Next day, one of the older Brothers, in a visit he made to the Founder, remarked, 'Oh, Father, what will become of us, should it please Almighty God to take you away from us? Who will be able to govern the Society without you?' 'My dear Brother,' answered the Father, 'do not trouble yourself about that. Is God in want of men to do His work? The Brother whom you have chosen to succeed me, will do better than I have done. Man is but an instrument, or rather he is nothing; it is God who does all. You who are acquainted with the Society from the beginning should understand this truth. Has not Providence always taken care of us? Was it not God who brought us together, and removed all the obstacles we met with on our way? Was it not He who furnished us with the means to build this House? Who blessed our schools and made them prosper, in spite of our great poverty and want of talents? Was it not Providence, in one word, that did all for us? Now, if Providence has taken care of the Society hitherto, why would He not do so in future? Do you think God will protect the Society less, because one man is removed from it? No, be not deceived, I repeat; man counts for nothing in this work;

God will bless it, not on account of those who govern it, but because of His goodness, and His merciful designs upon the children confided to us.'

He used almost the same language in speaking to Brother Stanislaus, who was weeping at the thought of his death and the loss it would be to the Society. 'Poor Brother,' said the Father, 'what little faith and confidence you have in God! Do you imagine that the prosperity of the House depended on me? Well, now, I tell you, beforehand, that after my death, things will go on much better than at present, and that the Society will make more rapid progress than ever. One day you will see the truth of what I now tell you; and you will understand then, that we need not trust in man, but in God alone.'

In his profound humility, the pious Founder uttered a prophecy which was literally fulfilled in the Brother's own life time. At the death of Father Champagnat, the Society had only forty-five houses; at the death of the Brother, thirteen years after, it had two hundred and fifty.

It was not the Brothers only, who imagined that the Society depended entirely on Father Champagnat for its progress; all those who came to see him, spoke in the same manner and said: 'God will surely restore you to health, because your Community stands too much in need of you.' 'God has no need of me,' answered the Father, 'and it is my conviction, that I am rather an obstacle to the progress of the Society. It will do better when I am gone.' On the third of May, he celebrated Mass for the last time. After his thanksgiving he said: 'I have celebrated my last Mass, and am pleased that it was that of the Holy Cross; for it is by this Holy Cross that we are saved, and that our Divine Lord himself left this world.'

From this time forward his sufferings daily increased, and did not leave him a moment's rest. The grief which his sufferings caused the Brothers, afflicted him more than his bodily pain. The desolation in which they were plunged, drew tears from his eyes, and made him conceal the gravity of his state, as long as he could. At last, perceiving that his strength was failing and believing his end to be fast approaching, he called Brother Stanislaus, and said to him, 'I should like very much to defer what I am going to propose, because I know it will be extremely painful to you all, but I cannot put it off any longer, for I feel I am going

fast. I wish to be anointed this evening. You will prepare all that is necessary in the community-room, so that all the Brothers may be present, that I may see them all together, say a few words of consolation to them, and bid them farewell.'

If, on the one hand, this solemn act was a source of consolation to the paternal heart of the good Father; on the other, it was extremely painful, and the thought that he was going to see the Brothers for the last time, grieved him exceedingly.

At five o'clock, all the Brothers and postulants being assembled in the community-room, where all was prepared for the solemn act, he entered clothed in his surplice and stole. His weakly appearance and his sufferings affected the Brothers very much, and drew tears to the eyes of all. He sat down in an arm-chair, joined his hands and remained in deep recollection for a short time, in order to prepare for the reception of the last Sacraments. He received Extreme Unction first. A Brother advanced to take off the Father's stockings; he would not allow him, but took them off himself. He then received the Holy Viaticum, with great sentiments of humility, respect and love. All being over, he remained for a few minutes as it were lost in thought, adoring and thanking Jesus Christ, with that piety and that lively faith which were so conspicuous in him when he celebrated Holy Mass, and which the solemnity of the occasion rendered more intense and more perceptible. Then raising his eyes he looked on the Brothers, and in a weak but pathetic tone he thus addressed them:—

'My dear Brothers, think of your last end and you will never sin. I understand now, better than ever, and so will you when you will be in the position in which I am now, that it is not without reason that the Holy Ghost assures us, that if we think of death and what follows it, we shall never sin, we shall not be attached to the things of this world. Alas! at the hour of death we regret but one thing, and that is not having done enough for God, for the salvation of our soul, for the possession of Heaven.

'My dear Brothers, we are all assembled here for the last time, and what I recommend to you above all things, before I leave you is, that you love one another. Remember that you are Brothers, that Mary is your common mother, and that you are called to the same inheritance, which is Heaven. Love one another then, as Jesus Christ loves you, as Mary, your mother, loves you. In proof of this love, bear with one another, do good

to one another, assist one another, and never forget that it is by the practice of Charity, that the religious life will be for you a life of sweetness, a heaven on earth. You must be thoroughly united; so accustomed to bear with one another, to make one another happy, that these words of the Holy Scriptures may be applied to you:—‘*Behold how good and how pleasant it is for Brethren to dwell together in unity* (Psalm cxxxii, 1).

‘After Charity, the virtue which I most recommend you to practise is Obedience, not that I have anything to complain of in this respect; on the contrary, I am happy to say that I have always found you perfectly docile to my will. What I mean is, that I wish you to render the same obedience to my successor that you have always done to me. In obeying, you are always sure of doing the will of God. For a Religious, obedience is the highway to Paradise. If he does not leave this path to it, he will infallibly reach it. Oh! how happy you will be at the hour of death, and what recompense awaits you, if it can be said of you,—He was obedient all his life.

‘My children, Ah! what a happiness to die in the Society of Mary! I tell you candidly, this, to-day, is my greatest consolation. Be faithful then to your vocation, and for that purpose, observe the Rule; for obedience to the Rule, will obtain for you perseverance; will make you love the duties of the religious life and will render them easy. Love your vocation, preserve it; it is by your vocation that God wishes you to be saved, and you will certainly be saved if you have the happiness of dying in the Society of Mary. I have seen a great number of Brothers die. I have not seen one who, on his death-bed, regretted having become a Religious, having persevered in his vocation, and having died in the habit of a Brother of Mary.’

At these words his voice became weak, his strength failed; he stopped awhile, and after a short interval, resumed: ‘My children, I cannot say any more, I will conclude by asking pardon, here in presence of our Lord, for all the bad example I may have given you. I do not remember having wilfully caused pain to anyone, but if I have, I sincerely beg his pardon.’

The Brothers, who had listened with rapt attention to these counsels, were touched and affected to the last degree, both by the words which he addressed to them, and by the condition in which they beheld him. When they heard him beg their forgiveness,

they burst into sobs and fell on their knees, almost choked with grief, and one of the chaplains, who witnessed this touching scene, exclaimed : ' Oh, Brothers, it is we who ought to beg the venerable Father's pardon.' But the Brothers were so deeply impressed and completely overcome with grief, that they did not hear him, and remained as it were overwhelmed with grief. The Father himself was extremely affected, but he made great efforts to control his feelings. The tone of his voice, however, and the tears that ran down his cheeks, showed clearly how much he was moved by the grief of the Brothers. Not to prolong their affliction any longer, he withdrew to his room, and although he suffered very much, he continued a long time in prayer.

He received the last Sacraments on Monday the 11th of May. On the following days his sufferings increased still more, and the pain in his back became so acute that he could scarcely remain up two hours at a time. On the day on which he was anointed a Novena was begun to St. Philomena for him. At the close of this Novena, there was a marked improvement in his condition which gave some hopes. The swelling in his hands and feet abated, the pain in the back which, since Ash Wednesday had caused him such sufferings left him, so that the good Father was able to leave his room, go to the chapel to adore the Blessed Sacrament, and to the sacristy to see a new credence table. ' You will be pleased now,' said he to the Brother Sacristan, ' with such a nice place for your vestments.' ' Yes, Father,' answered the Brother, ' but I should be much more so if *you* could make use of it.' ' No, my dear friend,' said the Father, ' I shall never use it; but that does not matter, it will be used by others.'

On returning to his room, the Father perceiving a Brother making a sort of niche in the wall, which might serve as a hiding place, sent immediately for the Director of the works and said to him : ' I advise you, in a special manner, to have an eye over that Brother, and those who are working with him. Be sure that you always know where he is, and what he does, and never leave any young Brother with him.' ' Superintendence,' added he, ' is an essential thing in a house like ours, where there are so many young men, whose virtue needs to be strengthened by this exterior help.' On another occasion, perceiving that some Brothers were working sluggishly in a field, ' Take care,' said he to the Brother Director, ' that the Novices are occupied and do not lose their

time ; for idleness is one of the most dangerous vices, and no other perhaps does so much harm to Religious. I have, to blame myself for not having kept the Brothers sufficiently at work, and for having been too indulgent towards the slothful.' This self-accusation was inspired only by the Father's great humility ; for it is well known how he liked to work, and how he wanted to see everyone about him occupied ; but this scruple shows us, once more, how much the good Father detested idleness, which he considered as one of the vices most dangerous to the Brothers.

His great sufferings, far from weakening his piety and religious sentiments, as is often the case in times of long and serious illness, served only to increase his fervour and lively faith. He desired to have always someone near him to speak to him of God, to suggest pious sentiments, and to help him to produce acts of faith, love, and confidence. He was specially pleased to hear Brother François, and felt greatly consoled in having him by his side. In his frequent conversations with the Brother Superior, he opened his heart to him, and told him all his desires, and all his troubles. His profound humility made him think, sometimes, that he had not done all that God required of him, or that he had not done it well enough ; then, after the example of the Royal Prophet, he trembled with fear at the thought of the Judgment of God ; but his heart soon filled with confidence and gratitude, when the good Brother reminded him of the special graces that God had bestowed on him, and the good He had enabled him to do, by the foundation of an Institute that would gain so many souls for Heaven.

One day, the pious Founder was uneasy concerning a good work, which had been proposed to him, but which he had not carried out. He was afraid that Almighty God would ask him an account of this. A pious inhabitant of Lavalla had offered him a house, together with an extensive property, for the purpose of establishing a sort of agricultural colony for orphans and deserted children. Other persons had promised to contribute towards the foundation, by providing the necessary funds. Father Champagnat now wished to see these persons, in order to speak about that project and have it concluded. Brother François, to whom he communicated his anxiety on the matter, said to him : ' Father, you may be perfectly at ease on that point, and you need have no regret at not having commenced that work sooner ; for,

you required all your time to establish the Society, to train and direct the Brothers. Besides, an agricultural colony is so entirely different from what we propose to ourselves, that you did well not to accept it without serious reflection. And again, the Society of the Brothers required so much care, and solicitude, on your part, that you could hardly have undertaken any other work without impeding its progress, and, may be, compromising its future, I think it more prudent, therefore, to leave the agricultural colony to someone else, to whom God may give the will and the means to carry it out.' These reflections entirely quieted the Father, and he never again mentioned the agricultural colony.

The last thing that troubled him, and that he spoke of to Brother François, was the thought that he had not sufficiently visited his sick Brothers. Here again it was the timorous conscience of the good Father, and his tender affection for the Brothers, that raised this groundless scruple in his mind; for, the sick Brothers had always been the objects of his paternal solicitude, and he never neglected to procure whatever could relieve or comfort them. He had a commodious infirmary expressly built for them, and a suitable dispensary, supplied, at great cost, with all the necessary medicines. Several Brothers had been trained to serve the sick, on whom they bestowed the most devoted and intelligent care. As soon as any Brother fell sick in an establishment, the charitable Superior sent for him, that his wants might be better attended to at the Mother-House.

Learning one day that a Brother was ill and not being able, through the serious nature of the illness, to have him brought to the Hermitage, he exclaimed with tears in his eyes; 'Ah! I fear this good Brother may not be properly attended to, how I should like to have him here to take care of him. I would give all that I have to relieve him.' He had the sick Brothers always before his mind; he visited them, recommended them to the prayers of the Community, saw they were attended to, both day and night, bestowed on them all sorts of care, and after all this, he reproached himself with not having done enough for them. It is thus that the saints judge and treat themselves. Saint John the Almoner, after giving all his goods to the poor, and divesting himself of everything to assist them, believed he had not done enough for them, and the fear that God might accuse him of allowing anyone to suffer, kept him from sleeping at night.



CHAPTER XXII.

SPIRITUAL TESTAMENT OF FATHER CHAMPAGNAT—HIS PIETY, HIS FERVOUR, AND HIS LOVE FOR GOD INCREASE WITH HIS SUFFERINGS—HIS AGONY, HIS DEATH AND OBSEQUIES.

NOTWITHSTANDING his sufferings, the good Father never forgot the presence of God, he was always either praying or conversing on some pious subjects with the Brothers who attended him or those who came to see him. When he was obliged to keep his bed, he requested them to place all round it, the pictures of Our Lord, of the Blessed Virgin, and of St. Joseph, in order that he might see them and contemplate them [at leisure, and thus nourish his piety and his love for Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, whose aid and whose names he continually invoked. The Brother who was told to hang up these pictures, having brought one of the Blessed Virgin in a gilt frame, the Father would not have it. 'Brother,' said he, 'we are poor, that frame does not suit this place. Take it back to the Sacristy where you got it and bring a plainer one.' Not satisfied with his pious ejaculations, he performed, with admirable fervour and exactitude, all his exercises of piety, answering distinctly to the Rosary, which he caused to be recited by his bed-side, when he was no longer able to say it alone, as also the Litany of St. Joseph, and the other prayers that were said at the different hours of the day. Every day he caused someone to read for him a chapter of the Imitation of Jesus Christ, on which he afterwards discoursed with the Brothers who happened to be in his room. He recited his breviary, as long as he was able to hold it. One day when it fell from his hands he wished

to take it up again shortly after, and it required a formal prohibition to make him leave off the recital of the Divine Office.

The slight improvement noticeable in the good Father's health, at the end of the Novena to St. Philomena, did not last; his sufferings and vomitings became more violent than ever. Sending for Brother François and Brother Louis-Marie, he said to them: 'My dear Brothers, as I have but a short time to live, I should be very happy, before dying, to make my Spiritual Testament; that is, to give the Brothers my last counsels; it will please them, and will do them good.' 'Father,' answered Brother François, 'it would certainly give the Brothers much pleasure, and they would feel very grateful; but I fear it might fatigue you.' 'No, no,' said he, and, looking at Brother Louis-Marie, he added, 'My dear Brother, you will write down the things I have to say. Here they are as I wish them worded and made known to the Brothers.' Then he uttered all the thoughts, counsels and recommendations given in his Spiritual Testament, and almost in the same order, repeating each sentence, and thus affording every facility to note down and to retain the full sense and his very words. The copy being completed it was submitted to him, and on its being read aloud to him, the Father said: 'Those are really my sentiments, and what I wish to say to the Brothers. You will assemble them all in my room, and after I have received the last indulgence, you will read to them my Testament in my presence. It will be a great consolation for me to see those good Brothers and to give them my last advice.' He pronounced these words with great emotion, and appeared deeply moved.

The Chaplains and the Brothers being assembled in his room, after night prayers, the Father received the indulgence *in articulo mortis*. Then, while Brother François held up his head, Brother Louis-Marie read the Spiritual Testament, expressed in these words:—

'Spiritual Testament of Joseph Benedict Marcellin Champagnat, Priest, Superior and Founder of the Little Brothers of Mary.'

'In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

'Here, in the presence of God, under the auspices of the most Holy Virgin and Saint Joseph, wishing to make known to all the Brothers of Mary my last and dearest wishes, I collect all my strength to indite my Spiritual Testament, according as I

believe it to be agreeable to the Divine Will, and most conducive to the good of the Society.

In the first place, I most humbly beseech all those whom I may have offended or scandalised in any way, although I am not aware of having wilfully given pain to anyone, to be good enough to forgive me, in consideration of the infinite charity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to unite their prayers with mine to obtain of God, that, in His infinite mercy, He would deign to forget the sins of my past life, and receive my soul. I die full of respect, of gratitude, and of submission towards the Very Rev. Father Superior-General of the Society of Mary, and in sentiments of the most perfect union with all the members who compose it, especially for all the Brothers whom Almighty God confided to my solicitude, and who have always been so dear to my heart.

‘I desire that entire and perfect obedience may always reign among the Brothers, that the inferiors, considering, in the Superiors, only the person of Jesus Christ, may obey them with heart and mind, always renouncing, if necessary, their own will and judgment. Let them remember that *the obedient Religious will speak of victory*, and that it is principally obedience which is the foundation and mainstay of a Community. In this spirit, the Little Brothers of Mary will be submissive not only to the head Superior, but also to all those who may be appointed to direct and guide them. They will be deeply penetrated with this truth of faith, that the Superior represents Jesus Christ, and that, when he commands, he ought to be obeyed, as if Jesus Christ himself commanded.

‘I beseech you also, my very dear Brothers, with all the affection of my soul, and by all your affection for me, to act in such a manner that Holy Charity may always abide amongst you. Love one another as Jesus Christ has loved you. Be of one heart and one mind. May it be said of the Little Brothers of Mary as of the first Christians: “See how they love one another!” This is the most ardent desire of my heart, at this last moment of my life. Yes, my very dear Brothers, listen to the last words of your Father, they are the words of our dearly beloved Saviour: “*Love one another.*”

‘I desire, my dearly beloved Brothers, that this Charity, which ought to bind you together as members of the same body, may also extend to all other Congregations. Ah! I conjure you, by the

boundless Charity of Jesus Christ, beware of ever envying anyone, and especially those whom Almighty God has called to the religious state, to labour, like yourselves, for the instruction of youth. Be the first to rejoice at their success and grieve at their misfortune. Recommend them often to God and the divine Mother. Yield to them without difficulty. Never give ear to any discourse that might tend to injure them. Let the glory of God and the honour of Mary be your sole aim and only ambition.

‘Moreover, I beg of God, and desire with all the affection of my soul, that you may faithfully persevere in the holy exercise of the presence of God, which is the soul of prayer, of meditation, and of all virtues ; that humility and simplicity may always be the characteristics of the Little Brothers of Mary ; and that a tender and filial devotion to our good Mother may animate you at all times and in all circumstances. Do your utmost to make her loved in every place. She is the first Superior of the whole Society. To devotion for Mary, join devotion to her glorious spouse, St. Joseph ; you know he is one of our greatest patrons. You fill the office of Guardian Angels towards the children confided to you ; render also to those pure spirits a special homage of love, respect, and confidence.

‘My dearly beloved Brothers, be faithful to your vocation, love it, and courageously persevere in it. Maintain in yourselves a great spirit of poverty and detachment. Let the daily observance of your holy Rules preserve you from ever violating that sacred vow which binds you to the fairest and most delicate of virtues. There are difficulties in leading the life of a good Religious, but grace makes all things easy. Jesus and Mary will help you ; besides, life is very short, and eternity will never end. Ah ! how consoling it is, when about to appear before God, to remember that one has lived under the protection of Mary, and in her Society ! May this good Mother deign to preserve, to increase, and sanctify you. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communication of the Holy Ghost, be always with you. I leave you all, with confidence, in the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, until we be all united again in a happy eternity. Such is my last and express will for the glory of Jesus and Mary.

‘The present Spiritual Testament shall be placed in the

hands of the Very Rev. Father Colin, Superior-General of the Society of Mary.

‘Given at Notre-Dame-de-l’Hermitage, on the 18th day of May, 1840.

‘JOSEPH BENEDICT MARCELLIN CHAMPAGNAT,
 ‘*Priest of the Society of Mary, Superior and
 Founder of the Little Brothers of Mary.*’

The Brothers listened with great attention and deep emotion to this Testament. The reading over, the good Father added a few words in confirmation of it, after which they all knelt down to ask his pardon and besought him not to forget them before God. ‘Forget you’! exclaimed the pious Founder, in a tone of voice which betrayed his emotion and tender affection, ‘no, that’s impossible.’ Brother François having asked his blessing for all the members of the Society, both present and absent, as also for those that would be members later on, he gave it with great affection. Joining his hands, raising his eyes to Heaven, and then casting an affectionate look on the Brothers, he pronounced the ordinary formula with great fervour, in a feeble but impressive voice.

After this, the Brothers recited for him three *Hail Marys*, the *Memorare*, and the *Sub tuum presidium*. At a signal from the Brother Superior, who was afraid to fatigue the patient, the Brothers all withdrew, with tears in their eyes, and deeply impressed by what they had witnessed.

When the Brothers had gone, the pious Founder appeared extremely satisfied with the whole proceedings. ‘I thank God,’ he said, ‘for having inspired me with the thought of making my Spiritual Testament. I am very glad that all the Brothers may know and read my last counsels and my last will; it will edify them and give them pleasure, besides, I owed them this consolation for the attachment they bear me.’

Indeed, this attachment could not be carried further. The prayers said for the good Father were general and continual; moreover, prayers were asked from all the Communities in the country. On Thursdays, the Brothers who were not too far from the Hermitage never failed to visit him, and to show their sympathy with him in his sufferings. Those of the house were happy to be able to serve him and watch him at night. They taxed their ingenuity to find means of alleviating his sufferings and of giving him pleasure. The Brothers and novices took the

greatest care not to make any noise near him, and although the corridors and passages had been purposely carpeted, they took off their shoes when coming near his room. M. Belier, Missionary of Valence, who was just then at the Hermitage, was astonished at the attention, the care and affection lavished by the Brothers upon their beloved Superior. 'Ah,' said he, 'how true it is that the Religious enjoys the hundredfold even in this life. Here is a saint going to Paradise, but never was there a prince of this world surrounded with such tender care in his last moments.'

There was nothing forced or artificial in this affection of the Brothers for their beloved Father; it was thoroughly sincere and spontaneous on their part, and we must say that the same care and attention are still bestowed on all the Brothers who die in the Society. It was the good Father himself who, by his example and instruction, taught the Brothers how the sick members of the Community should be treated.

We must add that Father Champagnat was not hard to serve. He could not conceal his sufferings, but his resignation enabled him to bear them without complaining, and made him constantly repeat: 'My God, my God, Thy will be done!' He took things as they came, the most acute fits of illness as well as the slight comforts given him, showing himself ever resigned, ever cheerful and happy. Once, perceiving that the Brother, sitting up with him, was sleepy, he said: 'Take a rest on that chair; when I want you I shall call.' In a moment, the Brother was fast asleep. Some time after, the Father called him, but could get no answer; when the Brother awoke, the Father said to him smiling; 'I have been calling you as loud as I could, during the last hour.' Then to excuse himself as it were, he added, 'You did not hear me, because I called you by a wrong name,' which he did by mistake. The same Brother having gone to sit up with him, on another occasion, the Father said to him in joke: 'I hope you won't do to-night as you did the last time.' The good Brother promised he would not, and tried his best to keep awake, but without success. In a short time he was again fast asleep. The Father, who suffered much that night, called him for a good while, but could not wake him, fortunately he was heard by a Brother who slept in a neighbouring room, and who went immediately to serve him. When the sleeper awoke, he was confused at being caught again and supplanted by another. The Father soon tranquillised him; 'Brother,' said he very kindly,

you are evidently on good terms with Almighty God, and have a peaceful conscience, for you sleep very soundly. Go to bed and think no more of your forgetfulness.' The Brother, who came to the Father's relief was Brother Jerome whom Father Champagnat loved very much, on account of his simplicity and excellent character.

No matter how great his sufferings, he always received with great kindness, the Brothers who came to see him; and never failed to address them some consoling and encouraging words.

Brother,' said he, to one of them, 'observe your Rule well; carefully instruct your children in the truths of Religion, for these are the two things that will console you most at the hour of death.' To another, who asked him by what means he could perform his actions well, he answered: 'Think only of what you are actually doing, or of what you would wish to have done' at the hour of death.' He said to one who was inclined to scrupulosity: 'Scruples are destructive of the love of God and of perfection; one should have a timorous, but not a scrupulous conscience. Do not waste your time in examinations, always turning back over the same things; but rather employ it in making acts of Faith, Hope, Charity, and others, a single one of which will render you more pleasing to God than all this trouble and anxiety about the past. Scruples ruin and destroy Hope, which is a theological virtue. God being our Father, nothing displeases him more than the want of confidence.'

It was thus that, notwithstanding his serious illness, he instructed and consoled his Brothers. If it happened that the intensity of his sufferings prevented him from conversing with them or answering their questions, he felt quite grieved at it. One day, he was very unwell and unable to see a Brother Director who had come to visit him. As soon as he felt better, he sent for him, and when he heard that the Brother had gone back to his establishment, 'Ah!' he exclaimed, 'how sorry I am that I could not speak to him and encourage him to fulfil with zeal and devotedness the glorious mission that God has confided to him. Oh! what merit have not the Brothers engaged in teaching! How great will be their reward if they are zealous!' Another day, after conversing for some time with Brother François, he turned towards him and asked how long they had been together. The Brother having told him that it was more than twenty years, he turned

back again, raised his eyes to Heaven, and in a state of profound recollection, he appeared to pray very fervently. 'Father,' said Brother François, a short time afterwards, 'I hope that if we are obliged to separate in body, you will be always with us in spirit, and you will continue to be our Father.' 'Oh, yes,' answered the Father, 'if I have any influence with God and our Blessed Lady, I shall employ it all in favour of the Society.' Then casting an affectionate look on Brother François, he said: 'Poor Brother, I pity you, for the government of the Society is a heavy burden, but the spirit of zeal, the spirit of prayer and confidence in God, will help you to bear it. Remember that one can be useful to others and procure the salvation of souls only by sacrificing oneself.' Brother Louis-Marie, having entered the room just at that moment, the Father, pressing his hand, said to him: 'Come Brother, help Brother François with all your might; pull well together, you will have much trouble, but have confidence, God will be with you, for it is His work you are doing. With His help you will overcome all the obstacles that the enemy may put in your way. Then never forget that you have the Blessed Virgin, who is the mainstay of the House; her protection will never fail you.'

On another occasion, he said to Brother Stanislaus, who scarcely ever left him. 'My good Brother, I give you much trouble; I regret it; but I am consoled in thinking that God will render you a hundredfold all you do for me. How good it is of God to keep account of all we do for our neighbour and to give a reward for it Himself! What a powerful motive for us to practise Charity, and render service to our Brothers! Try, therefore, as much as you can to be useful to the Brothers. Above all, encourage the novices and pay frequent attention to new-comers, in order to habituate them to the house. Vocation to the religious life is a great grace; this is the reason why the devil makes such efforts to disgust young people with it, to discourage them and draw them back into the world, where it is so hard to save one's soul.'

Meanwhile, the good Father's illness increased daily. His stomach could not retain anything, even the lightest cream. A devouring fire seemed to consume him. Vomitings became more frequent, and caused him extreme sufferings. 'Indeed,' he exclaimed sometimes, 'what can have kindled such a fire within

me?' and he immediately added: 'O my God, may Thy holy will be done. I offer Thee all my sufferings; give me but Thy grace, and send me all the sufferings Thou pleasest.' The only relief he obtained was through the use of iced water, and the application of ice to his stomach, which he permitted through obedience. He was constantly pre-occupied with the thought and desire of Holy Communion, and at the end of a profound meditation, he exclaimed, 'I believe that I am going to be heard and that my good angel will obtain for me the grace of receiving Our Lord once more. Bring me a picture of the Guardian Angel. I will ask that heavenly spirit to obtain for me this signal favour.' The picture having been brought to him, and fastened to his bed-curtain, the holy Priest gazed fixedly upon it; and after praying very fervently for some time, he felt that his prayer was heard and that he could receive Holy Communion once more. In fact, the vomitings having completely ceased, he became calm and tranquil as if all suffering had disappeared. After spending more than an hour in this tranquil state, he said: 'I am heard! I may communicate! Ask the Chaplain to bring me the good God.' He received Our Lord with sentiments of lively faith, tender piety, and extraordinary devotion. His looks, his movements, his posture, all announced the profound respect, the boundless confidence and the ardent love with which he was penetrated.

After receiving the Holy Viaticum he recommended the practice of silence, as absolutely necessary in a Community for the maintenance therein of recollection and the spirit of prayer. He again exhorted the Brothers to flee idleness, and to be constantly occupied, assuring them that, at the hour of death, they would have great remorse if they had not spent their time usefully. He remained in this quiet state without vomiting for more than an hour, then the malady resumed its course with greater violence than ever, but in receiving the Bread of Life he received new strength and courage to support his sufferings.

On the evening of the same day the Rev. Father Colin, Superior-General of the Society, came to the Hermitage, and M. Mazelier, Superior of the Brothers of Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux, arrived the following morning. 'Ah!' exclaimed the good Father on hearing of their arrival, 'what a blessing it is for me to receive the visit and assistance of these good priests.' He conversed a long time with Father Colin, recommended the

Brothers to him, and concluded by humbly begging his pardon for any faults that might have escaped him. Father Colin, extremely touched and edified, spoke to him most affectionately and encouraged him very much. In his conversation with M. Mazelier, Father Champagnat said: 'I recommend to you my Brothers who are liable to the conscription.' 'And I,' answered M. Mazelier, 'beg of you not to forget mine when you are in Heaven.' Both kept their promise. Father Champagnat did not only pray for the Brothers of Christian Instruction; he adopted them as his children. M. Mazelier continued his services to the Marist Brothers, and his esteem and affection for them so increased that at last he offered to unite to them his own Brothers, that all might form one single family.

The feast of the Ascension, which was celebrated that same week, awoke happy recollections in the mind of Father Champagnat. It will be remembered that he was baptised on that day, and he frequently spoke of the event in terms of deep gratitude. He earnestly desired that he might die either on the feast itself or during its octave; but, in his profound humility, he was afraid to tempt God by asking Him for such a favour.

His love of poverty, his attachment to the Brothers, and the desire of giving them less trouble, made him seek to be removed to the infirmary. 'My dear Brothers,' he said to those who served him, 'I must tell you a thought I have, because I believe it comes from God. I want you to take me to the infirmary, in order that I may have the consolation and the happiness of dying in the apartment where so many Brothers have departed for Heaven. Besides, in the infirmary, I shall give less trouble; it will be easier to serve me there.' He was still insisting, when Brother François said to him, 'Father, I believe that, in your present state, it would not be prudent to remove you to the infirmary. God wishes that you should remain in your room. As for trouble, it gives less to serve you here than in the infirmary, on account of the Brothers who sleep there, and who might be disturbed by your presence amongst them.' 'True,' said the Father, 'just as you like.' 'But,' added he, 'since I cannot go to the infirmary, let me be put at least on an iron bedstead.' They hastened to bring him one, in order to please him, and also because it was required when changing his linen. It was on this modest bed that he breathed his last.

His sufferings went on increasing, and he could obtain no relief in whatsoever position he was placed. Thus was fulfilled the prediction he made at the opening of the month of May: 'I expect great sufferings before the end of this month.' The intensity of these sufferings, however, did not prevent his close union with God: he was constantly repeating acts of love, of confidence, of resignation, and contrition, or some short invocations to the Blessed Virgin, to St. Joseph, to his Guardian Angel, and his Holy Patrons. At every moment he would cast a look upon the pictures of our Lord, of our Blessed Lady, of St. Joseph, and the Guardian Angel, that were attached to his bed-curtain. He wanted his professional cross to be constantly on the counterpane of his bed, so that he might frequently press it to his lips. He was ever putting out his hand to take it and kiss it affectionately.

On Monday, the first of June, M. du Treuil, Curé of St. Pierre, came to see him. The good Curé bent over to embrace Father Champagnat, who exclaimed, 'Oh, M. le Curé, I am quite ashamed to see you embrace me in this state.' The venerable Curé was extremely touched and edified by the good Father's humility and resignation, and he addressed to him a few affectionate words, which greatly sustained his confidence in Jesus and Mary. At the close of this short conversation, there sprang up between the two pious ecclesiastics a touching contest of humility, each of them asked the other to bless him, alleging the best reasons he could in his favour. In the end, the good Curé yielded, gave Father Champagnat his blessing, and withdrew, after recommending himself to the good Father's prayers.

On Tuesday, he was visited by a great number of ecclesiastics. M. Janvier, Curé of St. Julien-en-Jarret, with whom he had long been united in the bonds of holy friendship, would not leave him without receiving his blessing. Father Champagnat repeated several times, 'Ah! if you knew what a happiness it is to die in the Society of Mary, you would not hesitate an instant to join it.' Father Champagnat after blessing him exclaimed, 'Come, you must be a Marist! Do you promise me you will?' 'Not to displease him,' said the good Curé, 'I was obliged to promise I would.'

The nearer he approached his end, the more ardent became his charity, and the more earnestly he desired to see and possess his God. His last days were wholly spent in acts of love and

fervent aspirations to Jesus and Mary. All his thoughts were on heaven; he spoke only of it and of the happiness of dying a Religious. 'I shall see all those good Brothers who have gone before me,' he said, 'whom I believe to be all saints.' 'Father,' said someone to him, 'let not the pleasure of being with your Brothers in Heaven, make you forget those that are still on earth; for now, more than ever, we shall have need of you to intercede with the Blessed Virgin for us.' 'Oh, no,' answered he, 'never shall I forget you; and if I have any credit with Mary, I will pray so earnestly and so perseveringly to her for all the Brothers of the Society that she will obtain mercy for them. I am confident,' he added, 'that all, who will persevere in their vocation and who will be devout to this good Mother, will obtain salvation. Oh! how happy I am,' he repeatedly exclaimed, 'to die in the Society of Mary,' and he would then continue making affectionate acts of thanksgiving for this inestimable favour.

The sentiments of Father Champagnat regarding the happiness of dying in Religion, and its being a mark of predestination, are not peculiar to him. A great number of holy Religious held the same opinions and manifested them on their death-beds. 'The reason of this,' says St. Bernard, 'is, because it is very difficult for a Religious to persevere till death in his vocation, if he is not of the number of the elect.' 'That which was always the object of my most ardent wishes,' said the great St. Thomas Aquinas at the hour of death, 'is now that of my most lively gratitude. My God, I thank Thee for having preserved me in the religious state and for giving me the grace to die in it. This is one of the greatest graces Thou hast bestowed on me. It overwhelms me with joy, and it already causes me an unspeakable happiness.'

On Thursday, the fourth of June, the good Father ardently desired to receive Our Lord again; he had a firm confidence that God would grant him that favour which he earnestly implored, through the intercession of St. Joseph, and which indeed was granted him. The vomitings having become less frequent, the Holy Viaticum was again brought to him. On Friday, his sufferings were extreme. The internal fire which consumed him, along with the vomitings, caused him such suffering that he swooned away several times. The doctor was surprised that he lingered so long, and declared that he could not tell what kept

him alive; for, ten days previously, he had stated that his patient could not survive twenty-four hours.

In the midst of this long martyrdom, the pious Founder kept up his intercourse with God. Turning his looks constantly to the pictures of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, though no longer able to pronounce their holy names, he saluted them with his hand, which was held up for that purpose and directed towards each. At last, on Friday evening it was evident that the end was quite near. A good number of Brothers were praying with great fervour in his room, and wished to pass the night there, in order to be with him to the last, but he had still sufficient strength left to engage them to take their rest. Brother Hippolyte and Brother Jerome alone remained with him. During the night he continued his pious aspirations to Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. At about half-past two, he remarked that the lamp was going out. 'Excuse me, Father,' said the Brother, 'the lamp is burning well.' 'I do not see it,' said the Father, 'bring it here.' The lamp was brought to him, but he could not see it. 'Ah!' exclaimed he then, in a dying voice, 'I understand; my sight is going. My hour is come. God be blessed.' He then, in a whisper muttered a few more prayers, and shortly afterwards his agony commenced. It lasted more than an hour, but it was mild and peaceable. The vomitings had completely ceased, for nature was entirely exhausted. At twenty minutes past four, his breathing became slow, and more difficult, and then came only at intervals. The Brothers were assembled in the chapel to sing the *Salve Regina*. The Litany of the Blessed Virgin was immediately commenced; and during its recital, the pious Founder fell asleep in the Lord.

His death took place on Saturday, the 6th of June, the vigil of Pentecost. Several times during his illness, he had expressed a desire to die on a Saturday; but he always added, that he did not deserve such a favour, which, however, he hoped to obtain through the goodness of Mary. Not only was that grace granted to him, but it was given him to die during the very hour, which, for more than thirty years, he had devoted to meditation and union with God. It was during the prayer which followed the *Salve Regina*, that the Mother of Mercy took him from this valley of tears to show him Jesus, the blessed fruit of her virginal womb.

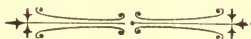
His death plunged the whole Community into profound

sorrow ; but the Brothers had been well prepared for the painful sacrifice, by the long sufferings of the good Father ; and moreover, they were so thoroughly convinced of his sanctity, that their grief was mitigated by their full conviction that all these sufferings were now changed into an immense weight of glory.

After his death he was clothed in his soutane, with surplice and stole. His professional cross was put in his hand, and he was left exposed in this manner, seated on an arm-chair, in his room. Beside him, was a little table on which was placed his breviary, biretta, an image of Our Lord, one of the Blessed Virgin, and two lighted candles. He was extremely pale, but in nowise disfigured. His face preserved all its masculine features, and that air of goodness and dignity which, during life, gave him such ascendancy over the minds and hearts of those with whom he came in contact. His whole appearance was pleasing and attractive, and the Brothers liked to be near him, to contemplate his features and to kiss his feet. They went, six by six, to recite the Rosary and the Office of the dead, beside his remains. In the intervals, between the exercises, all passed and repassed several times. On the day of his death, an artist was specially engaged to take his portrait, which could not be obtained before. On Sunday evening, the body, clothed in ecclesiastical dress, was placed in a leaden shell, enclosed in a strong oak coffin. The body was still perfectly flexible. Before closing the lead coffin, there was inserted, in presence of Father Matricon, Chaplain, Brothers François, Jean-Marie, Louis, and Stanislaus, a plate of the same metal, in the shape of a heart, on which were engraved the words :

OSSA J. B. M. CHAMPAGNAT, 1840.

His obsequies took place on Monday, 8th June. Nearly all the priests of the deanery, and the principal inhabitants of Saint-Chamond were present. The body was carried to the grave by the Professed Brothers who, deeply grieved for their loss, mingled their tears with the prayers which they offered up for the repose of his soul.





CHAPTER XXIII.

THE BROTHERS MANIFEST THEIR ATTACHMENT FOR FATHER CHAMPAGNAT BY THEIR FERVENT PRAYERS FOR THE REPOSE OF HIS SOUL, AND BY THEIR ENTIRE SUBMISSION TO HIS SUCCESSOR—THE BROTHERS OF SAINT-PAUL-TROIS-CHATEAUX AND THOSE OF VIVIERS JOIN THE MARIST BROTHERS—FOUNDING OF THE NOVITIATE OF BEAUCAMPS—THE SOCIETY IS APPROVED BY THE GOVERNMENT—REVISAL AND FINAL ACCEPTANCE OF THE RULES BY THE GENERAL CHAPTER.

As soon as Father Champagnat was dead, Brother François wrote a circular letter to announce the sad tidings to all the Brothers of the Institute. 'My dear Brothers,' he said, 'at half-past four on Saturday morning, June 6th, our Venerable Father Superior fell asleep in the Lord, after a mild death-struggle which lasted more than an hour. We invite you now to mingle your tears and prayers with ours. Let us weep for the loss of a tender Father, a worthy Superior and Founder, a holy priest, our mainstay, our guide and our comforter. He has closed, by a long and painful illness, a laborious and penitential life replete with good works, zeal, and devotedness. His death, like his life, was full of edification, and we have no doubt it was precious in the sight of God. Let these considerations, my dear Brothers, console and encourage us. We have lost a protector on earth, but he will be more powerful in heaven with Mary, to whom he has confided us all in his last moments. It remains

with us now to accept and follow his last and touching instructions ; to reproduce his life in ours, by faithful imitation of the virtues we admired in him.' Brother François then indicates the prayers to be said in each house for the repose of the soul of the well-beloved Father.

Faithful to the advice of their new Superior, the Brothers, although much afflicted at the death of their pious Founder, did not yield to discouragement. They understood that the best means to manifest their filial love and piety towards their tender Father, was not to abandon themselves to useless grief, but to imitate his example, to preserve and perpetuate his spirit, and to continue his work. The high idea they had of his virtue did not prevent them from praying fervently for the repose of his soul, for they knew that the infinite purity of God discovers defects in the holiest actions, and that, owing to human frailty, the lives of the most pious and most excellent men are not free from imperfections.

At the death of Father Champagnat, many persons had fears for the future of the Society and the stability of his work. Will the Brother elected to succeed him be able to bear that heavy burden ? Will the Brothers submit to his authority ? Has the Institute well-established Rules and a government strong enough to ensure its existence and development ? Are the Brothers attached to their vocation, are they sufficiently established in virtue, have they experience enough to govern themselves ? Will they preserve the spirit of their Founder ? Will they be guided by his principles, and will they walk in the path he has traced out for them ? Such were the questions that were asked at the time, and that experience has solved so honourably for the Brothers. They, indeed, were full of esteem and respect for the Superior whom they had chosen ; they accorded him their entire confidence, and their first care was to give him proofs of their perfect submission. They abandoned themselves in everything with perfect security to his guidance and paternal solicitude ; each one continued to apply himself zealously to work for his perfection, and to discharge his duties with all the devotedness of which he was capable. Perhaps never before did the good spirit, attachment to the Society, and fraternal union, shine more conspicuously than during the vacations that followed the death of Father Champagnat. At this time there were three new houses founded ;

Saint-Lattier in the Department of the Isère, Digoin in the Saône-et-Loire, and Carvin in the Pas-de-Calais.

Filled with the spirit of the pious Founder, and eager to adopt his manner of governing the Brothers and doing good, Brother François changed nothing of what had already been done, but continued all as usual. This prudent conduct gained for him the esteem of the public, caused his government to be loved, and obtained for him great influence over the Brothers. Everyone saw with satisfaction that the new order of things made no change in the administration, and that Father Champagnat lived and acted in his successor.

One of the first acts of Brother François' government was to carry out the union of the Brothers of Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux with the Marist Brothers. M. Mazelier, seeing that the development of his Society was hindered by want of subjects, was the first to press for the accomplishment of this project. The Reverend Father Colin contributed greatly also, by his advice, to smooth the difficulties in the way of a fusion so necessary for the two Congregations ; and as both parties were animated by a very conciliatory spirit, and sought only the glory of God, the union being earnestly desired by the members of both Communities, it was finally agreed upon and concluded on the following bases :—

(1.) That the Brothers, when united, should have but one and the same object, one and the same Rule, one and the same government.

(2.) That the Brothers of Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux should acknowledge the authority of Brother François, and submit to him in all things, according to Rule ; that they should adopt the costume and Rule of the Little Brothers of Mary ; in a word, that the two Communities should form one body, and should have the same Superior-General.

In April, 1842, Brother Jean-Marie was sent to take possession of the House of Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux, and direct the novitiate. As had been foreseen, the union of the two Societies proved advantageous to both of them, and gave rise to no practical inconvenience. The Brothers of Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux were few in number, but they were all Religious of great piety and solid virtue. At the time of the union, they numbered forty Brothers and twelve postulants ; they had thirteen houses. Being already Marists in heart and feeling, they had no difficulty in conforming

to the new Rule which they adopted, and in entering into the spirit of the Society of which they had become members.

The union of the Brothers of Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux was followed by that of the Brothers of Viviers. This Congregation, originally known by the name of *Frères de l'Instruction Chrétienne*, was founded, in 1810, by the Venerable M. Vernet, at Notre-Dame-de-Bon-Secours, in the parish of la Blachère, diocese of Viviers. For a number of years, the Brothers made but little progress. They obtained a legal status by a royal Ordinance, in 1826. A few foundations were then made, and their numbers somewhat increased, when the Revolution of 1830 seriously disturbed the good work, and the greater number of their houses had to be closed. After these troubled times, their pious and energetic Founder, who was also Vicar-General and Superior of the Diocesan Seminary of Viviers, made great efforts to reorganise the Society. In 1837, he transferred the Mother-House to Viviers, and placed the Brothers under the immediate direction of the Rev. Canon Gery, who, from 1837 till 1844, generously sacrificed himself to promote their welfare and development. All the zeal and unlimited devotedness of this good priest, however, obtained but a partial success. This is not to be wondered at, when we consider that the Society wanted the essential basis of stability—viz., well defined Rules and religious vows. The Brothers, at the annual retreat, made an act of Consecration to God, or promise of fidelity to their vocation; but these engagements failed to secure their perseverance. In fact, finding themselves, by their occupations, in contact with the world, they soon lost their first fervour; and having no vows to strengthen their will and their virtue, they easily gave way to discouragement, and many left their state to return to the world or to join other Orders. The good Vicar-General heartily deplored this state of things, but was powerless to remedy the evil; he now fully understood the necessity of religious vows to strengthen his Brothers in their vocation, and he conceived the idea of following the example of M. Mazelier, by uniting his Congregation with that of the Little Brothers of Mary, who, besides their vows, had well defined Rules and a properly constituted government. With this intention, he wrote several letters to the Rev. Father Cholleton, requesting him to negotiate this important affair with the Marist Brothers; but

death carried off M. Vernet before it was concluded. The Bishop of Viviers, Mgr. Guibert, afterwards Card. Archbishop of Paris, then took the matter in hand, and with the approbation of his Eminence, Card. de Bonald, Archbishop of Lyons, resumed negotiations with the Rev. Brother François, and brought them to a satisfactory conclusion, in January, 1844. This union was effected on the same conditions as that of the Brothers of Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux, and gave equal satisfaction to all parties. At the time of the union, the Brothers of Viviers had thirteen establishments, forty Brothers and twenty novices.

The annexation of these two Congregations was most providential at that time; for, as they had a legal standing, the whole Institute was thus able to secure the exemption of its members from military service, until 1851, when, by a decree of Louis-Napoleon, the Society was legalised for the whole of France.

But what is most admirable and shows the action of Providence on the Society, is that these successive annexations, which, in the ordinary course of things, might have proved a source of discontent and division, only brought to the Institute the elements of peace and charity, and a greater power of action for good. Never was there greater sympathy or more charity among the Brothers, more fervour and piety, more zeal and regularity in the houses. The annexed Brothers, forming together the Province of the South, were always distinguished by their docility, their devotedness and attachment to the Institute.

The novitiate of Viviers was transferred to La Bégude, in a large house, purchased for the purpose by Mgr. Guibert, and placed under the direction of Brother Louis-Bernardin, in 1844. This Novitiate became a nursery of excellent subjects for the Society. That of Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux, which up to that time had been recruited by few vocations, now gradually developed, and soon postulants arrived in such numbers that it was necessary to enlarge the building. The prosperity of the two novitiates was such, that, in a few years, Brothers were spread over all the south of France, and more than a hundred houses were founded.

The novitiate of the Hermitage, which was the centre of the life and true spirit of the Institute, had not only supplied the principal subjects to form the Province of the South, but it also founded a considerable number of establishments in the

Departments of the Loire, Rhône, Isère, Saône-et-Loire, Ain, Haute-Loire, Puy-de-Dôme, Oise, Pas-de-Calais, and the Nord.

A novitiate was founded in the last mentioned Department, in 1846, by Madame la Comtesse de la Grandville, a lady of great piety and rare virtue. Her first project was to establish an ordinary school for the children of Beaucamps, a small village in the neighbourhood of Lille; but wishing, afterwards, to extend the services of the Brothers to other parishes, she quickly perceived that this could be efficaciously done only by the founding of a novitiate. She accordingly undertook this important work, and completed it with such generosity and benevolence, that she has established a claim upon the everlasting gratitude of the Little Brothers of Mary, and of the thousands of children who, through them, receive the benefit of a truly Christian education in the large Province of the North.

The prosperity of the Society was in no wise retarded by the events of 1848. The Brothers, solely occupied in teaching the children confided to them, retained the good will of all parties, and were not interfered with. The elections of the 10th of December, in confiding the Government of the country to Prince-Louis-Napoleon, calmed the anxiety of the public mind regarding the future of France. A religious reaction having taken place in the minds of all friends of order, and M. de Falloux, an eminently religious man, having become Minister of Public Instruction, the clergy and all good Catholics took advantage of this circumstance to claim freedom of teaching. After extraordinary difficulties, their efforts were crowned with success, by the law of the 15th of August, 1850.

This law, in leaving secondary education free, and in giving to religious Congregations approved by the State and devoted to primary Instruction, the right of appointing their subjects to public schools, the free disposal of their members, and exemption from military service, created at the same time insuperable difficulties in the way of those not authorized, and made it impossible for them to do good. The Council of the Régime, seeing the Society placed in this painful position, did not hesitate to renew the application for legal authorization, which, on two different occasions, it had made during the reign of Louis-Philippe and since the death of Father Champagnat. Mgr. Parisis, Bishop of Langres, undertook to present the petition to the Minister of Public Instruction, and

he succeeded in arranging that, among several petitions of the same nature, that of the Society should be examined specially, and first of all.

The Minister received the petition, and took great interest in it ; he very kindly presented it himself to the Superior Council, which, on the favourable report of M. Portalis, first President of the Court of Appeal, voted unanimously in its favour and adopted it without discussion. A few days afterwards, it was sent to the Council of State, along with the favourable notice of the Superior Council, and the draft of a decree for the legal authorization of the Institute and the approval of its statutes. It was believed that the Council of State would grant the petition without difficulty ; but such was not the case. It met with strong opposition, which lasted more than three hours, in spite of the efforts of M. de Crouseilles, who had succeeded M. de Falloux as Minister of Public Instruction, and who defended the cause of the Brothers. No conclusion was arrived at, and the discussion was adjourned for a week.

However, religious men and all the supporters of the law of the 15th of March, 1850, worked hard in favour of the petition, not only on account of the interest which they took in the Society of the Little Brothers of Mary, but still more because this case afforded an opportunity of making the Government sanction the right of approving, by a simple Decree, religious Congregations devoted to teaching conformably to this law. Considered in this light, the question was one of extreme importance, and all religious men attached the greatest weight to it and made the most strenuous efforts to procure the triumph of the Brothers' cause and the principle it involved. Thanks to their persevering zeal, this principle was ultimately admitted by the Council of State, and the Decree, authorising the Institute, was adopted with all the advantages that could be desired. Consequently, the religious character of the Congregation is established, its civil existence is acknowledged for the whole of France, without any restriction whatever, together with the right of appointing their subjects to public schools, exemption from military service, the right to accept legacies for the schools and for the Society, to acquire and to possess property. Three days afterwards the Decree was signed by the President of the Republic.

It was thus that the authorization, as Father Champagnat had

promised on his death-bed, was granted at the very moment when it became absolutely necessary, and granted with much greater privileges than could have been obtained when he applied for it himself. There is no doubt that it was to his prayers and the prayers of so many good Brothers, who, we hope, enjoy eternal glory in company with him, that God granted this favour. 'Be sure,' said the excellent Brother Lawrence on his death-bed, to the Brother Superior setting out for Paris for the purpose of supporting the petition for authorization, 'be sure, when I am up there with Father Champagnat we will settle this matter between us.' The piety and the virtue of the good Brother were sufficiently known to make us believe that this thought was an inspiration from God, to show us the visible protection we might expect from our pious Founder on this occasion.

Another affair of no less importance, occupied Brother François and his Assistants for a long time, viz., the revisal of the Rules, and their final acceptance by the body of the Institute. We have already remarked that Father Champagnat did not think it advisable to insert in the first edition of the Rules a number of details already practised in the Society, but which required the sanction of time and experience before being finally adopted, and that if it was found necessary, after his death, even the Rules which he had printed might, with the exception of the fundamental Constitutions, be revised and modified by the General Chapter.

To fulfil this important task the members of the Régime did three things.

1st. They put in writing all the traditional practices which, though not explicitly contained in the printed Rules, had been established by Father Champagnat himself, and constantly observed by the Brothers.

2nd. They examined with great care all the notes and instructions which the pious Founder had left in writing, and from these they selected all that was calculated to throw light on certain points of the Rule, to explain them or complete them.

3rd. They arranged and classified all these and divided the whole into three parts under the titles of *Common Rules*, *Rules of Government*, and *School Guide*.

When this work was completed and maturely examined, the Brother Superior convoked the General Chapter, that its members

might still further study this work, revise it, and, if found advisable, modify any part of it, so as to determine and finally adopt the Rules, the Government, and the Method of Teaching of the Society. The members of the Chapter, numbering thirty, were chosen and named by all the professed Brothers. They assembled at the Hermitage towards the end of May, 1852, and after three days' retreat, the General Chapter was opened by a Mass of the Holy Ghost, and a procession to the tomb of Father Champagnat. After examining the work prepared for them by the Régime, the members of the Chapter, judging it impossible to study and examine the whole of it in one session, decided to hold three sessions, one for each part of the project. In the first session they examined and finally adopted the Common Rules. The second session was devoted to the School Guide, and the third to the Constitutions or the Rules of Government. The members of the Chapter applied themselves with great assiduity to the study and examination of the Rules submitted to them; and finding them to be the faithful expression of Father Champagnat's will, containing his principles and his spirit, they adopted them just as the Régime had prepared them, a few slight modifications excepted.

It could not have been otherwise, for the members of the Chapter were good religious men, and devoted to the Institute. Most of them had been trained by Father Champagnat himself, they were all animated with his spirit, and held essentially to everything coming from him. They looked upon it as their first and solemn duty to preserve the Rules given by the good Father, to maintain the usages established by him, and to perpetuate his spirit among the Brothers. Some warm discussions arose over a few points of detail, but the members of the Chapter never swerved from this view of their duty; all had but one desire, one object in view, and that was to preserve and perpetuate the Society as it was founded by their beloved Father.

Wishing, and justly too, to make known to all the Brothers the motives and principles, by which they were guided in the examination of the Rules of the Society, they expressed themselves thus in the preface to the Constitutions:—

‘Very dear Brothers, we believe it necessary to inform you that the Rules and the Constitutions of the Society are not our

own work, but that of our beloved Father. Although these Rules have not all been written with his own hands, still they are all his ; for we have either heard them from his own lips, or collected them from his writings, and from the observances which he established amongst us. They are the faithful expression of his will, and contain his spirit, that is to say, his manner of practising virtue, of forming and directing the Brothers, and doing good amongst the children. Yes, this Rule, is in all its parts the work of Father Champagnat. It was he who prescribed the religious exercises which we are bound to perform each day ; it was he who established all the practices of piety, the vows and the other means of sanctification which we find in our holy state. It was he who arranged the relations that should subsist between the Brothers themselves, with the public and with the children ; the kind of community life they ought to lead, in order to be good Religious ; their conduct towards the children, in order to be wise and pious teachers, and their deportment towards seculars, in order to edify them and to shed everywhere the good odour of Jesus Christ. He imparted to the Institute, its spirit, its character, its object, and determined its exterior form, that is, the Brothers' costume, their food, their mode of life, their dwellings, their furniture, their Method of Teaching, and their Government by a Superior-General, elected for life, aided by Assistants, and Visitors, and represented in the establishments by Directors and Sub-Directors. We had not to discuss these principles, much less, to add or retrench any, but to take and accept them, as our pious Founder left them to us. Their application and development only could become the subjects of our examination ; and we must say, the greater part even of these developments were supplied to us by the Rules and writings of our venerable Founder. Our mission, therefore, simply consisted in collecting, arranging, explaining and completing these various documents and teachings : it consisted, above all, in recognising and accepting, for ourselves, and for all our Brothers, the precious inheritance left us by our venerated Father, as it is our most important and most sacred duty to transmit it to you as we have received it, in order, that you, in your turn, may hand it down to those who will come after you.'

Before separating, the members of the Chapter, at the request

of the Brother Superior, elected a third Assistant, Brother Pascal, who was entrusted with the Province of the North.

During the sitting of the General Chapter, the Very Rev. Father Colin, paid a visit to the Hermitage, and encouraged the Brothers by his paternal advice. He took advantage of the holding of the General Chapter to inform the members that it was impossible to unite the two branches of the Society of Mary under the same Superior. After expressing his satisfaction at the excellent spirit of the General Chapter, he added :—

‘My dear Brothers, I must tell you that I was very uneasy when I saw Father Champagnat’s health fail. I scarcely knew what to think of your Society and what would become of it ; but the good God who watched over it, provided for the future and inspired your pious Founder to have his successor elected during his lifetime. But although Father Champagnat, yielding to my entreaties, had his successor appointed, you know well that he made me depositary of his authority and his last will. According to this act of your Founder, I might have interfered in your concerns ; but, I understood that any such interference could only have thrown confusion into your government ; I felt it my duty, therefore, to leave everything in the hands of your Brother Superior and his Assistants. And, indeed, you have every reason to be pleased with their administration, for they have governed your Society wisely. All this convinces me, more and more, that the will of God is that you be governed by yourselves. In the beginning, being, as it were, new-born children, you needed to be guided and surrounded on all sides by the Father’s care ; but now that you have reached manhood, you can go alone ; in a word, you must be emancipated. Be convinced of this, my dear children, that at present the Fathers cannot, with prudence, interfere in your administration ; for, not being sufficiently acquainted with your customs, they could only embarrass your government. After having prayed a long time and maturely examined the matter, I must declare that it does not appear possible to me to place the Brothers and the Priests under the same Superior ; and finally, the will of God was clearly manifest on the occasion of my visit to Rome, for when I presented to the Cardinal Protector of our Congregation, my writing, on the project that I had formed of uniting the two branches under the same head, his Eminence repeated to me several times that the thing could not be done,

and he even quoted for me those words of Holy Writ: *Thou shalt not plough with an ox and an ass together* (Deut. xxii, 10). Thus, my dear children, the will of God is that you be governed in all things by a Superior taken from among yourselves. This, however, does not mean that I break off all connection with you, and that I will no longer take any interest in your affairs; on the contrary, I shall never neglect any occasion on which I can be of use to you. I wish the Brothers and the Fathers to remain for ever united, and my intention is to put in our Rule an article to perpetuate this union which we derive from our common origin.'

This declaration of the very Rev. Father Colin surprised no one, for all the Brothers had long been aware that Rome refused to sanction the Congregation of the Fathers and that of the Brothers under one Superior.

The Brothers received with great pleasure the new edition of the Rules; they felt their courage and confidence renewed, and their attachment to their vocation and to the Society increased by the fact that the Rules and the Constitutions were finally settled, and that, for the future, the form and the spirit of the Society were consolidated.

PART SECOND.

The Virtues and Teaching
of Father Champagnat.



PART SECOND.

CHAPTER I.

PORTRAIT AND CHARACTER OF FATHER CHAMPAGNAT—HIS SENTI-
MENTS CONCERNING SADNESS AND HOLY JOY—THE PAINS
HE TOOK TO REMODEL THE CHARACTER OF
HIS BROTHERS.

FATHER CHAMPAGNAT was tall in stature, erect, and dignified. His forehead was large, his features well marked, and his complexion of a brownish tint. His grave and modest appearance inspired respect and, at first sight, even a certain amount of fear ; but after a few minutes' conversation with him, the latter feeling soon gave way to confidence and love ; for, under a somewhat strict and severe exterior, he concealed a most agreeable and attractive character. He was endowed with an upright mind, a sure and profound judgment, and a kind and loving heart animated with noble and elevated sentiments. He was courageous and resolute, constant in his undertakings and equable in temperament. These precious gifts and beautiful qualities, perfected by grace and brought into relief by his profound humility and great charity, made him beloved by his Brothers and by all who came in contact with him. God, who had appointed him to train teachers of youth, bestowed on him the most suitable character for a teacher, in order that, in this as

in everything else, his Brothers might fashion themselves after his example, and might have before their eyes a model of the virtues and qualities requisite for doing good among the children.

It was in great measure to his gay, open, engaging, and conciliatory disposition, that Father Champagnat owed the success which attended his labours in the sacred ministry and the founding of his Society. His plain and affable manners, the natural candour and goodness that shone in his countenance, won the hearts of all, and disposed them to receive readily and with pleasure, his counsels, his instructions, and even his reprimands. 'He is so kind and knows so well how to arrange matters,' said the inhabitants of Lavalla, in speaking of Father Champagnat, 'that one cannot but follow his advice and do what he wishes.'

His Brothers thought and spoke in like manner. One of them, on leaving the Father's room one day, exclaimed: 'If any other than himself had given me such a reproof, I should not have been able to bear it; but he censured my conduct in such a kind and paternal manner, that not only am I not vexed with him, but I love him more than before.'

But nothing was so remarkable in Father Champagnat as his great equanimity. Neither contradictions nor trials, fatigues, the administration of a large Community, which was often in want of many things, infirmities, or sicknesses, could disturb his peace of mind or ruffle the serenity of his countenance. He never complained, or seemed sad or discouraged. On the contrary, he carefully concealed his pains and troubles, and was ever raising the courage of his Brothers. 'My friends,' he often said to them, 'let us remember that it is for God we are labouring, and that the reward which He has promised is eternal. If we firmly believed these truths, could we ever yield to sadness, or give way to complaining and murmuring, when we meet with any difficulty or have to make some sacrifice. The people of the world have to work harder than we do, and sometimes they sing all day long, because they earn a few shillings, and, while labouring for heaven, should we be sad? should we yield to discouragement? God forbid that we should have so little heart and virtue.'

Being on a journey once with a Brother who was of a somewhat sad and fretful disposition, and who could not well suppress his feelings, Father Champagnat strove by every means to cheer him up and encourage him. 'Is it not true, Brother,' said he,

‘that this is a very long road?’ ‘Yes,’ answered the Brother, ‘and I should like very much to see the end of it.’ ‘Well the end will come, and then you will be sorry for not having borne this little fatigue more patiently.’ ‘I should willingly bear the fatigue of the road, if I had a drink of water, for I suffer terribly from thirst.’ ‘If you did not suffer from thirst you would suffer from something else. In this world, sufferings follow us everywhere, and he who can bear them with patience, and is not afraid of them, feels them least. Do you not see that you increase your sufferings and lose the merit of them by yielding to impatience? Let us sing a hymn to our Blessed Lady; it will help you to support your thirst and the other inconveniences of the journey.’

The good Father then intoned the hymn *Memento Salutis Auctor*, which he sang alone from beginning to end, repeating three times the strophe *Maria Mater Gratiae*. Shortly after, they came to a private house on the roadside, which they entered and the Brother got some refreshments; as to the Father, although he was much fatigued and suffered from a pain in his side, he would take nothing, not even a drop of water. On starting again he said to the Brother: ‘Now that you are thoroughly refreshed and are no longer thirsty, do you not regret not having supported with resignation this slight pain? Be more courageous another time and control your temper; for, besides destroying all the good sentiments of the soul it aggravates the pains of life and renders them insupportable. More than any other, you require to be on your guard against sadness, for you are naturally inclined to it.’

In Father Champagnat’s opinion, persons inclined to sadness and melancholy are neither suited for the religious life nor for teaching, and there is no defect which he combated more earnestly. ‘Sadness,’ said he, in an instruction, ‘produces four great evils:—

‘1. It kills piety, because it darkens the understanding and stifles every good sentiment of the heart; it destroys confidence in God, and keeps the soul in a state of constant trouble and anxiety. For a soul subject to sadness, there is no exercise so painful as that of prayer, in which it suffers a continual martyrdom, or rather a sort of hell impossible to describe.

‘2. It is a source of temptations. There are two sorts of

men with whom the devil does as he likes: the slothful, and those who give way to sadness and discouragement. Do not ask what temptations they experience, for they have all kinds. Religious of a dark and melancholy disposition who wish to be alone and hidden, nearly always have their minds filled with perverse thoughts. Like loves like, and the devil, who is a spirit of darkness, loves people of a sullen and gloomy character. This wicked enemy of mankind delights in the company of the sad and gloomy; he fills their minds with evil thoughts, and subjects them to all sorts of temptations; this caused a great saint to say, that "of all the devil's weapons the most to be feared is excessive sadness. All those whom the devil tempts to sin, he tries to seduce by means of sadness and discouragement; and, if he is deprived of these weapons he can do no more mischief."

'3. It destroys union and fraternal charity. Sadness gives rise to anger, impatience and spite; it renders him who is subject to it suspicious, susceptible, and ungovernable; it troubles his mind, disturbs his judgment, and renders him insupportable to all. Thus, a single Brother subject to this vice, is enough to disturb a whole Community, and sow discord amongst those who have the misfortune to live with him.

'4. It scandalises one's neighbour, because it gives him to understand that one is miserable in the service of God, and that there is nothing but bitterness in the practice of virtue. People of the world, in seeing a sad and melancholy Religious, exclaim: "See how he suffers; his very countenance betrays his miserable condition; he evidently does not like his state, and only remains in it by compulsion, and because he can do nothing else."

One day Father Champagnat was told that a young Brother was sad, and that, for some time past, he had scarcely spoken to anyone. Having sent for him, the Father said to him: 'Is it not true that you do not like your vocation?' 'Excuse me, Father, I have always loved my vocation.' 'Then it must be your Brothers that you do not like?' 'I have nothing against the Brothers, and I have no cause of complaint against any of them.' 'It must be your employment which does not please you?' 'My employment does not appear difficult to me, and I am not displeased with it.' 'Perhaps it is the house or the place that is not to your liking?' 'No, Father, nothing displeases me.' 'How comes it then that you are sad, and that you speak to no one?'

‘I do not know what it is that annoys me, for I am sad in spite of myself.’ ‘That is not quite exact. It is true that you are naturally inclined to melancholy, but this defect is much aggravated by your neglect to strive against it. In allowing yourself to give way to sadness, you make others believe that everything in religion displeases you, and is burdensome to you ; so true is this, that some Brothers have assured me, that you are not attached to your vocation, and that you do not like the Brothers ; whilst others have declared that, either the house or your employment displeases you. You see that, by yielding to your low spirits, you make others think evil of you, whence I conclude that if you do not correct this defect, you are not fit for the religious life ; for, you will be a cause of scandal to both Brothers and children, and you will make those miserable who live with you.’

Once, when the Life of St. Francis of Assisium was being read in the refectory, the good Father profited by the occasion to give the Brothers a sound instruction on holy joy. ‘My Brothers,’ he said, ‘this great Saint gives us rare examples of virtue ; but there is one that we should particularly observe, it is the great care he took to avoid sadness, and preserve holy joy.

‘The reasons which he gives for this are :—

‘1. Because the devils are powerless against those who keep themselves in peace, in confidence and holy joy.

‘2. Because this holy joy in the soul is a torment to the spirits of darkness, who envy a Religious his vocation, the benefits he receives from God, and the reward that awaits him.

‘3. Because it is devils only who should be sad. Religious should be joyful, for they are the children of God. St. Francis added that joy and gladness ought to be the habitual dispositions of Religious.

‘It is this happy state I wish you all to enjoy, for there is nothing so much to be dreaded as sadness and despondency ; after sin, there is nothing worse, nothing more dangerous.’

In order to preserve among the Brothers this holy joy of the soul, this modest and religious cheerfulness which he endeavoured to inculcate on them, Father Champagnat permitted them to play during the recreations, and he preferred to see them engaged in innocent amusements, rather than to see them conversing and walking about. ‘For young Brothers, above all,’ said he, ‘the best thing is to play during the recreations.’ He himself sometimes

played with the Brothers, but in play, as in everything else, he was always noble and dignified, though gay and amiable.

Some of the Brothers, in one of the houses, complained of the levity of a young Brother, saying that he was wholly taken up with childish amusements, and that his giddiness was opposed to religious gravity and decorum, and disturbed the whole house. The Father replied: 'Is this Brother active and tidy? does he perform his duties well in the kitchen?' 'I am not displeased with him on those points,' answered the Brother Director. 'Are you satisfied with him as regards the exercises of piety?' 'As for the exercises of piety, he does them and everything else very well. I have nothing against him but his too great love of play, his levity, and his noisy pranks. A single fact, out of a great number, will show you how he behaves. The other day, after having amused himself for a long time with the wheelbarrow, and brought it into the kitchen and through the school, he ended by wheeling it upstairs into the study.' The good Father, who knew the young Brother perfectly, and who loved him because of his candour and docility, answered his accusers: 'I am sorry he brought the barrow up to the study only; if he had wheeled it up to the garret, I should have given him a picture. I prefer to see him amuse himself thus, rather than remain idle and to weary. I do not see what harm he can have done with his barrow. Did you not play yourselves when you were young? I believe all the wrong is on your side. Instead of joining in some innocent game with this young Brother, or doing something to divert him, and make him spend his recreations pleasantly, you leave him alone; you spend the time either in study or in speaking of some serious subjects; having no one with whom to amuse himself, what wonder is there that he should play with the wheelbarrow? You are wrong in making a crime of this, and, worse still, in leaving him so much to himself, at the risk of disgusting him with his employment and his vocation.'

The pious Founder considered holy joy and gaiety as a mark of vocation. 'He who is gay and cheerful,' said he, 'proves by that alone that he loves his holy state, that he is happy and finds nothing too difficult in it.' As soon as he perceived any young Brothers giving way to weariness and despondency, he neglected nothing to help them out of this temptation; he had a special talent for relieving those who suffered from this dangerous

evil. A great number of Brothers found, by experience, that a few minutes' conversation with him sufficed to dissipate all thoughts of sadness and discouragement; many have even asserted that it was enough to see him, in order to be delivered from this troublesome temptation.

A postulant, who was endowed with excellent qualities, after remaining two or three days, went to Father Champagnat and asked leave to withdraw, alleging that he was tired of the place, and that it appeared impossible for him to become habituated to it. 'I remarked, indeed,' answered the Father, 'that you suffer here and are not content. To be a good Brother one must be gay and cheerful; if you do not become such, I shall not keep you; but I cannot let you go away while you are sad, for fear that you would keep back the young postulants of your place who are preparing to come here. In a few days, when this sadness has disappeared, I shall let you go home, if you wish.' After adding a few cheerful words, he sent off the young man much pleased.

Two or three days afterwards the postulant returned to Father Champagnat, and said: 'Father, I do not feel so tired of the place now; I am almost content enough. I dare say I may go home now.' 'My dear friend,' answered the Father, 'if you are content, why should you go home? You see that the sadness you felt was only a temptation. Instead of returning to the world, where it is so hard to save one's soul, you must, from to-day, begin your novitiate in earnest. If you follow my advice, I engage that you will become a good Brother, and save your soul.' 'I was thinking of that too,' said the young man, 'but there are two things which still trouble me. The first is my fear that the weariness will return when I am not near you; the next that I am incurring expenses which will be useless to me if I do not persevere.' 'Do not fear,' answered the Father, 'I promise to take care of you, and not to send you out until you are perfectly content and settled in your vocation. As to expenses, you will not incur any; if it turns out that you cannot become accustomed to our mode of life, and are obliged to leave, you will not have anything to pay.' Then, opening his desk, he took the young man's purse which contained £8, and, putting it aside in a little drawer, he said to him smiling: 'There is your money. I have not touched it, no one shall touch it, and if you have to leave, I

will return it to you just as you gave it.' The postulant, delighted with such liberal treatment, withdrew much pleased. In a few days he returned to the Father, and, with a beaming countenance, said to him : 'You may do what you like with my money, the weariness has entirely left me. At present I fear only one thing, namely, that of not persevering or of rendering myself unworthy of the great grace that God has bestowed on me by calling me to this holy vocation.'

Cheerfulness, holy joy, and modesty, are no less necessary to enable a Brother to succeed with children ; for, a harsh and repulsive character is one of the greatest obstacles to the good he may do. In fact, to gain children's love and respect, to interest them in our teaching, we must please them ; and it is principally by exterior qualities, that is, by kind affable manners, by a gay, open and modest character, uniformly mild and agreeable, that one captivates their attention, and gains their esteem and confidence.

'A good temper,' says St. Ambrose, 'is most agreeable to all ; and when it is accompanied by kind manners, modest affability, uprightness, and prudence, it is impossible to tell the extent to which it influences the heart.' And, therefore, there is nothing so much recommended to us by the Saints as these exterior qualities which are so necessary to make us useful to our neighbour while labouring for his salvation. St. Augustin says, 'The servants of God should be modest, grave, prudent, affable, without reproach and without stain, so that those who see them may say with admiration, "Indeed those whose character is so excellent are men of God."' St. Gregory of Nyssa, in describing the eminent virtues of St. Meletius, Patriarch of Antioch, gives special praise to his cheerful, affable, modest, and dignified manners, by which he gained the hearts of all who came near him.

St. Francis Xavier, sending one of his companions to catechise infidels, wrote to him :—'Let your manners be agreeable, and have an air of cheerfulness and serenity, in order that you may not exhibit one of those sorrowful faces that frighten and repel people who feel but too great a natural aversion for holy things, unless they are made pleasant and agreeable to them.' The same saint, in writing to all the Religious of the Company of Jesus in Cochin China, said : 'Be careful in conversation not to adopt a certain harsh and precise severity, which would make people

believe that you wish to be feared and courted ; but on the contrary, be cordial, and show by your cheerful countenance and great affability, that you are easy of access.' St. Vincent of Paul made the same recommendation to the members of his Congregation. He said : 'There are persons who, with a modest, smiling countenance, please and win all who see them ; whilst others appear with a sorrowful mien, a harsh and forbidding look, which frightens and repels those who come near them. A catechist, adds this great saint, should strive to acquire engaging and affable manners, which gain the hearts of all : without these, he will do no good, and will be like barren soil, which produces nothing but thistles and thorns.'

It was the profound conviction of this truth that led Father Champagnat to labour incessantly in reforming defects of character among his Brothers ; for he was persuaded that, if he succeeded in this important point, he would remove the greatest obstacle to their success and to the good they were expected to do among the children. 'My dear friend,' said he to an old Brother who wondered at the persistency with which the Father reproved him for certain external defects which did not appear to the Brother to be very serious, 'if you were called upon to save your soul like a Trappist in the interior of a monastery, I should pay less attention to your defects of character ; for, I admit, they interfere little with your perfection, and do not prevent you from being a good Religious ; but they may drive away the children from you, they may render your presence disagreeable to them, and thus be an obstacle to the good you might otherwise be able to do. When one is obliged, by vocation, to labour for the sanctification of others, it is not enough to please God by purity of conscience alone, one must also please men by an amiable character, by kind and engaging manners, and make oneself all to all to win them to Jesus Christ.'

In his instructions the pious Founder frequently returned to this subject. 'I do not like,' said he, 'the Brothers whose presence puts the children to flight, but I consider those best qualified to inspire the love of Religion whose amiable dispositions, whose kind and affable manners denote a contented and virtuous heart. To edify the children, to lead them to God, one must be truly pious and virtuous, but this is not enough if these qualities be not accompanied by pleasing and attractive manners. Humility, charity,

and respect are the foundation and the principle of all the good qualities which captivate and win the affection and esteem of men ; and I intentionally place respect for the child in the same rank with charity and humility, for it naturally springs from these two virtues, and there is nothing more necessary in education as regards both the master and the pupil than the mutual respect which they owe each other.

‘There is not one among you who doubts this truth, in so far as it concerns the respect due to the teacher. You desire and exact this respect from your children, and you believe that you could not properly educate the child that would refuse you this duty ; well, it is equally impossible to bring up a child properly if you do not respect him. But why must the child be respected? I answer :—

‘1. Because you desire that he should respect you, and in this as in every other point you must set the example.

‘2. Because the child is your fellow-creature ; because, like you, he is the child of God, a member of Jesus Christ and the temple of the Holy Ghost.

‘3. Because he is innocent, and because innocence and virtue have the greatest claim to our respect and veneration.

‘4. Because you will not gain his esteem, his confidence and his affection, except through the respect that you will bear to him, and by the proper way in which you will act towards him.

‘5. Because the respect in which you will hold the child will keep him to his duty, and will make him avoid most of the faults that youth and levity would cause him to commit.

‘6. Because this respect is the safeguard of your own virtue, the barrier that protects you against your own weakness and the dangers you might encounter in your constant intercourse with the children.

‘7. Because this respect is the best check upon ill-humour and all outbursts of anger, and is thus well calculated to prevent any ill-treatment of the children or the infliction upon them of over severe or unjust punishment.

‘8. Because without this respect and the wise prudence which it inspires, the kindness and affability, the devoted care and attention which you owe the children, would soon degenerate into weak indulgence, which would degrade your character and render you contemptible even in the eyes of your pupils.

‘If you ask me now what defects are most opposed to the respect we owe to childhood, I would answer :—

‘1. Rudeness and harshness, which are usually the source of ill-treatment.

‘2. Levity, which causes one to be wanting in reserve and gravity, to be inconsiderate in speech, and to say and do a thousand things calculated to produce bad impressions on the child.

‘3. All familiarity of a nature to cause the child to overstep the limits of respect which he owes to his master, or to become less docile and exact in the fulfilment of his duties.

‘4. Particular friendships, natural affections, caresses, and other unbecoming marks of attachment which proceed therefrom.

‘The Brother, who is too kind, and who condescends to undue familiarities, degrades himself just as much as he who, by harshness and brutality, ill-treats children. A wise and prudent teacher, who respects his reputation and understands his dignity, who is anxious to do good and to keep himself out of danger, never touches his pupils with his hands, either to caress them or to punish them.

‘5. Inconstancy in the manner of treating the children and in the method of teaching. This habit of changing systems, punishing everything one day and permitting everything the next, now acting one way now another, shows that the teacher does not understand the importance of the work of education, nor the principles which alone can secure its success, and that he is performing, in an unworthy manner, an excellent and everlasting work.

‘6. Weakness of character or of will, which causes one to overlook the faults of the children, and to take no notice of them. For, to leave a child without discipline, to tolerate his defects, and to let him do as he likes, is not to love or respect him. Such conduct, especially in a religious teacher, is cruel, and quite opposed to the respect which is due to childhood.

‘7. In fine, want of dignity is one of the defects most opposed to the consideration which should be shown children ; in yielding to it, one yields to a number of failings inconsistent with self-respect, which cause the child to have a bad opinion of his master, and to despise him.’

It is to maintain in the Brothers great evenness of tempera-

ment, to preserve them from all outbursts of ill-humour, and to cause them to shun everything prejudicial to the mutual respect in which master and pupil should hold each other, that Father Champagnat made those wise rules which forbid the Brothers to speak to the children in terms which denote undue familiarity, or even to play with them, to call them nicknames, to use harsh and offensive terms in speaking to them or in reproving them, or to employ corporal punishment. By other rules not less wise, the pious Founder prescribed to the Brothers:—

‘1. To be always very respectful towards the children, and to train them to civility, more by their example than by their lessons.

‘2. To delay till the morrow the punishment of serious faults, that it may be given with greater calmness, and that the spirit of justice, of charity and indulgence, may always accompany it.

‘3. To raise their hearts to God every time they require to punish a child, to reprimand him, or to give him an advice.’

The object of these rules and instructions of the pious Founder was not merely to keep the Brothers from committing any act of harshness, but to make their schools a large family, by the reciprocal sentiments of respect, love, and confidence, which ought to inspire both masters and pupils.





CHAPTER II.

FATHER CHAMPAGNAT'S SPIRIT OF FAITH.

'FAITH,' says St. Ambrose, 'is the foundation of all the virtues ; the stronger, more lively, and enlightened it is, the more solid and excellent are the virtues which are built upon it.' Father Champagnat was a model of the sacerdotal and religious virtues ; but all these virtues took root in his faith, and it was his lively faith that produced, fortified, and developed them. Faith was to him what it was to the Royal Prophet : a light which guided all his paths, and all his words ; which enlightened all his decisions, all his projects, and all his actions.

It was this lively faith and the strength and energy derived from it which made his instructions so moving, and caused him to be listened to with so much attention and pleasure. One would have imagined that he actually saw the truths of Religion with his eyes, and touched them with his hands, so much was he penetrated with them, and such was the profound conviction with which he spoke of them. In conversation, and in his private intercourse with the Brothers, there frequently escaped from him those exclamations and rejoinders which, dictated by his lively faith, penetrated, and left indelible impressions upon the hearts of those who heard them. Here are a few examples :

'What !' said he to a Brother who felt discouraged by some difficulties, 'you are not afraid to offer an insult to Almighty

God by being disheartened at such trifles! How can you doubt of your success when you have God on your side, and are doing His Work? Wishing to inspire another Brother with generous sentiments: 'Ah, my dear Brother' said he, while embracing him after hearing his confession, 'we must save our souls, but we must do so for God alone, and therefore put aside all these fears and troubles, and think only of loving God.' He answered a Brother who complained of the difficulties of his state: 'If you had more faith you would not be so faint-hearted in the service of God, and you would not find the difficulties of your state so great. There are troubles everywhere; all men have their crosses; but he who bears his cross for God, and meditates on the truths of faith, always finds it light.' 'My friend,' said he to a Brother who found the practices of the religious life too difficult, 'what gives you most pain now will one day afford you the greatest consolation.' A year had not passed away, when this Brother had experienced the truth of these words. 'Oh, how happy I am now,' he exclaimed on his death-bed, 'to have made some sacrifice to persevere in my vocation, to have done violence to myself in order to observe my Rule. In this I now find the greatest hope of my salvation.'

It was this spirit of faith which inspired our pious Founder with that ardent zeal for the glory of God, and the salvation of souls which consumed him; that great love which he had for the children, and the holy desire that incited him to consecrate the last years of his life to the conversion of savages. 'Oh!' said he often to the Brothers, 'if we did but know the value of a soul. If we knew how much Jesus Christ loves children, and how ardently he desires their salvation, far from finding the school burdensome, and repining at the labours of our state, we would be ready to sacrifice our lives to procure for these tender children the blessing of a Christian education.' How often did not the Brothers who accompanied him in his journeys hear him exclaim at the sight of a child: 'Behold there is a soul created to the image of God, redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ, destined for eternal happiness, and perhaps that child is ignorant of these sublime truths, and no one takes the trouble of teaching them to him.' Then, if he could conveniently do so, the good Father would go near him and ask him his Catechism.

This spirit of faith, by always keeping the presence of God

before his mind, kept him in a state of habitual fervour. After the most distracting occupations, he used to pray with such feelings of unction and piety, that the most tepid and the most indifferent were excited to prayer and the love of God by his example. He could not bear to see anyone praying negligently or in an unbecoming posture, or making the sign of the cross in a careless manner. How many times has he not reproved the Brothers for making this sacred sign hurriedly or without attention! 'Is it thus,' he said, 'that you make a sign which reminds us of the most touching and most ineffable of our mysteries? I cannot understand how Religious can forget themselves to such an extent. What an example to give your children and the faithful! What will they think when they see you perform this sacred act of religion in such a careless manner? How will you teach children to make it properly if you make it so badly yourself?'

An ecclesiastic, who had just made a visit to the Hermitage, said: 'Nothing made such an impression on me as the piety of Father Champagnat. In hearing him pray, one is convinced that he is a saint. Those who have the happiness of living with him cannot but be pious. I assisted at only one exercise of piety with him, it was the evening prayers, and I hope I shall never forget the sentiments of devotion which I there experienced.'

This same spirit of faith inspired him with profound respect for all religious objects, and things consecrated to God. If he found any leaves of a pious book on the ground, he carefully picked them up. 'Take care,' said he to his Brothers, 'not to let your children drop the leaves of their books upon the ground; if any become loose, let them be burnt, for, the name of God and His sacred words are often written upon them. To leave them lying about on the benches, or to trample them under foot, is to profane His adorable name or His holy word. Do not fail to take care of all the religious objects in your houses, such as crucifixes, statues, pictures, holy-water fonts; let them be properly placed, and kept in a state of the greatest cleanliness; and teach your children also to do the same at home.'

He carried this respect even to the religious costume of the Brothers, and was often remarked to pick up and to lay aside a piece of cord, an old hat, or any other part of the Brothers' clothing. 'Your clothes,' said he, 'are blessed; they are the

livery of Mary ; consequently, you must respect them and take the greatest care of them. The Brother who makes little account of his soutane, neither esteems his vocation nor does he know the holiness of his state. It pains me to see any part of your costume lying about. I advise you, therefore, to keep it always in a proper place. Even when a thing is past use, it should not be left lying about ; for every object, no matter how trifling, that reminds us of our holy state, deserves our respect.' He would have every Brother to kiss his soutane and his cross before putting them on in the morning. It would be impossible to tell the number of times he made similar recommendations to the Brothers, so much did he wish to inspire them with respect for holy things, esteem for their vocation, and for everything connected with it.

But his respect and veneration for churches, for the Sacraments, and for holy Mass, cannot be expressed in words. His lively faith in the real presence kept him, as it were, annihilated in presence of the Blessed Sacrament. It was impossible to assist at his Mass without being moved to piety and penetrated with profound respect for the sacred mysteries. When giving holy Communion, he pronounced the words—*Ecce Agnus Dei*, in so moving and penetrating a tone of voice, that it seemed as if he actually saw our Lord, and that his Saviour was not a hidden God to him. Many persons have been deeply touched, and have felt a renewal of fervour, by hearing him pronounce these divine words with such devotion and respect.

During a journey that he made in Savoy, he asked to be allowed to say Mass in a country chapel. The altar cloth and corporal given him were so much soiled that it actually made him sick. 'Behold,' he said to his companion, 'how they treat our Lord who, for the love of us, remains on our altars ! They have clean linen for themselves, for their tables, and they leave the adorable body of the Son of God surrounded with dirt and filthiness. Their houses are tidy and ornamented, whilst the church, in which our Lord dwells, is covered with dust and cobwebs.'

The profound respect that Father Champagnat had for our Lord Jesus Christ restrained him from speaking without necessity in church ; he would not permit anyone to speak freely even in the sacristy. One day, a Brother, through inattention, entered

the sacristy without taking off his hat. 'What! Brother,' the Father exclaimed, 'you do not take off your hat on coming in here! Do you not know that the sacristy is part of the church, and that one should appear in it only with respect and modesty?' As the Brother sought to excuse himself, the Father added: 'Come, no excuse; if you had a more lively faith in the real presence of our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, you would not be guilty of such a fault.' The Brother who relates this fact adds: 'It is now over twenty-five years since I received this lesson from the good Father, and the impression it then made on me, is still as vivid as it was the first moment.'

In the beginning of the Institute, when the Brothers were still at Lavalla, they had only a little oratory in which to perform their exercises of piety; the Father often said to the Brothers: 'When shall we have the blessing of having a chapel and possessing our Lord? I have every hope that this favour will be granted to us; but shall we know how to appreciate it sufficiently? for, to enjoy the presence of Him who is the beatitude of the Angels and Saints, is an inestimable blessing. This divine presence, although hidden, and, as it were, veiled from us in the Blessed Sacrament, is on that account the more deserving of our respect and adoration.'

He was very grateful for having been born in the bosom of the Catholic Church, and he continually thanked God for this favour. He kept, during his whole life, the anniversary of his Baptism as a special feast day, which he celebrated with sentiments of joy and gratitude. He did the same on the anniversary of his ordination.

'*The just man liveth by faith,*' say the Holy Scriptures. In Father Champagnat this life of faith was great; to be convinced of it, one has only to read in the Rule the Chapter on the Spirit of Faith. It is the faithful expression of his sentiments, of his teaching, and of the principles which guided him in the conduct of his life. By this spirit of faith, which superabounded in him, he saw only God and His holy will in all that happened. 'It is God,' said he, 'who brings about what happens, and who makes all things turn to the good of His elect. The wicked may try their best, they can do only what God permits them to do; so that, it is not they we ought to fear, but God only. We have greater reason to fear ourselves than we have to fear all mankind,

or even hell itself, for we ourselves are our greatest enemies, and we do ourselves more harm than all the wicked and all the devils together could do us.'

Enlightened by this spirit of faith, he saw clearly his own weakness, the nothingness of creatures, the insufficiency of human means ; and he relied on God alone for the success of his undertakings. He made use of human means, of course, since they enter into the designs of Providence, but he relied on God alone for the result. 'We should lose our time,' he would say, 'if we depended on our own efforts, on our talents or ability, or on men, for the success of our undertakings, which God alone can give ; for our part, we are fit only to spoil matters.'

At the vacations, when, after serious reflection he had, in concert with his council, settled the post and employment for each Brother, he said, 'We have carefully examined, and have weighed everything, in order to give to each Brother what suits him best ; we believe we have succeeded in arranging matters satisfactorily ; let us take care, however, not to rely too much on our own prudence. If God does not bless these arrangements, our labour will be in vain, and what we consider the best combinations may prove the least successful. Therefore, let us beg of God to bless our labour ; for *Nisi Dominus edificaverit domum, in vanum laboraverunt qui edificant eam*. 'Unless the Lord build the house, they labour in vain who build it' (Ps. cxxvi.) He then took the nomination list, put it on the altar during holy Mass, and, for several days, he offered up fervent prayers with the whole Community to obtain the blessing of God on the appointments.

In his instructions, as well as in his private counsels, which he gave the Brothers, he was ever repeating : 'It is by the grace of God, through the protection of Mary, by piety and virtue, that you will succeed and do good ; take care then not to count on yourselves, or on the favour or the support of men. Of course, you should endeavour to gain the confidence of the authorities, and interest them in your school ; but remember, it is neither on men nor on your talents, but on God alone that you must rely for the prosperity of your houses.'

A Brother Director, in giving Father Champagnat an account of his establishment, assured him that the Brothers had gained the esteem of all the influential persons in the locality, and that

he could count on their support. A few days afterwards, the Father learned for certain, that the very persons who were thought to be so devoted to the establishment, and from whom the Brother Director had expected the necessary means to support the Community, were plotting the ruin of the school and taking secret means to have the Brothers removed. The good Father, having assembled the Brothers Directors that same day, to talk over some business matters, profited by the occasion to give them a practical lesson on the powerlessness of human means for doing good. Addressing the Brother referred to: 'My dear Brother,' said he, 'did you not tell me that the authorities and all the influential persons of your parish patronise your school, that they are all devoted to you, and that you have nothing to fear for the future of your establishment?' 'Yes, Father,' answered the Brother, and he repeated the eulogium he had already passed on the authorities; at the same time, he did not fail to mention the fine promises they had made him. 'Well, my dear Brothers,' said the Father, 'I repeat again what I have so often recommended to you before, to be civil and irreproachable in your conduct towards everyone, particularly towards those in authority, whose co-operation you require in order to do good; but to rely on God alone for the success of your schools and your undertakings. The Brother, whom you have just heard, has counted too much on the people of his parish; for, this very morning, I have learned that they are doing all in their power to be rid of the Brothers, and to close the school.

'Whenever we put our trust in men, God withdraws his protection from us, and then we may expect the fulfilment of these words of the Prophet: *Nisi Dominus aedificaverit domum, in vanum laboraverunt qui aedificant eam.* Never forget, therefore, that it is by the help of God alone, and not by any human means that we can do good.'

When the meeting was over, Father Champagnat took the Brother aside, and said to him: 'Perhaps you are mortified at what I have done, but I thought the lesson was good for all. Besides, I am convinced that God has permitted all this to punish you for your too great confidence in men. During the past year you have paid them far too many visits, with a view to gain their favour. One single visit to the Blessed Sacrament would have brought you infinitely more profit. Do not forget that to lean

on men is to lean on a reed which yields, and lets us fall to the ground.'

On one occasion, Father Champagnat seeing the effects belonging to a Brother who had just arrived from a journey, and, noticing on a roll of paper the words, *Grand means of success*, he untied the roll to see what those grand means were. Unfolding the paper he found nothing but flourishes and figures of birds made with the hand, and drawings of all kinds. Feeling grieved at the great importance attached to such trifles, he sent for the Brother who taught the young Brothers, and, showing him all these papers, he exclaimed: 'See here the grand means of success of the young Brothers who are being formed in your class; this is what they depend on for their success. Is it surprising after this if they do so little good among the children? What is the use of teaching them all these things, if they cannot make a better use of them? For the future, give less time to science, and more to piety; but, above all, cease not to repeat to these Brothers that it is by virtue, by the help of God, that we do good, that we obtain success in our schools, and not by such trifles.' Then sending for the owner of the parcel, he first reprov'd him, and then, casting the roll of papers into the fire before him, he said: 'Behold your grand means of success! See how they go off in smoke, for smoke they are and nothing else.'

'Faith is a generous virtue,' says St. Thomas; 'it is bold and valiant,' says St. Augustin; 'it is the strength of great souls,' adds St. Leo. In Father Champagnat this virtue was all that. It was his faith which caused him never to shrink from any sacrifice; which induced him to bind his existence to that of his Brothers, to share all their privations, to sacrifice his health, his strength, and his very life, for the success of their work. It was his faith that rendered him bold and courageous. It caused him to undertake and successfully accomplish what, humanly speaking, seemed impossible. It was faith that imparted to him that energy, that grandeur of soul which made him triumph over all difficulties, and rendered him superior to all the trials and accidents of life. 'Father Champagnat,' said a pious ecclesiastic, who was a fellow-student of his in the Seminary, 'was not a transcendent genius, his talents were not above mediocrity; but he was a man of faith.' From the time of his studies, this virtue was observed to shine brilliantly in his character, and was the main-

spring of all his actions. It was this strong faith that made him succeed in all his enterprises. God said to him, 'Thou shalt do that,' and he did it, relying on God alone.

May the Little Brothers of Mary never forget by what means their venerable Father did good, and may they never be tempted to adopt any other means. If at any time they do not obtain from their labours the success they expect, let them ask themselves if they are not wanting in the spirit of faith of their pious Founder, or if they are not adopting certain means that were unknown to him. We often hear it said: 'How is it possible that so many instructions, so much care given to children should have so little result? How is it that, with so many means of perfection, there is so little solid virtue among the Brothers? St. Augustin tells us in two words—*Fides dormit*, it is because faith sleeps.' The instructions given to the children, the various means employed for one's own perfection, are not enlivened, are not inspired by the spirit of faith. In winter, when the sap sleeps, plants do not grow, they produce nothing; in the same way, when faith sleeps, the Religious does no good to himself or to others, notwithstanding all the trouble he may take.





CHAPTER III.

HIS TRUST IN GOD.

As we have seen, Father Champagnat succeeded in all his enterprises ; and what is more remarkable still, he succeeded without any human aid. What was the chief cause of this success? No other than this spirit of faith, and his immense confidence in God. ‘When God is on our side,’ he often said to the Brothers, ‘when we rely on Him alone, nothing is impossible.’ It is a truth of faith of which there can be no doubt ; for the Apostle tells us : *If God be for us, who is against us?* (Rom. viii, 31.) And again, *I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me.* (Phil. iv, 13.)

The life of our pious Founder is a complete confirmation of this truth. He had so little talent for study, that his parents, believing him incapable of attaining the priesthood, did all in their power to dissuade him from the study of Latin. When he had spent a week at the Little Seminary of Verrières, it was resolved to send him home at once ; for, on being examined, he was considered too dull to succeed in his studies, or to acquire the knowledge necessary for an ecclesiastic. The pious young man knew better than anyone else the difficulties he experienced in learning ; but, putting all his trust in God, he determined to proceed. ‘Since God wishes me to embrace this vocation,’ said he to his parents, ‘He will give me intelligence, and all that is necessary to succeed in my studies.’ ‘Give me a trial,’ said he to

the Superior of the Little Seminary ; ‘and if, in a few months, I do not succeed, you may then send me away ; but I hope that God will give me the grace to keep up with my class-fellows, and to satisfy you.’ His confidence in God was not in vain. We have seen that although he was not distinguished for talent, he completed his studies with success, and that, during the very year in which there had been question of dismissing him, he finished two classes.

When he became a priest, and was appointed curate at Lavalla, he undertook the reformation of that parish, and succeeded, not indeed by his eloquence as a preacher, but by his prayers and his confidence in God. His instructions were simple ; they mostly consisted of a reading, which he explained and developed, and yet they produced the greatest fruits in the souls of his hearers. He had not much time to prepare his instructions, for his priestly duties and the care of his Community took up the greater part of his time ; still, he never went into the pulpit without having studied and meditated what he should say. This simplicity in his instructions did not arise therefore from the want of preparation, but from his distrust of himself and his confidence in God, as may be gathered from the following words which he often repeated to his Brothers : ‘The words of man may please and even convince, but they are powerless to touch and change the heart. Of course, we should study religion, and carefully prepare our instructions, because we cannot teach others what we ourselves do not know ; but we should be greatly mistaken if we thought this was sufficient for doing good. It is not by fine phrases that we can inspire devotion, and gain souls to God. Change of heart is the work of grace, and not the effect of eloquence or human talents. The skill of the husbandman avails little if God does not give the increase. Let us be careful not to rely on our talents ; they are useless of themselves to effect any good ; we shall employ them in vain, and labour to no purpose if God be not with us. *Nisi Dominus edificaverit domum in vanum laboraverunt qui edificant eam* (Ps. cxxvi).

‘If the grace and the spirit of God do not animate our words, they will produce but a vain sound, which will strike the ear but will not reach the heart. It is not the report of the cannon, but rather the ball that makes the breach in the wall or sets the house on fire. Man can make a noise, but the grace of God,

represented by the ball, which alone overturns what opposes it, can alone change the heart, and inflame it with divine love.

‘This is why a prayer, an office, or a rosary, said with piety, a Mass heard with devotion, a fervent Communion, contributes more to the success of an instruction or a catechism, than any amount of science and natural talents ; for such holy exercises unite us to God and secure His grace, which is everything. And further, there is another great truth to be ever remembered : it is, that there is nothing more prejudicial to the work of God and to our success than presumption, and self-sufficiency ; and I have no hesitation in saying, that the most talented, if they are not sincerely humble, are the least fit to do good, because they count too much on themselves and too little on God.’

On one occasion, a member of his Council proposed one of the cleverest Brothers for a certain difficult post. ‘No,’ exclaimed the Father with great energy, ‘he could do nothing there, for he trusts too much in his little talents ; we require there, above all, a pious, humble man, one who is diffident of himself, and who trusts more in God than in his own ability.’ On another occasion, as someone in presence of the Father praised the talents of a young Brother, the Father said : ‘It is true, the Brother has talents ; but the devil also has talents, and far greater ones than he has ; but, for all that, he is not capable of doing good. It is not genius that is necessary for doing the works of God, and for making the children good Christians, but great devotedness, solid virtue, the spirit of prayer, and confidence in God.’ ‘The talents of this Brother,’ he added, ‘are a fatal gift, because they make him vain and presumptuous, and expose him to lose the spirit of his state, and perhaps even his vocation.’ The good Father was not deceived. The Brother was very successful, and this puffed him up with pride and rendered him worldly and disobedient, which, in the end, caused him to be expelled from the Society.

At the annual retreats, it was the pious Founder who gave all the conferences. One year, he began the first conference with this advice : ‘My dear Brothers, I have heard one of you ask if the Father, who is to give the retreat, preaches well. This is my answer to the question, and I hope you will not forget it : If you rely for the success of the retreat on the talents of the preacher and what I may say to you, you will make no retreat at all. The words of man may strike your mind, excite your

imagination, and produce temporary impressions ; but, if God does not touch your hearts, these impressions will die away with the sound that produced them, and you will leave the retreat just as you entered it. The most solid and best prepared instructions cannot produce any lasting effect, unless God speaks to the heart ; and His grace alone can touch you, give you sentiments of compunction, and change you for the better ; if, therefore, you wish to make a good retreat, pray fervently, and put your whole trust in God ; for, in this more than in anything else, we must say : *Nisi Dominus ædificaverit domum in vanum laboraverunt qui ædificant eam.*'

Father Champagnat's style, although very simple, was noble and vigorous ; his words and expressions were pithy ; his tone of voice was impressive, and his countenance animated ; everything about him indicated a man filled with the spirit of God, and this it was which rendered his instructions so interesting to the Brothers, that they preferred them to the sermons of the most renowned preachers. A feeling of satisfaction was visible in the countenance of all when he ascended the pulpit. They never tired of listening to him ; and they preferred his familiar instructions and paternal exhortations to the most laboured discourses of other preachers.

There is no virtue which Father Champagnat recommended so much to his Brothers as confidence. It would require volumes to relate his comments on the two first verses of the psalm, *Nisi Dominus ædificaverit domum*. 'Be not surprised,' he said, 'to see me always returning to the same subject. I do so because it is the most important ; because it is everything. Indeed, what is peculiar to man is weakness, misery, and nothingness ; he has nothing ; he can do nothing without the help of God. Our weakness and our continual wants are therefore so many motives for us to put our trust in God.

'But there is a stronger motive still to inspire us with unlimited confidence in God. It is the fact that this virtue is the measure of the grace we receive, and which God always gives in proportion to our confidence in Him. He says to us, as He said to the Israelites of old : "All the land that you tread upon will belong to you ;" that is, I will give you all that you expect from me. If you hope for grace to overcome your passions, to correct your defects, to triumph over all your enemies, you shall receive

it. If you expect virtue from me, I will give it to you ; if you wish for success in your undertakings, I will grant you success ; trust in me and I will be your protector, your friend, your father, I will bless all your steps ; I will grant all your wishes. I will give you temporal goods and the goods of eternity. In a word, have confidence in me, and receive from my mercy all the gifts and all the favours you desire.'

The good Father was glad to see his Brothers under the necessity of practising this virtue. 'I am not sorry,' he wrote to a Brother, 'that you have troubles, and are persecuted ; it will oblige you to put your trust in God.' He wrote to another, 'You tell me that death has carried off the greatest benefactor of your school ; that is not quite accurate ; the greatest benefactor of your school is God who never dies. Put your trust in Him, and He will not let you want for anything. He has taken away the person you so much regret, only to make you rely solely on Him.'

When the Father saw anyone discouraged and wanting in confidence in God, he felt much grieved thereat. 'What !' he wrote to a Brother, 'you wrong Almighty God by distrusting Him. Is He not powerful enough to help you ? or do you doubt His goodness towards you ? Was it ever known that anyone ever trusted in Him and was lost or left unaided ? If you knew God better you would not treat Him thus.'

On recovering from his illness, in 1825, he learned that the Brothers had given way to discouragement in those sad circumstances, and that several had even formed the intention of withdrawing, for they all considered the Society as lost, if he had died at that time. He was much surprised and deeply afflicted at this want of confidence in God. On the very day on which he learned these details, he assembled the Community, and reproached them severely for their want of faith and confidence, as may be seen from the following words which he addressed to them :—

'My dear Brothers, when shall we have sentiments more worthy of God ? Has He not given us sufficient proofs of His goodness, why then lose confidence in Him when He tries us ? Why should we doubt of the future of this Congregation and think all is lost, because it may please God to take away the instrument He made use of to found it ? This Community is His work. It is He who founded it. He has no need of anyone to

maintain it. He will make it prosper without the help of men, and in spite of men. Let us never forget that God has no need of us or of anyone else. If our thoughts and feelings are always worldly we shall end by losing our vocation and leaving the Society; but others will take our places; God will bless them because they will be more faithful than we are; and by them He will continue His work. Besides, I must add, in order to give you confidence, and to make you understand how wrong you were in losing courage, that the House is not so much in debt as has been represented to you. God has always provided for our wants; His assistance was ever at hand, so that we owe very little, and that little I am answerable for.'

In the year 1830, he earnestly exhorted the Brothers to the practice of this virtue. 'It is God,' said he, in one of these exhortations, 'who permits these things to happen, and who makes them turn to His glory, and to the good of His elect; if we trust in Him, no evil can befall us. Nothing in the world can hurt us, or cause a single hair of our heads to fall, if God does not permit it. God has said to the wicked: "*Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther.*" It is, therefore, certain that nothing will happen to us without His permission; that men have over us only such power as He gives them, and that all the harm their malice can do us, will, in the end, turn to our advantage.'

Some Brothers having asked him if they should not take certain precautions in consequence of the disturbed state of the country. 'The precaution that you ought to take,' said he, 'is to put your trust in Providence, and to redouble your confidence in God. Endeavour to merit His protection by greater fidelity to your Rule, by your zeal in instructing your children, and by the practice of all the virtues of your state. This precaution is sufficient, and any other, without it, would be useless to insure your safety, or preserve you from the danger which you fear.'

In several parishes, the Brothers' salaries having been stopped, they informed the good Father of it, and of the state of anxiety and distress to which they would soon be reduced. He answered them: 'Men have stopped your salaries, but God, who knows that you require food, has not withdrawn His protection from you; He will take care of you since you do His work. He feeds the birds of the air, He gives food even to the wicked, who blaspheme His holy name, who insult His religion; it is not possible that He

will abandon you, or let you want the necessaries of life. This trust should be the greater, as He is now your only support. When you can no longer live where you are, come to the Mother-House ; so long as we have a morsel of bread, we will share it with you.'

When he undertook any good work, he considered only one thing : namely, whether or not it was the will of God. If he believed that such was His will, neither obstacles nor the want of funds gave him much concern, for he knew well that God could remove the obstacles and provide all that was necessary. When he believed that the time had come for him to found the Society, he did not hesitate to assemble some poor young men without education, to buy a house for them, and to furnish it, although he was poor himself and had no money. Everyone told him that the undertaking would infallibly fail. An ecclesiastic of great merit, who afterwards became Archbishop, after endeavouring by all the means in his power to get the good Father to abandon his project, seeing that he could not induce him to change his mind on the matter, said to him : 'You build in vain ; you will not succeed, and you will become the laughing-stock of the public.' 'Alas !' answered the Father, 'I am firmly convinced that if God is not with us, we labour in vain ; but if He wishes this work, as I believe He does, He will make it succeed, although it may not possess a single element of success. The confusion that its failure would bring on us, if we do not succeed, is not what troubles me ; I fear more to be unfaithful to God than to be despised by men.'

When he undertook to build the Hermitage, several persons represented to him that it was imprudent to undertake such a building without having the necessary means. 'I confess,' said the Father, 'that it would be great imprudence and extreme rashness, if we counted on ourselves only ; but God, who has never been wanting to us, and who has done everything for us, will not abandon us since it is His work we are doing.' 'But are you sure that God wishes this work ?' they inquired. 'How could I doubt it,' was the reply, 'after the blessings He has bestowed on us, and the protection He has accorded us ? If He did not wish this Community, He would not send us so many subjects ; He would not bless our schools ; He would not provide us with the means of support, as He has done up to the present

time. Since He favours the Congregation, it is a proof that He wants it; and if He wants it, He will send us the means of building a house for its accommodation.'

A few even went further still, and seeing that the good Father did not follow their advice, declared that pride had turned his head, and that ere long he would furnish abundant proof of it, by abandoning his foolish enterprise and becoming bankrupt. When Father Champagnat was informed of these evil forebodings, he calmly answered, 'Let people say what they like, but let us put our trust in God who will never abandon us unless we first abandon Him.'

These damaging reports would not have troubled Father Champagnat, had they not produced an erroneous impression on the public mind, and thus prevented subscriptions which he would otherwise have received, and of which he stood in such great need. Indeed, several rich persons who had intended to contribute to the work sent their subscriptions elsewhere. In a moment of urgent need, a Brother went to one of these persons to ask some money. 'I shall take good care not to give you anything,' was the reply, 'I have no intention of encouraging your Superior in his follies. What does he mean to do with that large house he is building? Before it is finished he will be obliged to sell it, and give up everything. You shall have nothing from me, and I will advise no one to give you anything.' When the Brother brought this answer to the Father, he exclaimed, 'I have been long convinced that we need not expect anything from men, and that God Himself wishes to do all for us. Let us therefore redouble our confidence in His goodness, and abandon ourselves to His providence. It concerns His honour and glory to assist us, and give us the help that men refuse us. Should the whole world be against us, we have nothing to fear, if God be for us.' The good Father's confidence was not misplaced; help came, and from an unexpected quarter, thus making the protection of God the more visible.

It may be remarked that Father Champagnat did not like begging as a means of procuring funds; he preferred leaving to God the care of assisting him as He thought fit. Will it be believed that a crime was made of this entire confidence in God? 'See,' his censors would exclaim, 'he takes no one's advice. He has such a mania for stones and mortar, that he thinks of nothing

but building. Pay who may, little does he care, provided he can build walls to be pulled down next day, and rebuilt the day after.' These calumnious assertions deceived many persons, not excepting the Archbishop himself. Being constantly told that Father Champagnat thought of nothing but building, and that he spent money foolishly, his Grace believed it, and, having sent for him, he severely reprimanded him, and forbade him to build any more.

There was great fear at the Archbishop's palace that the good Father would become bankrupt. It was the common cry that he must necessarily fail. 'He incurs enormous expenses,' they said; 'his receipts are almost nothing; he owes more than he is worth; in the end, his creditors will perceive his critical condition; they will seize the property, and the result will be a public scandal.'

At one time this feeling prevailed to such an extent, that the Archbishop considered it his duty to relieve Father Champagnat of the administration of the House; and his removal would have been effected had not the ecclesiastic who was appointed to replace him, declined the mission. We must here state that his Grace was not long under this erroneous impression; and that his first sentiments of confidence and esteem for Father Champagnat soon returned. But the same could not be said of a great many persons, who, viewing things by the light of human prudence alone, could never understand the good Father's conduct. They always thought that his liabilities surpassed his assets; and were convinced that, after his death, the Brothers would not be able to pay their creditors.

During his life, the pious Founder never ceased to inspire his Brothers with confidence in God, assuring them that Providence would take care of them, and that His assistance would never fail. On his death-bed, it was the last recommendation he gave them. 'Put your trust in God, and count on Him; His providence will watch over you, will help you, will bless you, and provide for all your wants.' It was befitting the glory of God that He would recompense such great confidence, and show that it was not in vain that Father Champagnat trusted in Him. This man of faith had always been so opportunely assisted by God, that he was able to say confidentially to an intimate friend, 'I always found money when I absolutely wanted it.' At his death, he left to his children more than £8000 worth of landed property, free

from debt, with the exception of a small sum that was due for a property which he had purchased that very year; and, as if God had wished to reward his confidence to the end, a generous benefactor paid this sum shortly after.

This unlimited confidence in God kept his soul in unalterable peace and tranquillity in the midst even of the greatest difficulties. 'Our Lord,' said he on these occasions, 'will assist us according to our wants; the greater the obstacles we meet with, the greater should be our confidence in Him, for the more claims we have to His help.'

A Brother having fallen ill, Father Champagnat, not having anyone available to take his place, was obliged to send the Master of Novices. 'What will you do now?' someone asked. 'Where will you find a man to direct your House?' 'We expect God will send one,' answered the Father. 'In that case, I am afraid you will have to wait a long time.' 'Not so long as you think. God is never at a loss to find men. He may take the first that passes; in his hands, any instrument is good. In the meantime, I am going to confide the post to Brother N., and, although he is only sixteen years of age, I am convinced that God will bless him, because I have no other.'

A Brother Director once objected to take a Brother who was very young. 'Take the boy,' said the Father, 'I will promise that you will be satisfied with him. God will be obliged to bless him, since He sends him; besides, it is with nothing that God does great things. Put your trust in God, and you will see that this little Brother will do wonders.' He was not mistaken; the young Brother obtained a complete success.

In 1823, when he was still at Lavalla, writing to one of his Brothers, after mentioning different establishments, he added: 'As to Lavalla, it appears that this year we shall have many poor people; we will do our best to feed them. God who sends them to us, knows that we have nothing. I expect He will provide for them and for us. We also receive many postulants, but nearly all without money, and very young. However, three of them have come to the age of reason, for they are over thirty; one is a business man, another a shoemaker, and the third knows nothing; but it is with nothing that God does great things!!!'

To support his Community, and feed the poor of whom he took charge, Father Champagnat had only his salary as a curate;

the public were surprised and asked how he could maintain so many people. 'I do not know,' said a friend of his, 'what you mean by filling your house with poor children and receiving so many postulants who cannot pay their pension; unless you have free access to the public treasury you will assuredly become bankrupt.' 'I have something better than that,' answered the Father, smiling. 'I have the treasury of Providence, which supplies the whole universe without ever being exhausted.' Another person said to the Father: 'You must have a big purse, to provide for so much want and destitution. 'My purse,' replied the Father, 'is never empty; it is the purse of Providence; the more I take from it, the more there is.'

On one occasion he was blamed for building continually. 'They blame me for building,' he said, 'but I am forced to it, in order to accommodate so many Brothers. I must either build or refuse to admit any more postulants.' 'But,' it was said, 'you have no money, and it is imprudent to undertake more building without funds.' 'I have always done so,' said the Father. 'If I had waited for funds before commencing to build, I should not yet have one stone upon another.' A friend who paid him a visit at the Hermitage, asked him where he would find money to pay for the building then in course of erection. 'I shall find it,' was the reply, 'where I always found it—in the treasury of Divine Providence.'

At a time when the Community was large, and provisions were very dear, a Brother of his council, who knew that there was no money in the house, said to him, 'Father, this year we shall never be able to make both ends meet.' 'True,' replied the Father, 'if you judge by the material resources we have; but Providence! Do you count Providence for nothing? God must come to our aid, since He Himself sends us so many young people.' 'It is but right,' answered the Brother, 'to trust in Providence; but would it not be prudent to be more severe in the choice of subjects, and to refuse some of those who pay nothing.' 'Never!' exclaimed the pious Founder. 'Never shall I refuse a postulant who appears to have a vocation, and may be capable of doing good, simply because he brings no money. I would rather pay, if necessary, for a young man who may become a good Religious.'

One day Father Champagnat was threatened with a lawsuit,

if he did not pay at once a debt of £80 which he owed. The Father sent for the Brother Procurator, and requested him to try to borrow the required sum. 'Father,' said the Brother, 'you know that, last week, I was unable to find anything. People shun me when they see me coming. It is useless for me to try Saint-Chamond ; and I beg you will not oblige me to go.' As the Father insisted, the Brother answered somewhat pettishly: 'I will go if you oblige me ; but I tell you, beforehand, that I shall return empty-handed.' The Father said no more ; but, as the hour for payment was drawing nigh, he went to his room, and began to pray. In a few minutes he was called to the parlour ; and, as soon as he entered, a man threw down on the table a bag containing £120, saying at the same time: 'Here, sir, is some money I thought of giving you.' The Father embraced him affectionately, exclaiming: 'May God bless you, my dear sir ; it is His providence that sends you. I was in the most urgent need, and you have rendered me a service that I will never forget.'

On another occasion, the Brother Procurator went to the Father, and told him the flour was done, and they required a fresh supply. The Father opened his drawer, and handed the Brother all the money he had. 'But there is scarcely enough there,' said the Brother, 'to buy two sackfuls, and that would not last a fortnight.' 'Buy the two sackfuls, at any rate,' said the Father ; 'God will come to our relief before they are finished.' Ten days afterwards, the Brother returned to tell him that the flour was nearly done. 'Here,' said the Father, 'I have just received wherewith to buy thirty sacks. Was I not right in assuring you that God would not abandon us?'

On seeing the development of the Society, someone said to Father Champagnat, 'What great things you would do if you had a few thousand pounds.' 'If Providence sent me fifty good Brothers, we would do far greater things,' answered the Father. 'It is not money we stand in need of, but good subjects. A Community is always rich enough when it has holy Religious, and these I ask of God every day. As to pecuniary resources, I count on these words of our divine Saviour: *'Seek ye, therefore, first the Kingdom of God, and His justice ; and all these things shall be added unto you'* (St. Matt. vi. 33.)

He relied so little on human means, that he doubted of the success of any affair if he saw it much favoured by men. As

many persons took great interest in the authorization of his Institute, at the time he went to Paris for the purpose of obtaining it, he wrote from Lyons: 'Humanly speaking, everything appears to go well; but, more than ever, I say, *Nisi Dominus*. I am afraid that all these human helps may retard the action of Providence, and that, far from promoting our object, they may lead to its failure. Pray, then, and ask others to pray, for it is in God alone we should put all our trust.'





CHAPTER IV.

FATHER CHAMPAGNAT'S LOVE OF PRAYER—HOW CAREFULLY HE
TRAINED THE BROTHERS IN THIS HOLY EXERCISE.

'ONE of the greatest graces which Almighty God has granted me,' said the humble St. Francis of Assisium, 'is the gift of prayer; for it is by prayer that I have obtained all the favours which divine goodness has bestowed on me.' Father Champagnat might have said as much. God bestowed on him the inestimable grace of prayer; and it was in this holy exercise that he acquired that lively faith which animated all his actions, that unlimited confidence in God by which he obtained everything he required. It was by prayer that he arrived at such a high degree of virtue, that he gained souls to God, and that he founded such a useful Society in the Church. Prayer was his element, and he devoted himself to it with such ease and facility, that it appeared quite natural to him. Besides the community prayers, Holy Mass, and the Office of the Church, he spent a considerable time in conversing with God. It was for this purpose that he rose so early; for, being much occupied during the day, he was obliged to take from his sleep the time necessary to satisfy his piety, and the need he felt of treating with God. It was in prayer that he conceived and determined all his projects and undertakings. In prayer he began, continued, and ended everything he did. 'I could never undertake anything,' he

said, 'without having long recommended it to God in prayer; first, because it is easy for man to be deceived, and to mistake his own opinions and ideas for the inspirations of God; and second, because, without the help and protection of heaven, we can do no good.'

It was not in grave matters only that he acted thus; he did the same on all occasions, beginning each action with prayer, and continuing it in the spirit of prayer. Hence those holy practices which he so much recommended to his Brothers, and which he inserted as articles of the Rule, such as to begin all the school exercises with prayer, to raise one's heart to God each time one has to deal with another, to punish a pupil, or to give an advice to a Brother; to make frequent ejaculations during the day, and render them so habitual, that their ordinary occupations may be turned, as it were, into prayer, and thus prolong the morning's meditation throughout the day. In all dangers and troublesome occasions, prayer was his great haven of safety, and in the Community, novenas followed each other so rapidly, that one was hardly finished when another was begun. He was constantly urging the Brothers to pray, and to pray fervently. Such confidence had he in the efficacy of prayer, on these occasions, that he was often heard to say: 'I am sure that we shall be heard, and that, whatever may happen, it will turn to our advantage.'

Being fully convinced that, to a Religious, prayer is the most efficacious means to acquire the virtues of his state, to promote his own sanctification and that of others, he desired the Brothers to devote much time to prayer, and to have a great number of religious exercises.

Several persons did not approve his imposing on the Brothers the Office of the Blessed Virgin, and that for the following reasons: 1st, Teaching being very laborious, and the Brothers having to speak much in class, the recitation of the Office would fatigue their chests, and ruin their health. 2nd, The Brothers, not understanding Latin, the Office could not be of much use to them.

'I am convinced,' said the Father, 'that the Office of the Blessed Virgin, far from being an aggravation of their laborious task, is a comfort and a consolation to the Brothers, because they can recite it in a moderate tone of voice, and while walking in the open air; because it is a satisfaction for them to be associated

with so many religious Congregations, and so many of the pious faithful who pay this tribute of praise to Mary. As to the objection that they do not understand Latin, that is true; but God understands it, and their prayer is not the less pleasing to Him on that account, provided the interior spirit and the heart accompany it.'

It was represented to him also that the children drew little fruit from the recitation of the Rosary; that they repeated this prayer without attention, without understanding what they were saying, and that, therefore, it was lost time for them. He replied: 'Did the children who cried out *Hosanna to the Son of David* understand well what they said? Nevertheless, their prayer was so agreeable to Jesus Christ, that He publicly eulogised it, and declared that it is from the mouths of children that God receives the most excellent praise. If children have less fervour and devotion than grown-up people, they have more simplicity and innocence, and it is these that make their prayer so agreeable to God.'

In the beginning of the Institute, Father Champagnat established many practices of piety, which, later on, he was obliged to give up, at least in part, because they overburdened the Community, and could not be observed by all the Brothers. Such were the practice of visiting the Blessed Sacrament several times a day; these visits he reduced to one in the day; the practice of passing in prayer and meditation the last hour of the departing year and the first of the new one; the practice of the six Sundays' devotion in honour of St. Louis Gonzaga; and lastly, several prayers that were added to the ordinary exercises of piety, or that each one had to say in private.

He had a special liking for the prayers of the Church, and preferred them to all others; this is why he made the procession of the Rogations, why he celebrated the feasts that had been suppressed by the Concordat of 1801, and sang the Offices of Christmas Eve and Holy Week in strict accordance with the Rubrics. In the beginning, the singing of these Offices, for the most part, fell to himself, for the Brothers, besides being few in number, were not capable of assisting him; however, this did not prevent him from singing all of them, and with as much solemnity as in the grandest of churches.

On all occasions, Father Champagnat recommended the

Brothers to pray for the children confided to them. 'You will do more good,' said he, 'by prayer than by any other means. A Brother who is satisfied with instructing his pupils, does only a part of his duty; if he wishes to perform the whole of his task, he ought to recommend them to God in all his prayers. Above all, let him pray for the most vicious, for those who are most difficult to train in the practice of virtue, and who stand most in need of prayer. A Brother may not have much natural aptitude to teach Catechism, to discipline a class, or instruct children as he would like, but he can always pray for them; and it is by prayer that he will be of real use to them, will generally succeed in gaining their confidence, establishing his authority, and securing attention. The reason is, that nothing is so effective as prayer to touch the hearts of the children, and render them docile; several Brothers have assured me, that since they have made it their duty to pray much for their pupils, they can do with them what they like.'

As for himself, embracing all men in his charity, he constantly prayed for all. He prayed for the Pastors of the Church, for the conversion of sinners and infidels, for the school children, and, in particular, for the members of his Community. Every day, he consecrated his Brothers to the Blessed Virgin, and represented to God the wants of each. 'I feel such interest in these good Brothers,' he said confidentially to someone; 'and I so ardently desire their salvation, that I cannot cease praying for them, and recommending them to our Lord and His Blessed Mother.' Someone once mentioned to him a young Brother who experienced great temptations. 'Oh, the good Brother,' he exclaimed, 'I never go up to the altar without earnestly recommending him to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. Poor Brother, how I desire that God may bless him, and preserve him from sin! I never utter a prayer without soliciting this favour for him.' What he did for this Brother, he certainly did for all who were in need of spiritual assistance.

But what he desired most of all, was to inspire his Brothers with a love of prayer, to make them thoroughly understand its importance and advantages, and train them to this holy exercise. In his instructions, he continually returned to this subject which he called the *Main Point*. According to him, to have the gift of solid piety is to possess all the virtues; and this thought he developed as follows:—'If God bestows on you the gift of prayer,

He grants you, at the same time, all virtues, for one may say of prayer what Solomon said of wisdom : *All good things came to me together with her* (Wis. vii, 11). In fact, it is impossible to converse often with God without acquiring His spirit and becoming like unto Him by the imitation of His virtues. I have always remarked that he who had the spirit of prayer had also the spirit of obedience, of mortification, of zeal, and was wholly occupied with the attainment of perfection. The pious Brothers are the pillars of the Institute, and whatever be their health or talents, they are everywhere useful, because they show everywhere a good example, and God blesses everything entrusted to them. It is not without reason that St. Paul says : *Godliness is profitable to all things* (1st Tim. iv, 8). Godliness or piety does not communicate virtue only, it also gives success in temporal affairs. We are most probably indebted for the blessing of God on the Institute to certain good, pious, and virtuous Brothers, who may be looked upon by some as useless, because of their sickly state or want of talents, but who are extremely dear to our Blessed Lord and His most holy Mother. On the contrary, a Brother who is wanting in piety does no good either to himself or to others ; he is powerless for good, because he wants the *necessary* means to effect it, which are prayer and union with God. Moreover, long experience has taught us that a Brother without piety is good for nothing ; he is satisfied nowhere, and is a trouble to everyone. This may surprise you, but it is easily understood. Without piety a Brother cannot love his vocation or be devoted to his employment ; without piety there is no virtue ; and a man without virtue, who performs his duties badly, who fulfils his employment from mere human motives, and who is not content in his state, can only be a burden to his Brothers. Instead of being useful to them, he is hurtful, and paralyses all their efforts to do good.

Nothing afflicted the pious Founder so much as to see some Brothers easily omit their community exercises ; and he considered this fault a very dangerous one. This is how he expressed himself in an instruction on this point : ‘ How can you be happy ? How can you have peace of mind when you miss your exercises of piety ? Do you not know that Meditation, Holy Mass, the Office, the Rosary, and Spiritual Reading, are the consolation of good Religious, and that it is not possible to be happy in religion if one neglects them. Has not experience taught you that your

gravest falls have always been preceded by the neglect of prayer? and that the days on which you performed your religious exercises badly, have been filled with faults? You may be certain that the most fatal snare the devil can lay for the ruin of souls is to divert them from prayer; for the neglect of this holy exercise infallibly assures the triumph of his temptations.'

Father Champagnat wished, as he has inserted in the Rule, that any Brother who could not perform any one of his religious exercises with the Community should ask the Brother Director for time to perform it privately; and to show the justice and importance of this Rule, he said: 'When you have not been able to take your meals with your Brothers, you do not fail to take them at another time; and, no matter how hurried you may be, you always find time to give to your body the food which it requires; why not act in like manner with your soul? Is it less dear to you than your body? No matter what the occupations of a Brother may be, he can always find time to perform his religious exercises; besides, nothing can dispense him from this duty, which is the most important, and should be attended to before any other. I never understood how a Brother could omit his Office, his Rosary, or any other prayer, and pretend that he had not time to say it; if you cannot say your prayers kneeling, or in the oratory, say them at your work, or walking, or superintending your children. I was never once prevented, through want of time, from performing my religious exercises, either as curate, or travelling, and never, in the whole course of my life, have I heard a priest say that he had not time to recite his Office, yet the priest's Office is much longer than yours, and the occupations of an ecclesiastic are, in some cases at least, much more numerous than those of a Brother.'

It often happened, indeed, that the good Father was kept busy all day; but in such cases he took from recreation, or from sleep, the time required for his Office and his other exercises of piety. In his journeys, the recitation of the Breviary, the Rosary, Spiritual Reading, and, if he happened to be alone, the singing of some hymns, occupied his time. He declared even that he liked travelling, because it allowed him more time than usual for meditation and prayer.

The exercises of piety which he considered the most important, and which ought never to be omitted by the Brothers, are Meditation

and Holy Mass. Even when travelling, he desired them, if possible, to hear Mass, and receive their usual communions. 'A Brother,' said he, 'who has the spirit of faith, will consider it an immense sacrifice not to be able to assist daily at Holy Mass. He who misses it, through his fault, in order to apply himself to study or to any other thing not absolutely necessary, shows that he has no zeal for his perfection, and that he does not love Jesus Christ. Holy Mass, Holy Communion, visits to the Blessed Sacrament, in a word the Holy Eucharist; behold the source of grace, the first and most necessary of all devotions, which procures us most graces and consolations. O! how I pity those who do not understand this truth.'

He looked upon meditation as so indispensable that he did not think that a Religious who neglected it could persevere in his vocation. '*If the earth,*' he said, 'according to the words of the Prophet, *is filled with desolation, because there is none that considereth in the heart;* in the same way, it is because there are few men of prayer in communities, that there are so many faults and shortcomings, and so little solid virtue to be found in them. The religious Vocation is the treasure which our Lord declares to be hidden in a field; but it is in meditation that this treasure is discovered, that its excellence is understood, and that means are applied to preserve it, and to make it fructify. He who does not meditate will never know its value; he will not adequately appreciate it, and, at the first temptation, the first serious difficulty, he will be discouraged, and will abandon his state.

'Meditation, prayer, actual grace, habitual grace, perseverance in one's vocation, and eternal salvation, are six things which are linked together and depend on one another. Without meditation there is no prayer; without prayer there is no actual grace; without actual grace there is no possibility of resisting temptation, of preserving habitual grace, and, thereby, one's vocation; for, mortal sin, in causing the spiritual death of the soul, ruins, at the same time, the religious vocation, and destroys, to its very foundation, the great work of salvation. Oh! how many young persons have sadly experienced this truth. But the contrary happens to those who faithfully meditate upon the eternal truths. Meditation inspires them with a love and relish for prayer, by teaching them its necessity and advantages. Prayer brings them abundant

actual graces, by which they resist temptations, avoid sin, and maintain themselves in the state of grace, preserve their vocation, practise virtue, secure their perseverance, and work out their salvation. I am convinced that to be truly pious or to be a good Religious is one and the same thing; for a good Religious is necessarily a man of prayer, and a man of prayer is always a holy Religious. But the important thing to remember is, that solid piety can be acquired only by meditating on the truths of Religion.'

The good Father was so convinced of the efficacy of meditation that he said to several Brothers: 'If you faithfully make your meditation, I will answer for your salvation, and I assure you that, sooner or later, you will become good Religious.' There is no exaggeration in this, for several Saints have declared the same. St. Liguori says, 'that mental prayer and sin cannot dwell together, and that those who meditate fall rarely and rise promptly.' 'One may hold for certain,' says St. Teresa, 'that a soul that perseveres in the exercise of meditation will never be lost, however great or numerous its falls, however violent the attacks of the devil which assail it; sooner or later, God will deliver it, and conduct it to Heaven.'

The instructions of the pious Founder on prayer never failed to inspire great trust in God. Here are a few of his thoughts on this important subject, which was so dear to him. 'The more graces we ask of God, the more we obtain. To ask much from men is the means to obtain little or nothing; to receive anything from them, we must ask little. But with God it is quite the opposite; it is honouring His power and His goodness to ask Him for great things. As it would be an insult to ask a great king for a farthing; in the same way it would be despising God, and ignoring His power and goodness, to ask Him for a trifle. Whatever may be the wealth of a man, his riches are diminished by the amount of what he bestows, how trifling soever it may be. With God it is quite the contrary; He is so rich, that his wealth cannot be exhausted; and so liberal, that He never tires of giving. To do good to man is to Him a kind of necessity. Besides, what He gives to us still belongs to Himself; quite different from men. He enriches us without diminishing His wealth; one may say that He increases His riches by heaping benefactions on us; for, the graces that he gives us were, so to speak, buried in the bosom of His mercy, and con-

tributed nothing to His exterior glory, whereas, in our hands, they glorify Him by the good actions they induce us to perform. Never has God appeared greater or more amiable in the eyes of men than when He exercised towards them His greatest mercy. David, who was a man according to God's own heart, and knew Him well, said to Him : 'Thou wilt pardon me my sin, because it is very great, and it will show forth Thy great mercy.' Thus, what usually discourages men, great faults, great wants, was to this holy King the great motive of his confidence, for he had an exalted idea of God. To conclude, I say : to ask little of God is the means to obtain nothing. If, therefore, we wish to please Him, let us ask much, let us ask great things. The greater our petition, the more pleasing it will be to Him, and the sooner we shall be heard.'

To train the Brothers to piety, the good Father not only gave them publicly frequent instructions on this important subject, he also had private interviews in regard to it, and asked them an account of their meditations, and of the manner in which they performed their other exercises of piety. One of the Brothers, having told him that there was nothing more difficult for him than meditation, and that he then experienced more temptations than at any other time. 'Let not this surprise you,' said the Father, 'the devil knows all the good that meditation does you ; he sees that, by this means, God wishes to bestow special favours on you, and give you great virtues ; this is the cause of his fury against you, and of the temptations with which he assails you. Be neither frightened nor discouraged ; this trial is a good sign. To combat distractions, to resist temptations, and to support them with patience, is a prayer, it is more than a prayer, it is a virtue, or rather the exercise of several virtues.'

Another Brother, having declared that he had great difficulty in applying himself to meditation, and felt no devotion in his prayers. 'The reason of this,' said the Father, 'is because you are too much distracted during the day ; you never enter into yourself ; you know neither your defects nor the wants of your soul. If you made your examination of conscience more carefully, you would pray better. See how the holy King David prayed :

'Rebuke me not, O Lord, in Thy indignation, nor chastise me in Thy wrath. There is no health in my flesh, because of Thy wrath ; there is no peace for my bones because of my sins ; for my

iniquities are gone over my head ; my sores are putrefied and corrupted, because of my foolishness. I am become miserable, and am bowed down even to the end. I walked sorrowful all the day long. I am afflicted and humbled exceedingly, etc. (Ps. xxxvii.)

‘He spoke thus because he knew his wants ; and he knew them, because he often entered into himself. You are without virtue, you are full of defects, and you cannot apply yourself during meditation ? Lay your faults before God, and say to Him in your heart :—O my God, behold one here in Thy presence, poor, slothful, sensual, dissipated, inconstant. Ah ! my God, every day I fall into these faults, and into many others. Every day I offend Thee by my thoughts, words, eyes, ears, and all my senses. Heal, O Jesus, the wounds of my soul ; pardon me my sins. Thou seest that I have neither humility, nor modesty, nor obedience, nor mortification, nor zeal, nor piety ; give me these virtues, and, above all, give me Thy holy love. Perform this exercise every day, and I promise that you will soon be an excellent Brother, and you will have no difficulty in occupying yourself during meditation.’

Once, after meditation, the Father having publicly asked Brother Laurence how he had spent his time, the good Brother answered him with great simplicity : ‘You have hit well Father. Almighty God must have inspired you to ask me, in order to punish me, for I have done nothing good to-day, because I lost the subject of my meditation. However, not to lose my time altogether, I represented to myself St. John Francis Regis passing whole nights at the church door to adore our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. I kept looking at that great Saint all the time in that posture. There is one, I said to myself, who did not lose the subject of his meditation, it served him the whole night ; whilst I could not remember mine for a few minutes.’ ‘Very good, Brother Laurence,’ said the Father, ‘it is thus you must act whenever you lose the subject of your meditation.’

Let us conclude this chapter with one of those characteristic words of the pious Founder, which in some manner summarises his teaching on prayer, and fully shows us the importance he attached to piety. ‘Pious Brothers,’ he said, ‘are precious men who cannot be sufficiently esteemed ; they are the pillars of the Institute ; the more we have of them, the stronger will the Society be, and the more will it be blessed by Almighty God.’



CHAPTER V.

HIS SPIRIT OF RECOLLECTION, AND THE CARE HE TOOK TO KEEP
HIMSELF IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD.

FATHER CHAMPAGNAT'S favourite exercise was the presence of God. He preferred it to any other by natural inclination, but still more because God himself has appointed it as the shortest and most efficacious means of acquiring perfection. '*Walk before me,*' said the Lord to Abraham, '*and be perfect*' (Gen. xvii, 1). David said of himself, that '*he set the Lord always in his sight, that he might not be moved*' (Ps. xv, 8) either by temptation or by the difficulty which he experienced in the practice of virtue. If he had always kept this resolution, he would never have fallen into sin.

The exercise of the presence of God is not only the most efficacious means of sanctification, but it is the simplest, the easiest, and most agreeable. It is the simplest, because it may take the place of all others; and it is the easiest and most agreeable, because the remembrance of God strengthens the soul, and fills it with joy and happiness.

During a retreat, the preacher, as is usual on such occasions, having mentioned several means of performing one's actions well, of correcting one's defects, and acquiring virtue, Father Champagnat, in his eagerness to please God and advance in the way of perfection, began to employ all these means at once; but he soon found that their multiplicity, instead of aiding him, only

embarrassed him. He therefore went to the preacher, who was also his confessor, and candidly told him his difficulty. He said, the means which you have given us for acquiring virtue, although they are all good, have caused me much trouble, for, in passing from one to another, I lose my time. Might not the presence of God take their place? This is what I have practised hitherto; and if it alone could suffice, I should much prefer it.' The preacher did not hesitate to tell him, that the exercise of the presence of God is the most excellent of all the means that lead to perfection, and that it alone, with advantage, may take the place of all others. The good Father, very much satisfied with this answer, thanked his confessor, withdrew, and became more than ever attached to his favourite exercise, from which he derived so much fruit.

St. Francis of Sales observes that the multiplicity of means for advancing in virtue is, to some persons, a real hindrance. 'It is with them,' says the holy Bishop, 'as with a traveller, who, finding that several roads lead to the place to which he is going, spends his time in examining which is the best.' Therefore, the wise and prudent Director recommends to apply oneself to one exercise and one virtue at a time, because God does not make our perfection consist in the multitude of things we are doing to please Him, but in the manner of performing them, which ought to be with a pure and upright intention, and for the love of Him. Indeed, St. Francis of Sales seldom recommended any other means than the presence of God, which was his favourite exercise, or conformity to the will of God, or purity of intention, which he also esteemed very much. 'Let us not be,' says the holy Prelate, 'like those spiritual misers who are never satisfied with the exercises prescribed to them, and who are always on the look-out to discover some new means of assuming, as it were, the sanctity of all the saints to make it their own. Such persons are never satisfied, because they find it impossible to carry out all their plans and good desires. It is quite evident, therefore, that this multiplicity of practices retards our progress, because it prevents that undivided attention which ought to accompany everything we do for God. Those who, at a feast, should eat of all the dishes brought to the table, would injure their stomachs, bring on indigestion, and disturb their repose; in like manner, persons who wish to try every method and means of perfection they meet with,

do not act wisely, for their wills not possessing sufficient strength to digest so many practices, and turn them to profit, there is a certain crudity and uneasiness in their souls whereby they lose that peaceful tranquillity in our Lord which Mary has chosen, and which shall not be taken from her.'

This advice of St. Francis of Sales being of great importance in the spiritual life, and consequently of great utility to our Brothers, we did not consider it foreign to our subject to insert it here, the more so as it was the rule followed by our venerable Father, and is in perfect conformity with his spirit and his teaching. Like the holy Bishop whose doctrine he carefully read and practised, our pious Founder ceased not to repeat: 'Perfection does not consist in following all the practices we find recommended in books, but in adopting those that relate to our state of life, and applying ourselves constantly to that virtue which is most in keeping with the inspirations of grace and the recommendations of our spiritual director.

Father Champagnat's manner of practising the presence of God consisted in believing, with a firm and actual faith, that God is everywhere present, filling the universe with His immensity, and with the works of His goodness, His mercy, and His glory. In his instructions, his meditations and his private conversations, there was nothing more familiar to him than these words of the Apostle: '*It is in God that we live, and move, and be*' (Acts, xvii, 28); or those other words of the Royal Prophet: '*Lord, Thou hast proved me and known me, Thou hast understood my thoughts afar off, my path and my line Thou hast searched out, and Thou hast foreseen all my ways. Whither shall I go from Thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy face? If I ascend into heaven, Thou art there; if I descend into hell, Thou art present. If I take wings early in the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there also shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me. And I said, perhaps darkness shall cover me, and night shall be my light in my pleasures; but darkness shall not be dark to Thee, and night shall be light as the day, the darkness thereof and the light thereof are alike to Thee.*' (Ps. cxxxviii.) In the midst of the most distracting occupations, this view of God maintained him in a state of habitual recollection, and rendered prayer so easy to him, that he was ever ready to burst forth into acts of love, praise, and thanksgiving.

A postulant having besought Father Champagnat to allow him to remain all his life in the novitiate, that he might be completely cut off from the world, the Father answered, 'There is nothing to prevent you from leading a secluded life in any of our houses, and in the midst of the children ; for my part,' he added, 'I think, I could be as solitary in the midst of Paris as in the deserts of Siberia. During my stay in the capital, I transacted my business and then retired to my room. All Paris was ignorant of my presence in it ; and I took no more notice of Paris and its curiosities than if I had been a hundred miles away.'

To another person, who grieved at not being able to meditate, and who complained of the distractions caused by what he had seen in Paris, the Father declared that all the bustle of the capital, the crowds of people coming and going in all directions, the sights and wonders so well calculated to gratify curiosity, made no impression on him, and that he found it no more difficult to be recollected and united with God in the streets of Paris than in the woods of the Hermitage.

This feeling of the presence of God preserved his soul in unalterable serenity. His great maxim was, 'We have nothing to fear when God is for us ;' and, 'Nothing can harm those who trust in Providence.'

To the Brothers, he constantly recommended the exercise of the presence of God, and wished this practice to be one of their resolutions at the close of the annual retreat. He frequently repeated to them this saying of St. Francis of Sales : 'The presence of God ought to be the daily bread of pious souls ; which means that, as for our corporal food, bread is taken with all sorts of meat, so for the spiritual food of the soul, there is no act, and above all, no religious exercise which should not be accompanied and sanctified by the remembrance of God's holy presence.'

Wishing always to walk in the footsteps of the holy Bishop of Geneva, who, in the Constitutions for the Sisters of the Visitation, has established by Rule that in the recreations and other community exercises there should always be one of the sisters appointed to remind the others of the presence of God by these words : 'Let all our sisters remember the holy presence of God.' Our pious Founder desires that in recreation the Brothers should generally converse on edifying subjects, or that, at least, they should be careful to introduce some words of

edification into their conversation, so as not to lose sight of the presence of God, and to perform all their actions for His greater glory.

‘Perhaps you will ask me,’ he said, in one of his instructions, ‘why I so frequently return to the same subject? It is because the exercise of the presence of God is the foundation of the spiritual life. In what does the spiritual life consist? In the avoiding of sin and the practice of virtue. But the presence of God will make you avoid sin, it will enable you to practise virtue, to support the trials and difficulties of your state of life, and it will give you sentiments of piety. When one is tempted, this thought alone, *GOD SEES ME*, suffices to calm the passions, to banish temptation, and put the devil to flight. If we dare not do evil before men, how should we dare to do it before God, if we remembered His presence? Forgetfulness of God is the first cause of all crime.’

It was from the Sacred Scriptures and the holy Fathers that our pious Founder imbibed this doctrine.

‘*The land,*’ exclaims the Prophet Ezechiel (chap. ix, 9), ‘*is filled with blood, and the city is filled with perverseness, for they have said, the Lord hath forsaken the earth, and the Lord seeth not.*’ And the Psalmist says, ‘*the unjust hath said within himself, that he would sin; there is no fear of God before his eyes*’ (Ps. xxxv, 2).

If we thought that God sees us, that He is witness to all our actions, we should rarely offend Him. ‘We should never offend Him,’ says St. Thomas. ‘We lose our souls,’ says St. Teresa, ‘only because we believe that God is far from us.’ St. Jerome, speaking of God’s reproaches to Jerusalem, remarks that the remembrance of the presence of God banishes all sorts of sin. ‘What means can we adopt,’ asks St. Basil, ‘to repress our levity of mind, to be recollected at prayer, to overcome temptations, and avoid all kinds of sin?’ ‘No other,’ answers the holy doctor, ‘than the thought that God sees us; for the remembrance of the divine presence is a sovereign remedy against all sin.’

Father Champagnat gave a somewhat similar answer to a Brother who asked: ‘What can be the cause of the little progress I make in virtue, and the great number of faults which I daily commit?’ ‘I know no other,’ answered the Father, ‘than your

heedlessness, which makes you forget the presence of God.' To another, he wrote: 'Inattention does you great injury. Try then, to be recollected, to think of the presence of God, and you will overcome your giddiness, which is the source of so many faults, and which, if not corrected, may cause the loss of your soul.'

In speaking of a Brother, who was very successful in teaching, someone remarked that his presence alone was sufficient to establish order in school, and to make the children work. 'O my friends,' exclaimed the Father, 'with far greater truth may that be said of the presence of God in a soul. The divine presence alone is sufficient to establish order, peace, and happiness in our soul, to banish sin from it, and make us labour unceasingly for our perfection.' One day, in visiting the house, the good Father surprised a Brother in a fault. The Brother quite confused, cast himself at the Father's feet, and exclaimed: 'I beg your pardon Father, I did not know you were here.' 'Brother! Did you not know that the good God is here?' said the Father. 'What! You would do in God's presence what you would not dare to do before me! As long as you act in this manner you will have only the appearance of a Religious; your life will be full of faults and void of virtue.'

'Another advantage of the presence of God,' said Father Champagnat, 'is to inspire us with great courage and zeal for our perfection. No sacrifice appears too great when we think of what God has done for us. Who are the Religious who are lagging behind in the path of virtue? They are the careless Religious who seldom enter into themselves; Religious who do not observe silence, who have much intercourse with men, and but little with God; Religious who are faithless to grace, and who, like the Jews of old, heed not the word of God but when it is accompanied by thunder and lightning; that is, when it threatens them with hell. Such Religious, wanting the spirit of faith, and forgetting that God sees them, act like idle servants who leave off work, lie down, or amuse themselves as soon as their master is away. Let us not imitate such conduct, and, for this purpose, let us remember that our Lord and Master is always present, and that we are constantly under His eyes.

'What raised the Patriarchs to the sublime virtues, which we admire in them, was simply the thought of the presence of God. This thought was so familiar to them that one of their most

common expressions was: *The Lord liveth, in whose presence I am.*

‘Another thing, which may excite our courage and lead us to the due performance of our actions, is, that God always accepts our good will and our efforts, and does not require success, in which He differs essentially from men, who ordinarily make no account of our good will, and reward our effective services only. God looks to the dispositions of our hearts, and rewards even our good desires, heaping His favours and blessings upon us, whenever we do our little best to please Him in the performance of our duties. With a little good will, one may become a holy Religious, and do wonders. If, then, we are poor and devoid of virtue, we have only our own negligence to blame for it : we are wanting in good will, and the good will is wanting, because we have not the spirit of faith, because we do not meditate on the truths of Religion, and because we pass whole days without thinking of God.’

‘My dear friend,’ said the pious Founder to a Brother who considered the practices of the Religious life too difficult, ‘If you kept before your mind these words of the Apostles : *It is in God that we live, and move, and be,* you would not be so fainthearted; the observance of the Rule would not cost you so much, and you would not be so easily overcome by the demon of idleness.’ ‘Judging by the manner in which you perform your actions,’ he remarked to another, ‘one can see that you do not think of God, and that the intention of pleasing Him is never the motive of your actions.’

Writing to another, he said, ‘You have so much trouble in school, and you give way to impatience, ennui, and discouragement, only because you do not think of the presence of God ; and you do not seek His glory in what you do. The acts of patience, charity, and zeal, which you have so many occasions of practising, and which you neglect to profit by, would not be so irksome to you if you felt that God sees you, and that your good angel marks in the book of life all that you suffer for God, and every act of virtue you perform.’

The following will show in what Father Champagnat wished the Little Brothers of Mary to make the exercise of the presence of God consist :—

- (1.) In keeping themselves in a state of grace, in watching over

their thoughts, words, and actions, in order not to say or do anything that might hurt their conscience or offend God ; in resisting temptations by this thought, **GOD SEES ME.**

(2.) In offering all their actions to God, and in seeking in all things the greater glory of God.

(3.) In making frequent ejaculations in the course of the day, and even during the night in the intervals of sleep.

(4.) In taking our Lord Jesus Christ as the model of all their actions, remembering His virtues, His sufferings, His manner of dealing with men, and striving, on all occasions, to speak and act as He did or would have done under similar circumstances.

(5.) In seeing God in His creatures, and loving and praising Him for the services they render Him. In putting their whole trust in Providence and submitting to His will, in all the events of life, whatever they be, and looking to Him alone for help in all their needs and difficulties.

It is evident that this method of practising the exercise of the presence of God is both very easy and very profitable.





CHAPTER VI.

HIS LOVE FOR OUR LORD.

ALL virtue and sanctity consist in knowing, loving, and imitating Jesus Christ. Father Champagnat, being fully convinced of this truth, made the life of our divine Saviour the constant subject of his meditations. He had a particular devotion to the holy Infancy of Jesus Christ, and each year he celebrated the festival of the Nativity with all possible solemnity. On Christmas Eve, he had a crib made in order to represent this divine mystery with all its touching circumstances, and he went with the Community to adore the divine Infant lying on a little straw, and addressed to Him the most fervent prayers. 'O my dear Brothers,' he said on one of these occasions, 'behold the divine Infant lying in a manger, poor and helpless. He stretches out His little arms to us, and invites us to approach Him, not so much to make us share His poverty as to bestow His gifts and graces upon us; He becomes a child, and reduces Himself to this state of abjection, to gain our hearts and our love, and to dispel all our fears. There is nothing so lovely as a child; his innocence, his simplicity, his mildness, his caresses, and even his very weakness are capable of moving the hardest heart. How then can we refuse our love to this divine Infant, who became a child for love of us, in order to increase our confidence, and to show us that he can refuse us nothing. What more winning or tractable than a child? He gives all, he pardons all, he forgets all. A trifle pleases him. In

his heart there is neither guile nor bitterness, he is all tenderness, all sweetness. Let us go then to the divine Infant, who has all human and divine perfections ; but let us go to Him, as He has come to us, by humility and mortification. Let us ask Him for these virtues, for His love, and all that we stand in need of. He can refuse us nothing.'

The mystery of the Redemption was also one of the great objects of the devotion of Father Champagnat. He spent the whole of Lent in meditating on the sufferings of our divine Saviour ; and judging that this subject was more than sufficient to occupy the Brothers and to nourish their piety, he proposed it for their meditations, their spiritual reading, and often also for their readings in the refectory. Holy Week was still more specially consecrated to the contemplation of this ineffable mystery of the immense love of God for man, and the whole of this week was spent, by Father Champagnat, in the greatest recollection, and, as it were, in a sort of retreat. During the last three days, the Offices of the Church were celebrated in full with all possible solemnity and devotion. For many years, on Good Friday, the pious Founder and his whole Community fasted on bread and water. On this day there was no recreation after dinner. Profound silence reigned throughout the house ; the whole day was spent in assisting at the Offices of the Church, in spiritual reading, and in meditating on the sufferings of Jesus Christ.

Father Champagnat and his Brothers made this great week a special time of renewal of piety and fervour. Many of the Brothers of the establishments repaired to the Mother-House at this holy Season. The good Father saw them all privately, in order to encourage them and confirm them in the spirit of their state. Each day, he gave them conferences on the sufferings of our Lord and on the duties of the religious life ; so that this week was indeed a Holy Week, both for him and for all the members of his Community.

But it was above all in the Blessed Sacrament of the altar that he loved to show his affection for Jesus Christ. His faith in the real presence was so lively, that it seemed as if he saw our Lord face to face, in this ineffable mystery. While yet a seminarist, he often asked permission to visit the Blessed Sacrament, and, if his Superiors had not put a limit to his fervour and piety, he would have spent a great part of his recreations at the

foot of the altar. As long as he was curate at Lavalla, he never failed, after dinner, to make a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, and he made it a point to visit our Lord, before going out, to ask a blessing on what he was about to do, and again on returning, in order to examine how he had acted, to thank God for the graces he had received, and to beg pardon for the faults he had committed.

Father Champagnat, as may well be imagined, did not fail to inspire his Brothers with this devotion, which he called the first of all devotions. In the first Rules that were drawn up, he prescribed that two visits should be made to the Blessed Sacrament every day, and that, not only in the novitiate Houses, but likewise in all the establishments, so that the Brothers brought the children to the Church three times a day,—in the morning, to assist at Holy Mass, and after each school meeting, to adore our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament and to recommend themselves to the Blessed Virgin. He also made it an article of the Rule, that the Brothers should make a visit to the Blessed Sacrament each time that they go out for a walk, and, in the novitiates and other houses in which the Blessed Sacrament is kept, never to leave the house, or return to it, without visiting our Blessed Lord. ‘You should never,’ he said, ‘leave a house in which the Blessed Sacrament is kept without going to ask our Lord’s blessing, and, when you return, or when you go to a parish, your first visit ought to be to Jesus Christ in the Blessed Eucharist.’ He attached such importance to these practices that, on several occasions, he reprovved Brothers for neglecting them. It was much against his will, that, later on, he was obliged to reduce the number of these visits ; but, until his death, he never ceased to exhort the Brothers to the love of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

‘It is for us,’ he observed, ‘that, during eighteen hundred years, our divine Saviour has remained day and night on our altars, that we may have recourse to Him in all our needs ; and nothing so much afflicts His divine Heart as our ingratitude for such a favour, and our neglect to visit Him and ask His blessing. If we knew how profitable those visits are, we should be constantly prostrate before the altar. The Saints understood this truth ; they knew that Jesus Christ is the source of all grace, and whenever they encountered any difficulty or wished to obtain any

particular favour, they ran to Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. St. Francis Xavier, St. Francis Regis and others spent whole hours during the day and, frequently, a great part of the night at the foot of the altar; it was in these long interviews with Jesus Christ that they advanced the good works they had in hand, converted sinners, and obtained success in all their undertakings for the glory of God and their own sanctification.'

In all this, the pious Founder only borrowed the language of the Saints, who are unanimous in declaring, that visits to the Blessed Sacrament are a source of grace to Christians.

'It is certain,' says St. Liguori, 'that of all the practices of piety, there is none, after Holy Communion, more agreeable to God and more profitable to us than to make frequent visits to Jesus Christ dwelling on our altars. We often obtain more grace in praying one quarter of an hour before the Blessed Sacrament, than in all the spiritual exercises of the day.'

Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament,' says St. Peter of Alcantara, 'has His hands full of graces, and He is ready to bestow them on anyone who asks for them.' 'Nowhere does Jesus hear our prayers more readily than in the Blessed Sacrament' says the Blessed Henry Suson. In fine, St. Paul recommends us *to go with confidence to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace in seasonable aid.* (Heb. iv, 16).

In all his difficulties, trials and contradictions, Father Champagnat had immediate recourse to Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament; it was at the feet of our Lord that he examined what was to be done, and he never decided anything of importance without first recommending it to Him. In all such cases, he would say: 'We are going to recommend all this to our Lord, during Mass, in our Communions, and visits to the Blessed Sacrament; we shall then see what is to be done.' How many times it happened that matters which appeared to be hopeless were arranged suddenly, contrary to all human foresight, after a few fervent prayers, offered up for the purpose, before the Blessed Sacrament! On one occasion, he was discussing a matter of very great importance with a number of distinguished persons who were all interested in the affair, when the pretensions of both parties were such that a settlement seemed impossible. When

the discussion was at its height, Father Champagnat appeared to consider within himself for a moment, then rising, without saying a word, he went to the chapel, cast himself at the feet of our Lord, and, after a few moments of fervent prayer, he returned to the meeting. On seeing him, they all became calm, and after hearing from him a few words which appeared most reasonable to all, they came to an agreement, and the affair was settled to the satisfaction of all parties.

One day a Brother went to the Father in his room, and said to him plainly : ' Father, I want to leave, and I am so determined on going that nothing in the world can induce me to stay.' ' Why would you leave?' inquired the Father, ' I don't know any reason that can justify your resolve. Up to this I thought you were made for the religious life, and I believe God has called you to it.' ' I also believed it for a while,' answered the Brother, ' but now I am convinced of the contrary, and for some months past the community life has become insupportable to me.' ' You are labouring under a very great temptation,' said the Father to him ; ' the devil, jealous of your happiness and foreseeing the good you may do in the Society, wishes, by a single stroke, to prevent this good, and ruin your soul. Beware of yielding to his suggestions. You would have to repent of it all your life and perhaps during all eternity.' After employing every means that his zeal could suggest to induce the Brother to change his resolution, seeing that all was to no purpose, and that he could not prevail on him even to take a few days to pray and reflect, the good Father said to him : ' Wait a moment ; I will be back shortly and tell you what you are to do.' The Father ran to the chapel, and in an ardent prayer he besought our Lord to have pity on the Brother, to save him on the brink of the precipice, and to deliver him from the terrible temptation which assailed him. He had hardly been a few minutes before the Blessed Sacrament when he felt that his prayer was heard. He returned to the Brother, whom he found on his knees, and who immediately called out to him : ' O Father, what a service you have done me ! The devil, by whom I was tormented, has left me. I do not know what has happened within me, but I feel as if a mountain were taken off my shoulders. My ideas are entirely changed and I can't understand how I allowed myself to be seduced by such gross illusions.'

‘My friend,’ said the Father, ‘do your best to love our Lord, for it is to Him you are indebted for this favour. Endeavour to make the good Jesus known and loved by your pupils ; it is for this purpose He has delivered you from the temptation, and preserved you in your vocation.’

Another Brother, who was violently tempted against holy purity, and who could not overcome the bad habits he had contracted in the world, often went to the good Father to confess his weakness and ask a remedy. After giving him many counsels and suggestions, which produced no definite results, the Father prescribed the following :—

(1.) To offer and consecrate his heart to our Lord, every day, during Holy Mass, recommending him to use for that purpose the Litany of the Sacred Heart, and to say, after each invocation : ‘I consecrate myself to Thee.’

(2.) To renew this offering and this consecration, during his thanksgiving, whenever he should have the happiness of receiving Holy Communion.

(3.) To go twice a day, during free time, to the chapel, to ask our Lord’s blessing.

These practices produced the most happy results. The temptations gradually diminished, and the Brother, in a short time, was completely rid of the bad habits which had kept him so long in a state of bondage.

It was the profound respect and tender love that Father Champagnat had for our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, that led him to perform the offices of the Church with so much solemnity, and to observe the most minute points of the rubrics and all the prescriptions of the diocesan ceremonial. In this respect, the little chapel of the Community resembled the Metropolitan Church and that of the Diocesan Seminary, so much uniformity was there with these model churches in the manner of performing the divine Offices. This fact has been remarked by many persons. Although he had a particular love for poverty, and, as we shall see later on, was careful to maintain it in the Community, he wished the chapel and everything belonging to the divine Service, to be an exception ; he wanted the vestments and sacred vessels to be not only very clean, but even rich ; so far at least, as the resources of the Community would permit.

On his arrival at Lavalla, he found the parish church very

dirty, and he himself began to dust down the walls and remove the cobwebs that covered them ; he painted some parts that were unsightly, cleaned the candlesticks and crosses, the statues and all the ornaments ; once a week he waxed the altar steps, and maintained order and cleanliness in the sacristy. He continued these offices until a Brother was sufficiently trained to take charge of them. In order to give more solemnity to the Services of the Church, and to foster piety among the faithful, he trained a set of altar boys to serve at Mass and Benediction, and, for the processions of Corpus Christi, to incense the Blessed Sacrament and strew flowers with becoming reverence.

To obtain all this from the children and make them behave piously on these occasions, he made them go through a sort of novitiate, and admitted them to serve in church only when they had, by irreproachable conduct for a considerable time, merited this favour.

He directed that the Brothers, through respect for our Lord, should always appear clean and tidy in church, with religious costume, and their shoes polished. 'The great dignity of the divine person of our Lord,' he said, 'requires this profound and exterior respect, when we have the happiness of coming into His presence; and to appear before our Lord Jesus Christ in soiled or careless attire, shows that we do not know our duty towards Him.'

His piety in celebrating Holy Mass was admirable. His modest and recollected appearance, his pious and animated tone of voice ; everything denoted the sentiments which penetrated his soul and the profound impression made on him by the sanctity of the august Sacrifice which he offered up to God. He never omitted to say Mass daily, and sometimes, when travelling, he was known to go five or six leagues, and even more, to be able to celebrate. Often, on these occasions, he remained fasting the whole forenoon, hoping that he might be able to say Mass at the place to which he was going.

In a journey which he made to Gap, on leaving the conveyance, at eleven o'clock, he went direct to the cathedral and asked leave to say Mass. After his thanksgiving, he rejoined his companion, to whom he exclaimed : 'What a favour God has bestowed on me to-day ! I did not expect to have the happiness of ascending to the holy altar this morning, although I desired it very

much.' On another occasion, he arrived at Bourg-Saint-Andéol, without hope of being able to offer up the holy Sacrifice because he had not his *Celebret*. Providence brought about his meeting with a priest whom he knew and who procured for him the happiness of saying Mass. After his thanksgiving, he went to offer his acknowledgment to this priest, and said to him: 'Ah, my dear sir, you have done me a favour which I shall never forget.' 'He pronounced these words,' said the priest who related the fact, 'with so much faith and piety, that they produced an impression on me which twenty years have not been able to efface.'

It is not surprising, after this, that the good Father recommended so earnestly to the Brothers frequent Communion and regularly assisting at Holy Mass. 'The loss that you sustain,' he said, 'in missing Mass or Holy Communion, is so great and irreparable, that you could not be consoled, if you sufficiently understood the immense treasure contained in the Holy Eucharist. When your Confessor has given you permission to receive Holy Communion, you must never fail to receive it, unless you have the misfortune of committing a mortal sin, or one which you believe to be mortal. To miss Holy Communion, on the plea that you do not feel sufficiently disposed, or that you have no sensible devotion, that you have been somewhat negligent, or have committed some slight fault, is an illusion; it is repairing one fault by committing a greater.'

One day, the Father asked an old Brother why he missed the Thursday's Communion so easily. 'It is,' answered the Brother, 'because I am too imperfect and full of defects.' 'My dear friend,' said the Father, 'it is precisely because you are imperfect and full of defects, that I should like to see you communicate often; for the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist is the most efficacious means to correct your defects and draw you out of the state of tepidity into which you have fallen. Jesus Christ does not say, "Come to me you who are perfect," but "Come to me all you that labour and are burdened, you that suffer, you that are in anguish of mind, you that struggle and are borne down by the weight of your imperfections, and I will refresh you." It is not by remaining away from Holy Communion that you will correct your defects, that you will become pious and virtuous, but by frequently approaching your divine Saviour.'

‘But,’ answered the Brother, ‘I reap no fruit from my Communions.’ ‘Holy Communion,’ the Father replied, ‘always produces its fruit when one is exempt from mortal sin ; for this Sacrament acts in two ways : by itself, *ex opere operato* ; and by one’s dispositions in receiving it, *ex opere operantis*. You must not imagine that you reap no fruit from Holy Communion, because you do not perceive the progress you are making in virtue ; Holy Communion serves at least to preserve you in the state of grace ; and this is no small matter. Do you imagine that the food you take is useless to your body, because your health and strength are not increasing ? No, certainly ; for they repair the daily loss sustained by the body, and preserve both health and strength. Many complain, but without reason, that they reap no fruit from the Sacraments. To resist temptations, to keep from mortal sin, to persevere in your holy state, to fulfil your employment fairly well, to be faithful to your exercises of piety, to weep over your imperfections, are all so many fruits of the Sacraments ; and not to acknowledge them, or not to feel thankful to Jesus Christ for them is the height of ingratitude. What is wanting to such Religious, to cause them to make rapid progress in virtue, and to acquire all the perfection that God requires of them ? A little more care and effort to pray well, a little more punctuality in observing the Rule, a little more devotedness to their employment, a little more love for Jesus Christ, a little more zeal to make Him known and loved. Now the most efficacious means to obtain the little that is wanting to them in all these things is assisting at Holy Mass with great piety, meditating on the mysteries and life of our Lord, frequent Communion ; for we must not forget that, in Jesus Christ, we have all things, and without Him we have nothing.’

A Brother once excused himself for having missed Thursday’s Communion on the plea that he was too much tempted. The Father said to him : ‘You keep away from Holy Communion because you are tempted ; this is yielding the victory to the devil without a struggle. If he tempts you so violently, it is only to keep you away from Holy Communion ; for he knows by experience, that he can easily make those fall into mortal sin who deprive themselves of this celestial food, which is a sovereign remedy against sin. Have you not remarked that, on the eve of your Communion, the devil fills your mind with evil thoughts, and

leaves you no peace ; but as soon as you make up your mind not to communicate, he leaves you alone? Why does he act thus? Because he has an extreme hatred of Holy Communion ; and he hates it, because he knows the great good it procures us, because he knows it is the antidote against sin. The most effectual means, therefore, to triumph over temptations and make them cease, is frequently to approach our Lord in Holy Communion.'

But what afflicted the pious Founder most, was to see Brothers miss either Mass or Holy Communion, through indevotion, indifference, want of zeal for their perfection, or on account of unnecessary journeys or visits. Many a time he protested against such conduct, and always with a firmness and an energy that evinced the tender love he had for Jesus Christ, and the profound sorrow he felt when he saw the Brothers keep away from Him who is the source of all grace.

In fine, it was also his love for Jesus Christ which inspired him with that ardent zeal for promoting His glory, and which caused him on all occasions to exhort his Brothers to study our divine Lord, and to make Him known and loved.

In his instructions he constantly returned to this subject. 'To make our Lord known and loved,' he said, 'is the end of our vocation, and the object of the Institute. If we do not attain this object our Institute will be useless, and God will withdraw His protection from it.

Meditate, therefore, on the life of our Lord ; speak frequently to your children of His mysteries, His virtues, His sufferings, of His great love in dying for them on the Cross, and of the treasures of grace He has left them in the Sacraments. The whole science of Religion consists in knowing Jesus Christ. More than this, eternal life itself consists in this knowledge, and the Saints in Heaven are occupied solely in studying, contemplating, and loving Jesus Christ who is their beatitude. To impart a knowledge of Jesus Christ ought, therefore, to be the object of all your Catechisms, and you ought never to omit speaking of this divine Saviour in any of them. The more you will make Him known and loved, the more also will you weaken the reign of sin, establish that of virtue, and assure the salvation of your children.'

In a great number of letters he recommended the Brothers to repeat frequently to the children how much Jesus Christ has loved them, and how much therefore they are bound to love Him in return.



CHAPTER VII.

HIS DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

WE may say, that our beloved Father imbibed this devotion in his earliest infancy ; for his mother and his pious aunt, both very devout to the Blessed Virgin, instilled this precious devotion into his tender heart. During his childhood, and whilst he lived with his parents, his devotion to Mary consisted in the daily recitation of a few short prayers which he had been taught ; but, when he took the resolution of embracing the ecclesiastical state, and when attending the seminaries, his piety towards the Mother of God visibly increased, and he undertook a great many pious practices, to merit her protection and manifest his tender love for her.

It was at this time he took the resolution to say the Rosary every day,—a resolution which he adhered to with the greatest fidelity, all his life. He loved also to make frequent visits to Mary ; and it was in those communings with her, at the foot of her altar, that he understood that God wished to sanctify him and prepare him to labour, by a special devotion to the divine Mother, for the sanctification of souls. From this time forward his device was : *All for Jesus through Mary, and all to Mary for Jesus.* This maxim reveals to us the spirit which animated him and which ruled his conduct throughout his whole life.

Regarding the Blessed Virgin as his Mother, and the way that would lead him to Jesus, he put his studies, his vocation, and

all his projects under her protection ; each day, he consecrated himself to her and offered her all his actions, that she might present them to her divine Son. It was in one of these frequent visits to our Blessed Lady that he conceived the idea of founding a Congregation of pious Teachers, and giving it the name of her who had suggested the project to him. As he felt a special inclination to honour the Blessed Virgin, and, judging of others by himself, he believed that the name of Mary would alone suffice to draw subjects to the Congregation which he intended to found. He was not deceived. Faithful to his resolution of always going to Jesus through Mary, on leaving the seminary after receiving Holy Orders, he went to Fourvières to consecrate his ministry to the Blessed Virgin ; and each time that business brought him to Lyons, he returned to the Sanctuary of Mary to renew this act of Consecration.

When he was appointed Curate of Lavalla, he went there on a Saturday, and desired to begin his ministry on the Feast of the Assumption, in order that Mary might bless the first fruits of it, and present them to her divine Son.

It was thus he acted all his life, offering and confiding to Mary all his projects and his works, and beginning them only after having long besought her to bless them. Every day in visiting the Blessed Sacrament, he also paid respectful homage to our Blessed Lady. But that was not enough to satisfy his piety ; in his room he erected a little altar to Mary, on which he placed her statue ; and there, at every hour of the day, he addressed fervent prayers to her, often remaining a long time prostrate at her feet. Perceiving that the altar of Mary, in the parish church, was in a dilapidated state, he procured a new one, made at his own expense, and had the whole church repaired. There is in the parish of Lavalla, and at a short distance from the village, a chapel dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, under the title of our Lady of Pity. The good Father visited it often ; and, several times a week, he went there in procession, with some good people, to celebrate Holy Mass ; they chanted the *Miserere mei* on their way thither, and the Litany of the Blessed Virgin in returning.

In the very first year of his ministry, he established the pious exercise of the Month of Mary, which, at that time, was little known, but which, a few years later, was to produce such

wonderful fruits of salvation in France and in the whole Christian world. This exercise he performed every morning before Mass. During the month, he distributed through the parish, a great number of copies of a little work entitled *The Month of Mary*, and other works calculated to inspire devotion to the august Mother of God. The devotion soon spread, so that, in a short time, the exercises of the *Month of Mary* were performed in all the hamlets of the parish and, in the end, each family had its oratory, where, in the evening, all the members assembled before the image of the Queen of Heaven, to implore her protection, sing her praises, and meditate on her greatness and her goodness.

When he founded his Institute, the *Month of Mary* became a community exercise; and he established it even in the schools, and made it an article of the Rule expressed in these terms: 'All the Brothers shall have at heart the due performance of the Month of May devotions; they shall so arrange that their children may likewise perform them with pleasure and devotion.'

With all the Saints, he believed that devotion to Mary is a mark of predestination; he liked to repeat this consoling truth in his instructions, and there can be no doubt that this was the reason of all his efforts to make this august Virgin known and loved, and to inspire the faithful and the Brothers with unlimited confidence in her protection. Moreover, he was convinced that all the Brothers who have the happiness of dying in the Society, will be saved. Many a time he was heard to say: 'I firmly believe that Mary will not permit to be lost any-one of those who persevere till death in their vocation, and will leave this world clothed in her livery.'

The following are the reasons on which he grounded his belief; it will be seen that they are solid, and amply justify his confidence:—

(1.) Because, according to the sentiments of the Saints, the religious vocation of itself is a mark of predestination.

(2.) The special devotion which the Society professes for Mary, and the numerous practices of piety prescribed by the Rule to honour her and merit her protection. 'When we see that so many Christians obtain salvation because they have been faithful to say a little prayer to this powerful Virgin, or perform some act of virtue in her honour, how could a Brother be lost who every day recites her Rosary, her Office, and several other prayers

in her honour, who consecrates to this divine Mother one day in each week, who celebrates her feasts with particular devotion? Should it happen that, by some unaccountable perversity of disposition, any Brother should abuse all the means of salvation furnished him in his holy state, may we not believe that the prayers and good works of his Brothers would obtain his conversion? My belief is that such will be the case, or else he will leave the Society.'

(3.) The promises of salvation attached to the holy Scapular. All the Brothers wear this holy habit, and if the Blessed Virgin preserves from eternal damnation those who simply wear her Scapular, how much more will she preserve from such a fate those who, together with the Scapular, bear her name, wear her costume, live in her House, offer her daily a tribute of homage, labour to spread devotion to her among children, and practise innumerable other acts calculated to honour her, and merit her protection.

(4.) The experience of the past. 'See,' said he, 'those who have died in the Society; consult the mortuary register, and tell me if there is one whose end left us any doubt as to his eternal fate. No, thanks be to God, there is not one; and all these good Brothers died in the holiest dispositions. We may even add, to the glory of Mary, our good Mother, that the greater number of them, left this world with visible marks of predestination.'

We might here relate a great number of incidents in confirmation of the above; we will, however, confine ourselves to one. In 1838, Brother Justin, Director of the Establishment of Perreux, had an attack of pulmonary phthisis which, in a short time, reduced him to the last extremity. The Brother was perfectly aware of his position, and prepared himself to die the death of a good Religious. One of his Brothers having advised him to ask Almighty God to restore him to health, he replied: 'I shall take very good care not to do that. I have no need of health, and it is enough for me to do the will of God. If you knew how happy I feel, in being able to suffer a little for our Lord, and in dying that I may be able to see Him in Heaven, you would not talk to me of asking for my recovery.' Filled with these sentiments, he spent the last days of his life in constant colloquies with Jesus and Mary. He had received the Sacraments, and the indulgence in *articulo mortis* had been applied to him. With his crucifix and

his beads in his hands, he awaited with a holy desire the moment of his departure for Heaven. Towards midnight, June 23rd, those who sat up with him, perceiving that he was absorbed in deep thought, spoke and questioned him, and were assured by his answers that he was still in full possession of his faculties. Knowing that he liked to commune with God, they did not disturb him any further, but did not lose sight of him. After half-an-hour spent in this contemplation his countenance became animated and coloured; then, joining his hands, he endeavoured to rise, and several times began to smile. The Brothers who attended him asked what he wanted, and why he smiled. 'I smile,' he said, 'because I see the Blessed Virgin; she is there; she is come for me.' A moment after, he died peacefully in the Lord, with a smile on his lips, and his eyes fixed on the spot where he said he saw the Blessed Virgin. A postulant, whose conduct was not satisfactory, and whose vocation was so unsettled that he had several times asked permission to leave, having witnessed this precious death, was entirely changed by that beautiful spectacle. Early in the morning, that same day, he went to Father Champagnat, and declared that he was resolved to live and die in the Society; he asked to be received, to be allowed to take the name of the Brother who had just died, and to be sent to the Mission of Oceanica. The change wrought in this postulant was permanent; from that day forward he was quite another man, and he obtained the three favours he asked for. After spending many years in the Missions, he returned to France, and died happily in Lyons, on the 7th of June, 1871.

One will be less surprised at this assurance of Father Champagnat, concerning the salvation of the Members of the Institute, when it is known what he prescribed to his Brothers in order to honour Mary, and to merit her protection. In the mind of the pious Founder, everything in the Society must belong to Mary; everything must be employed in her honour. To love this august Queen, to serve her, and to propagate devotion to her, according to the spirit of the Church, as an excellent means of loving and serving Jesus Christ easily and more perfectly; such was the object he had in view in founding the Society. Acting on this principle, he wished the Brothers to look upon the Blessed Virgin as their Mother, their Patroness, their Model, and their first Superior; and he wanted their feelings towards the Mother

of God to be in keeping with these titles. It was in accordance with these principles that the following practices were established in the Society.

From morning onwards, the entire day is consecrated to Mary by the singing of the *Salve Regina* in the large Communities, and by the recitation of the same prayer in the other houses.

Each Brother, on rising in the morning, should put himself under her protection, offer himself to her, and say three Hail Marys; in the evening, before going to bed, he should do the same.

The Office, the Rosary, the recitation of the *Ave Maria* at each hour of the day, and several other prayers, are the tribute of homage which the Brothers are expected to offer her during the day.

All the exercises of piety, as well as the greater part of the community exercises end with the *Sub Tuum*.

The Saturday of each week is specially consecrated to Mary. On this day, special prayers are offered up to obtain, through her intercession, the holy virtue of purity. Besides this, all the Brothers are bound to fast on this day, and if anyone is unable to fast, he can only be dispensed by permission, and by making up for the fast by some prayers or some other act of virtue. Moreover, Saturday is a Communion day for all those who have permission to receive on that day.

As to her Feasts, they should be celebrated by all the members of the Society, with holy joy, with devout respect, filial love and gratitude. The Rule requires the Brothers to prepare for these Feasts by a novena, or by some practice of piety, and to fast on the eve. On the Feast-day itself, after Holy Communion, each Brother ought to renew his vows, and consecrate himself anew to this tender Mother. In the novitiates, the five principal Feasts of the Blessed Virgin are kept as days of obligation, and the services are celebrated with the greatest solemnity. These holy days ought to be employed entirely by all the Brothers of the Institute in honouring their divine Mother, either by reading books that treat of her greatness, or by giving instruction to the children on the object of the Feast, and the advantages of devotion to Mary.

To all these practices established in the Society to honour the Mother of God, the pious Founder added two things which he considered indispensable, as being the complement and the fruit of their homage and their devotion to Mary. The first is the

imitation of her virtues. He wished, therefore, that the love of the Brothers for Mary should lead them, above all, to adopt her spirit, and to imitate her humility, her modesty, her purity, and her love for Jesus Christ. The poor and hidden life of the divine Mother, and the sublime examples she has given us, ought to be the rule of conduct for the Brothers, and each one should endeavour to be so like her that everything, in his person and in his actions, may resemble Mary, may exhibit the spirit and the virtues of Mary. The second is that the Brothers should consider themselves bound to cause her to be loved, served, and honoured by all their children.

The following are some of his thoughts on this interesting subject :—

'Salvation is of the Jews, said our divine Lord to the Samaritan woman. My dear Brothers, we can say with as much truth, that salvation is of Mary. It was of her that Jesus was born ; it was by her that He came down from Heaven to save man ; it was through her mediation, that He first applied the merits of Redemption in sanctifying St. John the Baptist. He performed His first miracle at her request ; it was to her that, from the Cross, he confided all men, in the person of the beloved Disciple, in order to teach us that she is our Mother, and that it is through her that He wishes to bestow His grace on us, and apply to our souls the merits of His Passion and Cross. Now, if grace is dispensed to us by the hands of Mary, and if her intercession is necessary for our salvation, as the Fathers of the Church assure us, we ought to conclude with St Liguori, one of the greatest Saints of our time, that the salvation of all men depends upon their being inspired with a solid devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and with unlimited confidence in her protection. If, therefore, you have the happiness of instilling this precious devotion into the hearts of your children, they will be saved ; for, either they will not seriously deviate from the paths of virtue, or having gone astray, they will be brought back by her whom the Church calls the Mother of Mercy, the Refuge of sinners.'*

* It was by devotion to Mary that the Saints of every age have sanctified the world. St. Vincent Ferrer considered devotion to the Blessed Virgin as the most effectual means of inspiring people with the spirit of penance and a horror of sin.

In order to inspire the children with solid devotion to the Blessed Virgin, Father Champagnat wished the Brothers to seize every opportunity to speak of it, giving them, frequently, special instructions on the subject, which ought to be confirmed and made interesting by well selected stories, taken from the examples and practices of the Saints. He, himself, frequently related such stories, and he could render them so interesting, making such correct applications of them, that all were delighted to listen.

Father Honorius, of the Order of St. Francis, so illustrious by his missionary preaching and the fruits of salvation it produced, never ceased to propagate devotion to Mary; teaching the people to honour her by divers practices, but especially, by that of the Rosary. As many persons criticised his manner of acting, and reproached him with losing his time: 'Wait,' said the holy man, 'till the close of the mission, and you will see the fruits of devotion to Mary, and whether or not I lose my time in inculcating it among the people and teaching them to say the Rosary;' and, at the close of his missions, innumerable sinners were converted, piety and the practices of Religion revived, and whole populations were evangelised or brought back to the paths of virtue.

It is well known that, when St. Dominic was preaching to the Albigenses, he found that his efforts were producing hardly any fruit among the people, and that the Blessed Virgin appeared to him and said: 'My son, know that the means used by the Blessed Trinity to reform the world, was the Angelical Salutation which is the foundation of the New Testament; consequently, if you wish to gain over these sinners, preach my Rosary.' The Saint, consoled and enlightened by this vision, taught the mysteries of the Rosary, inspired the people with devotion to Mary, and, in a short time, converted more than a hundred thousand heretics and an innumerable crowd of sinners.

St. Gregory Thaumaturgus, on becoming Bishop of Neocæsarea, found his diocese buried in vice, and so miserably addicted to superstition and idolatry, that Satan seemed to have fixed his seat there. He addressed himself to the Blessed Virgin, placed his bishopric under her patronage, and implored her to obtain the conversion of his flock, and to make known to him the most fitting means of instructing them and gaining them to God. The Blessed Virgin heard the prayer of her faithful servant; she appeared to him, resplendent with glory, accompanied by St. John the Evangelist, whom she commissioned to explain to Gregory the mysteries of faith and the manner of teaching them. Finally, she blessed the labours of the Bishop in such a wonderful manner, that, at his death, there were only seventeen heretics or infidels left in his vast diocese, which, when he came to it, contained only seventeen Christians.

The grand secret of St. Ildefonsus, Archbishop of Toledo, for the conversion of sinners, was to lead them to Mary; and he had the greatest hope of them, when he saw them persevere in honouring her whom he called the Restorer of the universe, the Treasurer of all grace. His zeal for the honour of Mary was indefatigable. He spoke of her on all occasions, and he even composed a treatise in defence of her perpetual virginity. The Blessed Virgin did not suffer herself to be outdone in generosity; she granted innumerable favours to the holy Bishop; among many of which we may relate the following:—On the Feast of the

Zeal in propagating devotion to our Lady is not only a means of gaining the children to God, it is moreover a source of blessing to the catechist ; and Father Champagnat never failed to remind the Brothers of this. He wrote to one of them : ‘ Do you wish Almighty God to bless your House, to bestow on you and your Brothers the spirit of fervour and piety, strive to inspire your children with devotion to our Blessed Lady.’ ‘ If you are zealous for the honour of Mary,’ he wrote to another, ‘ you will overcome the temptations that annoy you, you will persevere in

Annunciation, which was kept in Spain on the 18th of December, Ildefonsus was seated on a chair, ready to begin the Office, when the Queen of Heaven, accompanied by a multitude of angels, appeared before him. She held in her hand the book which the Saint had composed on her virginity, and, after expressing her satisfaction to him for the book, she presented him with a magnificent chasuble, as a token of her affection, and addressed him in these words : ‘ Because, to a lively faith and a pure conscience, you have joined great zeal for my glory, I give you this vestment, drawn from the treasury of my Son.’

This fact is recorded in the acts of a Spanish Council, which established a feast to commemorate the event ; it is related also by Marianna, Baronius, Tritenus, St. Francis of Sales and many others.

St. Bernardin of Sienna having begun from his very childhood to serve the Blessed Virgin, and to pray before her statue for hours together, one day the divine Mother appeared to him and said : ‘ My son, in recompense for the piety and love thou hast for me, I will bestow on thee three excellent graces—the first, a vocation to the religious life ; the second, a talent and special aptitude for preaching the word of God and converting sinners ; the third, solid virtue and great sanctity.’ Shortly afterwards, Bernardin filled all Italy with the fruit of his preaching and the report of his miracles. The greatest sinners were converted by his discourses ; piety flourished on all sides, and virtue took the place of vice. The Saint raised to life four dead persons, in presence of a great number of witnesses. These wonders and the fruits of salvation which they produced, were the reward of his devotion to the Blessed Virgin ; his confidence in her was such, that he asked her for a miracle with the same assurance that he asked an ordinary favour. Through much speaking, he became subject to hoarseness, and his voice was almost extinct, but he had recourse to Mary, and obtained a complete cure. This Saint was born on the feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, and, out of devotion to her, he chose the same day for the principal actions of his life. On it, he took the religious habit, made his vows, said his first Mass, preached his first sermon ; he died on the same day.

St. Philip Neri, from his childhood, made it a point not to pass a day without offering some practice of piety to the Blessed Virgin. He called her by no other name than that of his tender Mother, his sweet Patroness, his delight. On all occasions, he endeavoured to cause her to be loved, and to inspire others with devotion to her. Whenever he spoke of her, his face became radiant with joy. Those who heard him felt their fervour increase, and it often happened that they were inspired to enter the religious state. He never preached a sermon, or gave an instruction, without speaking of Mary. With his penitents, and others who consulted him, he never concluded without saying a few words on devotion

your holy vocation, you will be happy in your state, and the Blessed Virgin will grant you special graces. If our Blessed Lady is so good towards all men how much more merciful will she be towards those who, not content with serving her themselves, labour moreover to make her loved and honoured by others !'

Thus it may be seen that Father Champagnat did not make this devotion consist in exterior practices only, he wished the Brothers to apply themselves to the imitation of her virtues, and

to the Blessed Virgin. 'Honour Mary,' my children, he would say, 'for she is the dispenser of grace. If you wish to obtain perseverance, serve and invoke Mary every day ; if you wish to be converted, pray to Mary.' The number of habitual sinners, whom he converted and reclaimed from vice by prescribing some practices of devotion to the Blessed Virgin, is incalculable. It was by this pious devotion that he renewed the city of Rome, and that he worked wonders of grace in every condition of life, but particularly, among the young.

Father Gonzales Sylvera, of the Society of Jesus, used to recommend all his undertakings to the Blessed Virgin. Having learned that he was destined for the Ethiopian Missions, he endeavoured, by divers prayers and acts of homage, to gain the favour of the Blessed Virgin. Every day, during the voyage, he spent several hours in prayer, recommending to her the work to which Providence had called him, and earnestly beseeching her to obtain the gift of faith and the grace of the Sacraments for the infidels whom he was going to instruct. Each day, he assembled the sailors and passengers to converse with them on the greatness of the Mother of God, and to inspire them with devotion to her. Arriving at the kingdom of Monomotapa, on the Zambesi, which was to be the scene of his labours, he redoubled his prayers and his mortifications to induce the Blessed Virgin to facilitate his entry into the kingdom, and to dispose the heart of the prince to whom he was sent, to listen to the truths he had come to announce to him. What was the result of all his devotion and zeal in the service of Mary ? The result was, that, notwithstanding the innumerable obstacles in the way of the conversion of this idolatrous king, the holy missionary, through the protection of her who is all powerful, succeeded in converting him, and in baptizing him, with more than three hundred of the principal men of the kingdom. Finally, after preparing the Kaffirs to embrace the faith, he received the crown of martyrdom. Such are the favours and blessings bestowed on those who labour under the protection of Mary.

In the life of Father Francis Vépèze, who died in the odour of sanctity, in the year 1617, Father de Varasco relates that the holy man had a revelation to the effect that the devils complain of two sorts of persons who cause them considerable loss ; namely, those who spread devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and those who wear the scapular.

After preaching a sermon one day, a missionary saw a venerable old man approach him and ask to be allowed to communicate something important to him. 'Well, what have you got to tell me ?' 'One ! One . . .' and the old man's voice failed ; his respect for the minister of Jesus Christ choked his utterance, and did not permit him to communicate what God had inspired him to say. 'Have confidence, my friend,' said the priest, 'speak in all liberty.' 'What ! I,

to show great zeal in spreading it among their children. But as these practices are well calculated to nourish piety and to merit the protection of Mary, there being no true devotion to the Blessed Virgin without them, he required that the Brothers should perform them with great exactness and fervour.

As we have already observed, several persons urged him to suppress the Office of the Blessed Virgin, but he would never consent; on the contrary, he earnestly recommended the Brothers never to omit it, and always to say it with great piety and devotion.

the most miserable of men, shall come to remind the minister of God of his duty ! Never ! I cannot bring myself to do it.' 'Do not be afraid ; speak out. What duty do you find that I do not properly discharge ?' 'Minister of Jesus Christ, you complain that your discourses, which are so touching, meet with no success for the conversion of men. I know the cause.' 'What is the cause ?' 'One thing, and that an essential one, is wanting.' 'Pray let me know what it is ; explain.' 'O sir, you forget to speak of the Blessed Virgin. Without her you lose your time, for the fruit of the word of God is in her hands.' The missionary, who was a holy priest and who burned with the desire of saving souls, profited by this advice. Next day, he gave a solid instruction on devotion to our Blessed Lady, which produced a great impression on the people. Sinners asked to go to confession, and, from that day, the success of the mission was secured. The missionary often related this fact, in the third person as having happened to another, as a proof of the necessity of devotion to the Blessed Virgin, in order to gain souls to God, and make them advance in virtue.

St. Antoninus relates, that the Blessed Virgin came to assist her faithful servant, St. Dominic, at his death, and that she conducted his soul in triumph to Heaven. She granted the same favour to St. Philip Neri, to St. Francis Regis, to St. Liguori, and to many others, in return for the zeal of these great Saints in promoting her honour and spreading devotion to her.

A holy Religious of the Society of Jesus, called Ignatius, felt inspired to give up the office of preacher, in which he distinguished himself, to teach Catechism to little children. Being very devout to the Blessed Virgin, he laboured continually to implant this devotion in their hearts. His zeal prompted him to teach Catechism in the public places. At each of his instructions he related some story or miracle of the Blessed Virgin. The people listened with the greatest attention to the explanations given them by the holy Religious, and reaped much fruit from them.

One day he asked a number of country people, in the public square at Lisbon, if any amongst them would recite the Hail Mary. All having, either through timidity or human respect, declined to say it, a child, six months old, in the arms of its mother, raised its voice, to the great surprise of all, and distinctly repeated the whole of the prayer. The Blessed Virgin obtained this miracle in order to approve the ministry of her servant, and to show how much his zeal was pleasing to her. On his death-bed, this good Religious was visited by Mary, who consoled him and filled him with joy and happiness. He asked that the pointer which for seventeen years he had used in teaching the alphabet and Catechism to children, should be buried with him,—a request which was granted.

‘Remember,’ he would say to them, ‘that it is the word of God you are pronouncing, that the Holy Ghost has inspired those prayers by which we honour the Mother of God.’ He spoke in the same strain regarding the Rosary, and he desired the Brothers never to be without their beads and the scapular. ‘If, in consequence of some unforeseen event or extraordinary occupation,’ he said, ‘you should find it impossible to recite the whole Rosary, say two or three decades of it, and if you cannot do so much, say at least the first three Hail Marys, or even take your beads and reverently kiss them before going to bed ; so that you may never entirely omit this prayer. He who loves Mary is never without some object to remind him of his heavenly Mother, and he keeps constantly about him, day and night, his beads and his scapular. These are spiritual arms which defend us in time of temptation, and often it suffices to take them in our hands, or to remember that we have them about us, to put the devil to flight.’ One day, meeting a Brother who had not his beads, the Father said to him : ‘If you loved the Blessed Virgin, if you knew how useful your beads may be to you in a moment of danger, and what blessings you secure to yourself by wearing them, you would not so easily forget them.’

We need not wonder then at the Father’s unlimited confidence in Mary. In fact, this confidence was such, that, with the assistance of his powerful Protectress, nothing seemed impossible to him, and he was often heard to say : ‘Were the whole world against us, we have nothing to fear if the Mother of God is for us.’

After the events of 1830, as the Society was not yet approved by the Government, a report became current that it would be suppressed. In fact, the Prefect of the Loire, whether from having received orders from the Minister, or from merely yielding to the perverse inclination of his own heart and his hatred for Religion, was preparing to close the Novitiate. In this critical juncture, instead of being alarmed or discouraged, Father Champagnat, as usual, addressed himself to the Blessed Virgin, and confided his Community to her. Calling together the Brothers, who were beginning to feel uneasy, he said to them : ‘Do not heed the threats made against us ; and have no fear for the future ; Mary, who has brought us together into this house, will not allow us to be turned out of it by the malice of men. Let us be more

faithful than ever in honouring her, and in showing ourselves her true children, by imitating her virtues. Let us redouble our confidence in her, and let us remember that she is our *ordinary Resource*. To merit her protection, and ward off all danger, we will sing the *Salve Regina* in the morning before meditation.'

This was the only precaution he thought necessary to take; and Mary, in whom he put all his trust, did not desert him; for the Prefect was removed and the House was left undisturbed. The singing of the *Salve Regina* in the morning was continued ever afterwards, and is now an article of Rule.

When Father Champagnat had recommended any affair to the Blessed Virgin, whatever turn things might appear to take, he remained calm and confident. 'Don't be afraid,' he would say, 'appearances are against us, but Mary will arrange everything; she will know how to remove difficulties, control events, and turn them to our advantage.' And what is truly remarkable, his confidence was never deceived. In all his needs, in all his difficulties, he had recourse to Mary, and he wished to be indebted to her alone, after God, for everything. He expected everything through her powerful protection, and his favourite expression was: MARY IS OUR ORDINARY RESOURCE.

On all occasions, after engaging the Brothers to ask for the virtues or temporal blessings they might require, he used to repeat: 'You know to whom we ought to apply for these favours, to our *ordinary Resource*. Let us not fear to ask her too much; her power is unlimited, her goodness and her treasures are inexhaustible. Besides, she has charge of us, being our Mother, our Patroness, our Superioress, and we trust in her. This Society is her work; she has brought us all into this house; she ought, therefore, to give us all the virtues and temporal goods we stand in need of.' Devotion to Mary, the desire of honouring her, serving her, and living under her protection, was, in the eyes of the pious Founder, a mark of vocation. 'Why do you come to our Society, which is the least of all?' he inquired of a postulant. 'I come to your Society,' answered the young man, 'because it bears the name of Mary; because I desire to bear that name myself, and to live under the protection of this holy Mother.' 'Since this is the case,' said the good Father, 'be of good courage. Mary will bless you; you will be happy in her Society, and you will become a good Religious.'

Another young man applied for admission into the Society, but as he had no letter of recommendation, and was unknown to the Father, he refused to receive him. The postulant was much grieved at this refusal, which he did not expect, and began to weep, declaring that he would not return to the world. Much pleased at such a determination, the Father, after questioning him, concluded by asking if he could pay the pension for his novitiate. 'I have only one franc,' answered the young man. 'But do you love the Blessed Virgin?' asked the Father. At this question the postulant continued to weep. 'Do you love the Blessed Virgin?' asked the Father a second and a third time. 'Yes, sir, I do,' answered the postulant, in a firm tone of voice, 'and this is what brought me here.' 'Very well, my friend,' said the Father to him, 'give me your franc; you are admitted; but never forget that it is to love and serve Mary that you came and were received into the Society.'

We will conclude this chapter with a remarkable instance of the protection of our venerable Father by the Blessed Virgin. In the month of February, 1823, one of the Brothers of Bourg-Argental being dangerously ill, Father Champagnat could not suffer his child to die without seeing him once more to give him his blessing. The weather was bad, and the ground was covered with snow, but this did not prevent him from undertaking the journey on foot, as soon as he knew that the Brother was in danger. After consoling the Brother, and blessing him, the good Father prepared to set out again for Lavalla, notwithstanding the efforts made by the Brothers to dissuade him from his purpose, by reason of the dangerous snow-storm which was still raging. But consulting only his courage, he did not think he should yield to the entreaties of the Brothers and his friends; he soon had cause to regret it. Accompanied by Brother Stanislaus, he started for Lavalla, across the mountains of Pila; but they had scarcely walked two hours when they lost their way and could not make out any trace of the road; they were forced to go at random, or rather at the mercy of God. A violent wind blew the snow in their faces, and almost blinded them, so that they scarcely knew whether they were going backwards or forwards. After wandering about for several hours, the Brother felt so fatigued that Father Champagnat was obliged to take him by the arm to help him along. But soon the Father himself,

benumbed with cold, and almost smothered by the snow, felt his strength leaving him, and was obliged to stop. Addressing the Brother he said : ‘ Brother, we are lost if the Blessed Virgin does not come to our relief. Let us have recourse to her, and beseech her to save us from the danger we are in of losing our lives in the snow, in the midst of this wood.’ Before he had finished uttering these words, he felt the Brother slipping from his grasp and falling to the ground, through exhaustion. Full of confidence, he knelt down beside the Brother, who appeared to be insensible, and recited the *Memorare* with great fervour. After this prayer he endeavoured to raise the Brother, and to make him walk ; they had not gone six yards when they perceived a light shining at a short distance from them, for it was now dark. They went in the direction of the light, and came to a house, in which they passed the night. Both were quite benumbed with cold, and the Brother especially was a long time before he recovered consciousness. Father Champagnat declared on several occasions that, had relief not come at that very moment, they must both have perished, and that the Blessed Virgin had snatched them from certain death.





CHAPTER VIII.

FATHER CHAMPAGNAT'S OBEDIENCE, AND HIS RESPECT FOR THE CLERGY.

OBEDIENCE is the special virtue of Christianity ; it is the foundation of the religious state ; it is an abridgment of perfection, and the surest means of acquiring every virtue. Firmly convinced of this truth, Father Champagnat aimed above all things at obedience, and placed himself unreservedly in the hands of his Superiors. He was so diffident of his own light, and so convinced that, without obedience, the best things cannot please God ; and he had, besides, such a respect for his Superiors that one word from them would have sufficed to make him abandon the work he had so much at heart—the foundation of the Institute. Several times he declared to the Archbishop of Lyons and to his Vicar-General : ‘ If you believe this work not to be of God, tell me, and I shall abandon it immediately ; for I wish only what God wishes, and I cannot know what He wishes of me but by you.’ One of the maxims of the pious Founder was, that man is not happy and cannot do any good except where God wants him to be, and God always wants him to be where obedience calls him. This is why he never asked and never even desired any appointment, and why he would never do or undertake anything, but with perfect submission to his Superiors, and after having obtained their consent.

In his opinion, obedience is extremely necessary to the Brothers for three reasons :—

‘1. Because this virtue,’ he said, ‘is the foundation of the religious state, and obtains for us the grace of state so necessary for having a faithful vocation. If, therefore, you wish Almighty God to make use of you to do good among children, allow yourself to be guided by obedience; love the employment assigned to you by obedience. “*Master, we have laboured all the night, and have taken nothing,*” said the Apostles to the Saviour; “*but at Thy word we will let down the net.*” They did so, and *caught such a great multitude of fishes, that their net broke* (St. Luke, v, 5-6). Imitate the Apostles; cast your net in the place pointed out by obedience, your labour will be blessed, and you will have the happiness of gaining the children to God. Do you know what happens when obedience calls you to any employment? If you accept it with submission, God immediately bestows on you all the graces you need to fulfil it well; and the more it costs you to submit to what obedience requires, the more abundant are the graces. God will send His angel before you to prepare the way, to remove difficulties, to dispose the minds of the people in your favour, to render docile the hearts of the children to be confided to you; and you will see, by experience, that there is nothing difficult, and that all is possible to him who walks in the ways of obedience. On the contrary, if you are guided by self-will, if you seek an employment, or a position according to your taste, if, by dint of entreaties, you oblige your Superiors to change you, you will forfeit all right to those special graces; for, remember, this sentence from the Imitation of Christ. “*Son, he who strives to withdraw himself from obedience, withdraws himself from grace.*” Being deprived of the grace of God, you will not have any success, and, in the place where you expected to find peace and happiness, you will meet with nothing but trials and afflictions. You will be all the more miserable in such a position, because your conscience will reproach you with being yourself the cause of your trouble, through your want of obedience. In such a state you cannot expect any sympathy, either from God or man; not from God, since you follow your own will, instead of His; nor will you dare apply to your Superior, for he may answer you: “You have forced me to give you this post, or that employment; if you do not succeed in it, if you are unhappy, it is your own fault, and you have

brought it all upon yourself.” He further explained this by the following comparison : ‘If a soldier, on his way to a garrison, follows the itinerary marked out for him, he finds, at each halting place on the way, his board and lodging, and all that he requires. But if he takes another route, he has no right to these comforts ; he is left to himself, is obliged to travel at his own expense, and is exposed even to be taken up as a deserter. It is the same with a Religious ; so long as he keeps in the path of obedience, God heaps His graces upon him, and protects him ; nothing is wanting to him, and he is blessed in all his undertakings. But if he leaves this path to walk in that of self-will, he loses all right to the help of God ; he is abandoned to his own weakness ; he makes as many falls as steps ; he is miserable, and renders all about him miserable.

‘2. Obedience is necessary to the Brothers, because they are obliged to teach it to their children. But obedience holds the first place among the chief things necessary to a good education. In this as in everything else, one cannot give what he does not possess, and the Brother who is not obedient will never inspire this virtue to his pupils ; and by the simple fact, that he does not make them obedient, he ruins the work of their education. Let no one say that obedience may be established by firmness of character, or by physical force ; obedience is not imposed, it is inspired ; and if exterior order and discipline may be established and maintained by authority, and by a determined will, the virtue of obedience, and the grace that always accompanies it, can alone inspire this virtue, and cause it to take root in the hearts of children.

‘3. Obedience is further necessary to the Brothers, because to them, as Religious, it becomes a duty of state, and without it there is neither progress, nor virtue, nor happiness. Obedience is a duty for the Brothers, a commandment, because they have made a promise and a vow to obey. A Brother’s life is essentially a life of dependence, on account of his vocation and of his vow ; and he who, in religion, is attached to his own will, who withdraws from obedience, and follows his own light in what he does, fails in his religious duty, and does not fulfil his vow. One thing to be remembered is, that the Brothers owe obedience particularly to those who are appointed to guide them, so that they do not fulfil their vow if they are not submissive to their Brother

Director. In fact, it is to the Brother Director that you owe obedience, because he is the representative of the Superior ; because you depend on him for all the details of your conduct. He who would obey the Superior only, or when the Superior himself commands, would hardly ever obey ; for the Superior rarely commands personally ; and very many religious, as regards the details of their exterior conduct, have never received a single order from their Superior. Thence I conclude that a Brother who is not in a state of union with his Director, and who is not submissive to him, is not obedient, and does not fulfil his vow. And, if he does not accomplish his vow, do not ask what progress he makes in virtue ; for he makes none at all. He does not advance ; he goes back. His piety, his love for his vocation, his devotedness to his employment, his horror of sin, and his zeal for the salvation of souls, are decreasing every day, without his perceiving it. This Brother will very soon have nothing but the habit of a Religious ; he will soon lose his peace and happiness, and then the bad spirit, interior troubles, bitterness of heart, weariness, and disgust for his holy state, take the place of the joy and happiness which he experienced when he was obedient.

‘ Here is a truth which I trust you will not forget. There are two persons on whom your happiness depends ; to be content, to be happy in your vocation, it is necessary to keep on good terms with them. These two persons are God and your Superior. To stand well with God, two things are requisite : you must fear sin, and carefully avoid it, and you must be faithful to all your exercises of piety, performing them with all possible fervour. To stand well with your Superior, two things likewise are requisite : full and entire openness of heart, and docility. Let me see a Religious who stands well with God and with his Superior, and who is not happy in his vocation, in his employment. I don’t think such a one could be found. Let me see a Religious who has but little intercourse with his Superior, who hides his faults and weaknesses from his Superior ; a Religious who has antipathy against his Superior, who thinks himself ill-treated by his Superior, and who is happy, contented, and solidly virtuous. You may search the world over and not one will you be able to find. For a Religious, *obedience*, *happiness*, and *solid virtue* are three synonymous terms ; whoever does not possess the first, cannot have the other two.’

The good Father's love of obedience led him to seek occasions of practising it. Each time that he had a reception of the Religious habit, he asked the Archbishop's permission. Someone having observed to the Father that he might obtain this permission once for all, which would dispense him from writing several times a year for the same thing. 'It is quite true,' he replied, 'that it would save trouble, but, besides the desire I have for frequent intercourse with my Superiors, it is necessary that we should often make acts of dependence, and seek opportunities of practising obedience.' An admirable example, and one well calculated to confound those independent minds and lovers of liberty, who find it hard to comply with the Rule which obliges them to have frequent intercourse with their Superiors, and to ask permission to act in certain circumstances.

Our pious Founder had the most profound respect for the pastors of the Church. In the first place, for our Holy Father, the Pope, whose decisions and counsels he considered as divine oracles. One day, when reading to the Community an encyclical letter of Leo XII concerning bad books, he required the Brothers to stand while listening to this letter, in order to show their profound respect for the words of the Pope. He took occasion of this encyclical to give the Brothers that wise rule which forbids them to read any dangerous book:—'They shall scrupulously avoid reading dangerous books. Should any fall into their hands, they shall burn them, or give them to the Parish Priest, without taking the liberty of examining them. They shall not read any book, which, though good in itself, would be unsuitable for them, and likely to awaken their passions.'

On one occasion, seeing a Brother read a book with much attention, the Father asked, 'What are you reading, Brother?' 'Father, I am reading a work on the infallibility of the Pope.' 'By whom is the work written?' 'By Cardinal Maur Cappellary, to-day our Holy Father, Gregory XVI.' 'Very good, but do you believe in the infallibility of the Pope, Brother?' 'Yes, Father, I believe it firmly.' 'So do I,' answered the Father; 'I always believed it; and notwithstanding all I have heard to the contrary, I have never had the slightest doubt about it.'*

* The personal infallibility of the Pope, when speaking, *ex Cathedra*, on faith and morals, was defined as an article of faith by the Vatican Council, fourth session, July 18th, 1870.

In order to inspire the Brothers with a great love for the Church and its august Head, he frequently made the following comparison : 'As all the light which enlightens the earth comes from the sun, in the same way, all the light which enlightens men in the supernatural order of salvation, comes from our Holy Father the Pope. The Pope is to the moral world what the sun is to the material world. Without the sun, the earth would be only chaos ; without the Pope the Church would be nothing, and there would remain only the impenetrable darkness of error. What takes place among Protestants, some of whom go so far as to deny even the existence of Jesus Christ, is a conclusive proof of this. In remaining attached to his pastors, the Catholic possesses truth ; he remains united to Jesus Christ. To-day, the Church is such as the Divine Saviour founded it, such as the Apostles established it. If St. Peter and St. Paul returned to this world again, they would not find a single point of doctrine to be reformed ; they would find the Church just as they left it, that is, possessing the same dogmas, the same morals, the same teaching, the same Sacraments, the same means of grace, the same Hierarchy. I do not hesitate to declare that these Apostles would be satisfied ; they would exclaim : 'This is really the Church that we established ; this is truly the Spouse of Christ, ever without spot or wrinkle. She is still what she was when we left her.'

His respect for the Bishops was hardly less profound. As soon as he appeared before them, he cast himself on his knees, and humbly asked their blessing ; before withdrawing, he did the same. The prelates with whom he had to treat were edified at the humility and simplicity of the pious Founder ; they bestowed on him the greatest marks of their esteem, and always showed themselves devoted to his Work, which was one of his greatest consolations. Sometimes he would exclaim : 'Oh what a consolation to have all these holy Bishops for us ! What can we fear when we are guided and protected by the successors of the Apostles, by those who are the light of the world, the pillars of truth, the salt of the earth ! The Bishops are our fathers ; we ought to look upon ourselves as their children, and, on all occasions, give them marks of our profound respect, and entire submission. It is absolutely necessary for the Brothers to be on good terms with the

clergy ; now, more than ever, this is necessary, in order to be able to do good.*

There is perhaps nothing Father Champagnat so much recommended to the Brothers as respect for the clergy and submission to the pastors of the Church. This is evident from the Rules and writings he has left on this subject. Thus, he wishes:—

(1.) That the Brothers should look on their Parish Priest as their Father, and act towards him as submissive children.

(2.) That, in everything of importance concerning the school, they should take his advice, above all, when there is question of expelling any pupil ; that they should arrange with him for the distribution of prizes ; and should do nothing against his will, and without having his full consent.

(3.) That they do not give holidays nor absent themselves without giving him notice.

(4.) That they ask his blessing every time they are called to

* A Brother having asked Father Champagnat how he ought to act on occasion of the visit of a Bishop to the parish, the Father answered :—

(1.) If a procession is formed to meet the Bishop, you will not fail to be there too, with all your little children, and you will recommend them to be silent, modest, and to keep perfect order.

(2.) You will go with your Brothers to the presbytery, and present your humble respects to his Lordship. Of course you will arrange with the Parish Priest as to the best and most convenient time.

(3.) When in presence of his Lordship, you will kneel at his feet to receive his blessing ; you will do the same before withdrawing.

(4.) After expressing to his Lordship your sentiments of profound respect, you will give him a brief account of the state of your school, and you will ask him to be so kind as to visit your establishment and bless your children.

(5.) If he grants you this favour, you will arrange things so that order, discipline, tidiness, simplicity, and modesty may be observable all over your establishment and in the appearance of your Brothers and children.

(6.) You will go to receive his Lordship at the principal door of your establishment, and conduct him into the place where your children are assembled under the superintendence of the other Brothers, and in which you will have prepared seats for his Lordship and those who accompany him.

(7.) As soon as the Bishop and his attendants are seated, a boy whom you will have prepared for the purpose will read an address to his Lordship, thanking him for his kind visit, and testifying to him the sentiments of respect, of love, submission, and religious veneration which are due to the chief Pastor of the diocese, to a successor of the Apostles.

(8.) The Brothers and the children should then kneel down to receive his Lordship's blessing.

(9.) You will accompany his Lordship in his visit through your establishment ; lastly, you will conduct him back to the principal door, and, before parting with him, you will again ask his blessing.

the Mother-House, or come to it for the retreat, and before starting on any journey.

(5.) That they invite him frequently to visit the classes, and to bless the children from time to time.

(6.) That they consult the Parish Priest regarding any visits they may think it necessary to make in the interest of the school.

(7.) That they make every effort to give the children a high idea of the Priesthood, to inspire them with great respect for the clergy, and entire submission to the Parish Priest.

All his life he exacted compliance with these points. He would have liked the fourth and fifth to be articles of Rule like the others, but, as many Parish Priests would not readily comply with them, it appeared advisable to leave them by way of counsel only. In fine, he constantly recommended his Brothers to be always united with the Parish Priest, to listen with profound respect to his counsels, his admonitions, and even his reprimands, to give him all the assistance in their power, in everything that relates to the good education of the children, and in all works in keeping with the spirit of the Rule, such as training the children to sing in the church, teaching them to serve Mass, practising them for the processions of the Blessed Sacrament, taking care of them in times of missions or retreats and when preparing for First Communion, and to do all these things with submission to the Parish Priest, and according to his intentions. In a word, he wished the Brothers to be completely united with the Parish Priest, and to act in such a way that their schools and their personal conduct may be his consolation.

Such is the spirit which the pious Founder aimed at imparting to his Brothers, by his instruction and private counsels, by the Rules which he made for that purpose, and which breathe the spirit of God, and, above all, by his examples. It was at the request of the clergy that he founded all his establishments; and no matter how advantageous a position might have appeared to him, he would never have consented to send his Brothers into any place without the full consent of the Parish Priest.

When he came to inspect the schools, his first visit was to the Parish Priest, to whom he presented his respects even before having seen his Brothers. On these occasions, he usually judged of the state of the schools and the Brothers' conduct by the report and dispositions of the Parish Priest; if these were satisfactory,

he considered that all was well. In such cases, he generally made but a short visit to the Brothers for their special consolation, and then left without even seeing the schools. If a difficulty arose in any house, he would decide nothing without consulting the Parish Priest, and having his advice. More than once, the humility of the pious Founder, and his profound respect for the parochial clergy, smoothed down many difficulties, allayed much irritation, and arranged matters that appeared quite hopeless.

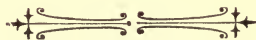
The last time that he passed through Lyons, after founding the Novitiate of Vauban, although suffering very acutely, he wished to present his respects to the Parish Priest of St. John's, who had charge of the orphanage. As someone tried to dissuade him on account of his sufferings and exhaustion: 'No, no,' he said, 'I must go; I may not meet with a warm reception, on account of the difficulties that have sprung up in the administration of that institution, but it does not matter; one must pass over such trifles in order to do the works of God; besides, my visit cannot fail to give him pleasure.' In fact, the reception was cold enough, and the good Father appeared somewhat embarrassed; but he was so frank, so simple, and so humble in his explanations that the Parish Priest softened down completely, and accompanied the Father part of the way back, with manifestations of friendship and devotedness. He carried this respect for the clergy so far, that several thought it was the result of timidity, and because he feared them; and in this conviction, they sometimes demanded concessions regarding the financial concerns of the establishments; but the pious Founder was as firm as he was humble and modest. If the interests of Religion led him to be pliant sometimes on questions that were purely material, he never yielded in matters that might endanger the Brothers' virtue, or expose them to lose the spirit of their state.

Another matter, which he often recommended to the Brothers, and which he made an article of Rule, is to keep aloof from every party and from every opinion that might agitate the parish. Called solely for the instruction and edification of the children, the Brothers ought to be very careful not to criticise the authorities, or to interfere, in any way, with the civil or the ecclesiastical administration of the parish.

A very pious but simple Brother ventured to reproach his

Parish Priest with not being friendly to the Brothers, and not visiting the school. Father Champagnat, who heard of this during the vacations, sent for the Brother, and said to him : ‘ Who has given you charge over your Parish Priest, and what right have you to upbraid him ? A Little Brother of Mary should never be guilty of such an act. To-morrow, you will start at sunrise, and go to the Parish Priest, and on your knees you will beg his pardon for that fault.’ The good Brother received and performed his penance with great humility ; the only hard thing he found in it was the thirty miles he had to go on foot to perform it.

In order that this submission to the clergy, which he requires of the Brothers, may never weaken regularity and the Community spirit, he wisely ordained that, in case the Parish Priest should propose to the Brothers any change in their method of teaching, or in the way of living adopted by the Society, or if he wished to grant them some extraordinary permissions, they should respectfully tell him what the Rule prescribes or permits in such cases, and beg that he would allow them to act accordingly. But as the Parish Priest might insist, then, to avoid all disputing with him, Father Champagnat enjoins on the Brothers to beg of the Parish Priest that, before acting, he would allow them time to write to the Rev. Brother-General for permission to comply with his request. The wisdom and prudence of this device is quite evident, it is so well calculated to prevent all conflict ; for, by leaving the decision of the case to the Superior, it saves the Brothers from contention ; it preserves their union with the Parish Priest, and, at the same time, takes from him the power of abusing that dependence and submission which the Brothers owe him. The pious Founder thus devised a means of giving the Parish Priest all the influence and authority which he has a right to exercise over the Brothers and over their schools, without ever allowing this authority and influence to interfere with the spirit of regularity and uniformity which ought to reign in all the houses of the Society.





CHAPTER IX.

HIS LOVE OF POVERTY.

FATHER CHAMPAGNAT practised poverty all his life. His small patrimony barely sufficed to pay his pension in the seminaries, and keep him in clothing, so that, when ordained priest, he had absolutely no money. His disinterestedness was such that, during all the time that he was curate, he never once thought of laying past money ; all his savings were either given to the poor, or spent in supplying the wants of his Community. Although the Brothers were living in a state of indigence, he did not hesitate to cast in his lot with theirs, and share their privations and their poverty. From the first day that he lived with them, he would have nothing of his own, but would constantly follow the Community life. On one occasion, a Brother in speaking to him of a piece of furniture which the Father had brought with him from the presbytery, employed the word *yours*. ‘Why do you speak to me of *yours* or of *mine*?’ said the Father, somewhat sharply. ‘That article is as much yours as mine ; it belongs to the Community ; that is, it belongs to any Brother who may want it.’ But, in order to form an idea of the privations and sacrifices which the Community life may have cost him, it is necessary to know what sort of life the Brothers lived in the beginning of the Society. The good Father was entirely without funds when he founded the Institute, and he was obliged to borrow the money with which he purchased the little house that was to become the cradle of his first spiritual children.

The young men whom he gathered round him to begin the Institute, were still poorer than he was. To support them he had nothing but his moderate salary as curate, and the collections which were made in the parish of Lavalla. During eight years these collections were the principal support of the Community. The food of the Community was of the simplest and plainest quality,—coarse bread, cheese, potatoes, vegetables, sometimes a little salt pork, and always water for drink ; such was the fare of the Brothers.

The food was served up unseasoned, first, from a spirit of poverty and mortification, and secondly, because the Brothers, who were all young and unskilled in cookery, although anxious enough to do well, could not properly discharge this part of their duty. At table, two things only were given at discretion—bread and water, everything else was measured out. One day the Parish Priest of Lavalla, passing through the refectory during supper, and seeing on the tables nothing but salad, the quantity of which was far from being sufficient for the eight persons at each table, shrugged his shoulders, exclaiming : ‘ Poor fellows ! I could carry off your supper in my hand.’ For nearly fifteen years, in the beginning, neither wine nor butcher meat was used in the Society. It was only after the year 1830, that the Community, at the Mother-House, began to mix a little wine with the water, and to take some flesh meat. In the other houses, the Brothers had nearly the same fare as at the novitiate. That a correct idea may be formed of the poor and frugal life of the Brothers at this time, we subjoin a statement of their expenses in the establishments, as written down by Father Champagnat himself, in the account book at the Hermitage.

			<i>Fr. c.</i>	<i>£</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
Bourg-Argental	. . . . .	in 1825 spent	364.30	=	14	11 5
Boulieu	. . . . .	in 1825	306.00	=	12	4 9
St. Symphorien-le-Château	in	1825	518.00	=	20	14 4
		1826	342.00	=	13	13 7
		1827	389.00	=	15	11 2
		1827	350.00	=	14	0 0
Charlieu	in	1828	402.50	=	16	2 0
		1829	462.00	=	18	9 7
		1830	403.00	=	16	2 4

			<i>Fr. c.</i>	<i>£</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>d</i>
Mornant . . . . .	. in	1827 spent	400.00	=	16	0 0
		1828	„	425.00	=	17 0 0
		1829	„	446.00	=	17 16 9
St. Paul-en-Jarret . . . . .	. in	1828	„	521.00	=	20 16 9
		1829	„	457.00	=	18 5 7
Neuville . . . . .	. in	1828	„	420.00	=	16 16 0
St. Symphorien-d'Ozon . . . . .	. in	1828	„	456.85	=	18 5 5
Chavanay . . . . .	. in	1828	„	300.00	=	12 0 0
Saint-Sauveur . . . . .	. in	1828	„	300.00	=	12 0 0

There is a note in the account book to the effect that at Chavanay, the third Brother only remained six months, from September till Easter; whereas, in each of the other houses, there were three Brothers during the whole year. There is a further remark, stating that, at Saint-Sauveur, the Brothers left a supply of wood, 10lbs weight of lard, and 50lbs of salt. This shows that these expenses were considered high enough; it is certain they were much less in previous years. For instance, in 1824, the Brothers of Chavanay spent only £10. It should be stated also that lighting, heating, washing, and other similar expenses are included in the above figures.

The houses, furniture, and clothing of the Brothers, were in keeping with their food. Their linen was of the coarsest description. All the Brothers slept on straw; there were no mattresses, not even for the sick. The Brothers performed all their journeys on foot, no matter how long or how difficult they were. For more than twenty years, no Brother made use of a trunk to bring his personal effects with him; a coarse linen bag sufficed for that purpose. Umbrellas were unknown to them; in fact, they dispensed with everything that was not absolutely necessary.

What is still more admirable, the Brothers liked this life of poverty, and practised it willingly from virtuous motives. They even refused anything that might have in the least mitigated its rigour, as will be seen from the following examples:—

In one parish a charitable woman having brought a sugar-loaf as a present to the Brothers, they refused to accept it, alleging that such things were not in use in the Society. The good woman insisted on the Brothers accepting it, and she even seemed mortified by the refusal which, to her, appeared inexplicable. At last

the Brother Director said to her, 'Since you wish to do us a kindness, I will accept a sack of potatoes instead of this sugar-loaf, if you will be so good as to send them.' The kind woman withdrew, taking her sugar-loaf with her, and in the course of the same evening, she sent the desired sack of potatoes.

In a house founded in 1825, the Brothers on arriving found in the cellar a barrel of wine placed there by the founders; they were much embarrassed to know what they should do with it; at last, they informed their benefactors that the Brothers did not drink wine, and besought them to take it away.

In another house a Brother fell sick, and the people of the place, being much attached to the Brothers, called frequently to inquire about him. When he was convalescent they sent him a great quantity of delicacies and restoratives, things which he did not so much as taste. One day, casting his eyes upon them, he said: 'What shall we do with all these pots of jams and jellies, and all these bottles of wine so well corked? For my part, I won't taste them; I have no need of them.' After consulting among themselves to know what was to be done, the Brothers agreed to send them to the sick in the hospital close by.

In 1822, when the House at Bourg-Argental was founded, Madame de Pleyné, who furnished the beds for the Brothers, had a good mattress put on each bed, but, instead of making use of them, the Brothers brought them to the garret and left them there. Some time afterwards, this lady's man-servant, who frequently brought provisions to the Brothers, had an opportunity of seeing the mattresses stowed away, and informed his mistress who straightway went to the Brothers' house to demand an explanation. 'Your mattresses are not good enough, then,' she said to the Brother Director. 'They are very good, indeed, madam.' 'How is it, then, that they have been replaced by others?' 'I don't know that they have been replaced by others.' 'In that case you sleep on the straw; do you think that I bought mattresses for you to stow away in the garret? I want you to put them in your beds and to keep them there; when they are past use I will buy others for you.' 'I feel very grateful, indeed, madam, but we don't sleep on mattresses.' 'It is very wrong of you not to do so. After the day's fatigue in school with the children, you should have at least a suitable bed to sleep in during the night.' 'But, madam, these things are not used in

our Community.' 'In that case I shall take them away.' 'I think that would be the best plan,' answered the Brother. After trying in vain to persuade the Brother to use the mattresses, the kind lady, to her very great regret, had them taken away, and the Brothers were very glad to get rid of them.

Another person of Bourg-Argental having given the Brothers six pairs of large sheets of very fine and excellent linen, they thought they should not use them, so they brought them to Father Champagnat that he might dispose of them as he thought fit.

It is evident from these and many other similar facts, that frugality and the spirit of poverty were, in some sort, natural to the Brothers; for in living and acting in this manner, they did not even think that they were making any sacrifice, but were simply doing their duty, so convinced were they, that, in their state of life, they should not act otherwise. When we add to this that the Brothers were only following, and at a great distance too, the example that Father Champagnat gave them, it will be seen to what a degree of perfection he practised the virtue of poverty.

It must not be supposed that it cost Father Champagnat but little trouble to train the Brothers to this sort of life. It was by his daily example, by his instructions and oft-repeated lessons; it was by his private remarks, his daily observations, and by following the Brothers in all the details of their conduct that he succeeded in training them to economy, and inspiring them with a love of poverty. Every week, and sometimes oftener, he assembled the Brothers in charge of the temporal affairs of the house, such as the procurator, the cook, the gardener, and the heads of the tailoring and shoemaking departments, to ask them how they employed their time, and to teach them to be careful of things by putting everything to the most profitable use, and also to make any remarks that might be called for by the experiences of the past week. In the same way he trained the workmen employed on the building; and the foreman carpenter afterwards said: 'He has given me such a habit of utilising wood, that I cannot do otherwise, and I would seek, in every corner of the building for a piece rather than employ one that could be put to better use.'

Father Champagnat rarely went to the kitchen, the pantry,

or the workshops, without making some observation regarding order or economy. Nothing displeased him more than to see things going to loss, through want of care. 'After sin,' he would say, 'nothing pains me more than to see things spoiled or used with prodigality.' He often reprimanded, and even punished, the Brother cook, for allowing fat and butter to remain in the dishes after they had been removed from the table. One day, passing through the refectory, and seeing some crumbs of bread lying under the tables, he sent for the Brother who had charge of the refectory, and severely reproved him. 'Why do you leave that bread there?' he said. 'Do you not know that there are many people who have not enough to eat? It is a breach of poverty to allow the gifts of God to be wasted in that manner.'

One day seeing a postulant trampling under foot, instead of lifting it, an object that happened to be in his way, the Father sent for him and dismissed him. As some were surprised at this act of severity, he said, 'This subject is not a child. At his age, such a fault proves that he has no judgment, or that he is wanting in order, economy, or devotedness to the Society, and that he came here solely to find a livelihood; in any of these cases, he does not suit us, for we want careful men, men who are naturally inclined to economy and animated with a love of poverty.' On another occasion, he made one of the principal Brothers take his dinner on his knees, for having left a lamp burning unnecessarily for a few minutes.

Always joining example to percept, he himself was the first to do what he required of others. Many a time he was seen picking up a piece of wood, fruit that had fallen from a tree, or any other object that he might meet with. One day, in coming from St. Chamond, he picked up a few ears of Indian corn which the carter, employed at the house, had let fall. Every day he made his rounds of the building; here putting an object in its proper place, there shutting a window that was not secure and might be broken by the wind, elsewhere arranging tools that had not been put in their proper place.'

In speaking of economy, he related a story which we give here, as well as the moral with which he accompanied it. 'A man was accused of parsimony and avarice, by his servants, and even by the members of his own family, because he avoided all useless expenses. To all their reproaches he simply answered: "I could

easily act differently, but I do not see who would gain thereby, but rather who would lose. Later on, I fear, they will economise less, but then there will be less to give away." Indeed, this excellent Christian, by means of his savings, was enabled to give abundant alms to the poor; but these were discontinued after his death, for his son, who had not the same spirit of order and economy, could not even pay his servants.'

'Behold,' added Father Champagnat, 'what happens every day amongst us. A Brother who is economical, and avoids useless expenses, can, even with his moderate income, keep up a suitable house, help the Institute, and promote the vocation of postulants who are unable to pay their pension; whilst a Brother who is not economical, who does not take care of things, who buys a thousand trifles that can be easily dispensed with, ruins his house, allows the furniture to go to wreck, and is not able even to pay for his Brothers' clothing. Such men are neither good Religious nor good teachers. They spread their disorderly habits everywhere, in spiritual and intellectual, as much as in material and temporal things. Such men are real pests to the houses into which they come; everything depreciates in their hands, and they leave nothing but ruin behind them.'

'For the Brothers, economy is not a mere counsel; it is a duty, because being Religious they are bound to practise poverty in their food and clothing; to take care of their personal effects and everything intrusted to them. I have no hesitation in saying, that those who allow things to go to waste, whether they belong to the parish or to the Institute, are guilty of injustice, and are bound to make restitution.'

To induce the Brothers to be careful of the things confided to them, he ordained that any Brother who should let anything be spoiled or broken, even accidentally, should acknowledge his fault to the Superior, and kneel down in the refectory during dinner. Those who allowed any article of clothing, or any other part of their effects, to lie about, were likewise obliged to make reparation for their neglect by a public penance.

He wished all the Brothers to learn cookery, and have a knowledge of domestic economy; first, through a spirit of poverty, and to be able to supply their own wants, without the assistance of strangers, and also in the interest of their own health. 'My friends,' he would sometimes say, laughingly, 'are you prepared

to abolish the kitchen and live like the angels? Let us see now! Let all those who can do without eating stand up!’ As no one stood up, he continued, ‘Since you don’t accept my proposal, and you all find cooking a thing that cannot be dispensed with, you must learn to do it well, for bad cooks are the enemies of both purse and health; for, while they spend much money, they destroy the health of the Brothers.’

He also wanted all the Brothers to learn to sew, so that they should be able to mend their own clothes when necessary. He would not suffer them to employ strangers to do this sort of work, not even to wash their stockings and soutanes. In this our pious Founder required of his Brothers only what is practised in nearly all Religious Orders—where each Religious has to take care of his own clothes, keep them clean, and mend them when necessary. Several holy Bishops, who had been taken from the cloister, continued all their lives these practices of poverty and humility. Here is an example which may edify the Brothers. St. Thomas of Villanova, of the hermits of St. Augustin, being raised to the Archiepiscopal See of Valentia, in Spain, would never permit any expense for the purpose of increasing his humble monastic outfit. The only outlay that he would sanction was the purchase of a supply of needles and thread, a pair of scissors, a thimble, and all that was necessary to mend his clothes when they should need it; he took care, however, to procure these articles indirectly and secretly; he kept them in a box, under lock and key, along with his instruments of penance. This box was kept concealed in a narrow cell, devoid of all ornaments, which cell the humble prelate preferred to any other apartment. It was there he retired to pray and practise mortification; and to mend, with his own hands, his linen and worn out garments.

This faithful observer of evangelical poverty felt an unspeakable pleasure in such humble work; but when he was engaged in it, he took the utmost precautions not to be seen, through fear of appearing singular, or of giving offence to those who might be disposed to blame him. It was partly on this account that he forbade anyone to enter his cell, which he kept locked, and of which he himself kept the key. One day, however, after entering it, he forgot to lock the door, and was surprised by an ecclesiastic, one of his most intimate friends, who called on some urgent business, and opened the door without knocking. The Archbishop was

just then mending a pair of drawers. The canon, greatly surprised, exclaimed, 'What! His Grace at such work? It is unbecoming your dignity. The first tailor you meet would mend that for a *real*. I will not let this go on.' So saying, he stepped forward and pulled the drawers out of the Archbishop's hands. 'Wait a moment,' said the prelate, smiling; 'let me go on with my work.' Then, assuming a serious air, he added: 'I know I am a Bishop, but I am a Religious as well, and as such, it is my duty to practise poverty, through love of poverty itself. I am pastor, and as such it behoves me to practise poverty, through love for the poor, who are so numerous in my flock. You see, then, that I have two good reasons for acting as I do, not to speak of the pleasure that I find in this sort of occupation. You tell me that I could have this work done for a *real*. I am well aware I could, but I thought that, by doing it myself, I should be able to-morrow to provide a dinner for some poor person.' This is how the Saints act and speak.

We cannot resist the pleasure of quoting another example of the same kind; one that is more likely to edify us, and serve as a model to us, from the fact that its author is dearer to us, and more intimately connected with the Society. The Rev. Father Colin, Superior-General, being one day in one of our Novitiate Houses, and his clothes requiring mending, went to the Brother tailor, and asked for a needle and thread, a thimble, and a few pieces of cloth. The Brother, who saw at once what was the matter, offered to repair the clothes himself, and begged the good Father, as a favour, to let him do so. 'No, no,' said the Father; 'just give me what I have asked for; I will do the rest myself, for I am used to that sort of work.' All the entreaties of the Brother were of no avail, so he gave the Father what he wanted. The venerable Superior then shut himself up in his room, and with his own hands mended his clothes, which were quite worn out.

On many similar occasions Father Champagnat did the same. After such examples, what Brother would consider it beneath him to mend his clothes, or to take care of his outfit? Those who really possess the spirit of their state, will look upon it as a duty to walk in the footsteps of these venerable men who were our fathers and our models.

The love which our pious Founder had for poverty made him take the greatest care to cultivate its spirit among his Brothers.

Hence those wise rules which he has left us upon the subject, and on the observance of which he insisted so much all his life. Each year, at the retreat, he carefully inquired if the Brothers possessed anything not sanctioned by the Rule, or by the Superiors ; he ordered all the articles that had been got without permission to be brought to his room, as well as others not absolutely necessary, or which, by their quality, were opposed to the spirit of the Rule, such as snuff-boxes, books in fancy binding, expensive pocket-books, pen-knives, books of science, drawing instruments, etc. He was not less vigilant in repressing all manner of abuses in the establishments. As soon as he learned that the Brothers, in any house, had outstepped the limits prescribed by poverty and simplicity, even in small matters, or on some particular occasion, he immediately called them to order. He did not hesitate, when necessary, to undertake for this purpose, long journeys on foot.

Being informed that in a certain establishment there was to be a reunion of Brothers, and a dinner at which the rules of religious poverty and simplicity were likely to be violated, the good Father went to the establishment on the day of the meeting, and, after seriously reprimanding the Brother Director, ordered him to serve dinner according to Rule ; the Father then sat down at table, without any further remarks, and was extremely kind and cheerful during the whole dinner.

Another time, being told that a Brother Director had bought some fancy earthenware, the Father visited the establishment purposely to see whether the report was true or not. On arriving, he went straight to the cupboard in which the earthenware was kept, and, finding nothing but common, ordinary things, he inquired of the Brother Director if that was all the ware he had, and, on being told that he had no other, the Father said : ‘ I am very glad they are mistaken. I was told that your ware was not in keeping with the spirit of poverty and simplicity befitting the Brothers. I shall now know what to think of those stories. However, these reports, though false, ought to teach you, who are one of the seniors, the necessity of giving good example, for everything you do is talked of among the Brothers, and cannot fail to be productive of much good or evil, according as you act well or ill.’

A person who was in great need, came to a Brother Director once, to sell him a pair of silk breeches, and besought him so

earnestly to buy them that the Brother, yielding to the man's entreaties, gave him four shillings for them, though they were worth a great deal more. During the next retreat, Father Champagnat being informed of this purchase, which was contrary to the Rule, sent for the Brother, and, after reprimanding him very severely, forbade him to wear the breeches. As the Brother sought to excuse himself, alleging the importunity of the seller, and the low price of the article, 'My friend,' said the Father, 'I will prove to you that you knew you were doing wrong, and acting against your conscience. Tell me, did you bring them with you to the retreat? Did you enter the payment in your account book?' The Brother having confessed that he did neither, the Father said to him: 'There is a twofold proof that you believed you were doing wrong. You are not afraid to mark the expenses authorised by the Rule. A good Religious never buys what he durst not mark in his account book, or what he would wish to conceal from his Superiors.' The affair stopped there for the time, but shortly after the re-opening of the schools, as soon as the good Father had a moment's leisure, he visited the establishment in which the transaction occurred. He was only a short time in the house, when he asked to see the wardrobe. 'Open this press,' he said to the Director. He was not long in finding what he sought. With one hand he seized the silk breeches, and holding them an arm's length off, as if he were afraid of contamination by touching them, 'Follow me,' he said to the Director. Going to the kitchen he went up to the fire and flung the breeches into it, exclaiming at the same time, 'This is only fit to be burned!' Then, in a severe tone of voice, he added: 'Never let such things be introduced among us! A Little Brother of Mary ought not to touch silk, nor have, in his establishment, any fancy article whatever.'

It was not only on the persons of the Brothers that he wished to see poverty reign, but also in everything belonging to them, such as their dwellings, their furniture, and fittings. According to him, simplicity and cleanliness ought to be the sole ornaments of religious houses, and, acting on this principle, he would not have the walls papered, neither would he allow the Brothers to have costly pictures, nor any object purely ornamental. Being one day in a house, the rooms of which were all papered, he openly expressed his displeasure and disapprobation, as it is not

usual in the Congregation to have apartments papered. It was then remarked to him that as the house was given to the Community in that state, it was not considered advisable to remove the papering. 'If this house belonged to me,' said Father Champagnat, 'before night I should have every one of these walls whitewashed.'

Finally, our pious Founder looked upon poverty as indispensable to attain the end of the Society. 'My friends,' he would often say, 'let us keep in mind the object we had in view in founding this Congregation, which is to provide Christian instruction for the children of poor parishes in which we can expect but a moderate salary. Now, if we neglect the spirit of poverty, if we wish to live comfortably, and enjoy all the conveniences of life, our present salaries will not suffice; we shall require a greater income; the vast majority of the parishes will not be able to support us, and we shall become useless. Our religious profession, therefore, and the object we have in view, equally oblige us to practise poverty, to seek only what is necessary, to avoid with the greatest care not only luxury and superfluities, but everything that would betray too great a love of comfort and worldliness, or that would be opposed to that simplicity and modesty which are the characteristics of the Institute.

As we have already observed, Father Champagnat always confirmed his instructions by his example; he never required of his Brothers what he himself was not the first to practise. Thus, through a spirit of poverty, he did nearly all his travelling on foot, and if he was obliged to take a public conveyance, he always chose the lowest place.

During his stay in Paris, as his frequent journeys fatigued him very much, an ecclesiastic of his acquaintance suggested that, for a mere trifle, he might go in the omnibus to the different parts of the city where his affairs required his presence. 'I could easily find omnibuses,' replied Father Champagnat, 'the streets are full of them, but one does not become a Religious to ride about like a lord. If the vow of poverty cost nothing, it would procure us no merit. Conveyances, it is true, are not costly, but many little sums soon make a great one. In a large Community, if every member were to gratify his whims and fancies on the plea that each of these only costs a trifle, in the course of a year all these

trifles would amount to a considerable sum, which might suffice to pay the pension of several postulants.'

A Brother, whom the Father reprimanded for buying something that was not necessary, tried to excuse himself by alleging that the sum spent was only a trifle. The Father replied: 'Do not call a trifle what makes you practise the vow of poverty, and preserves you in the spirit of your state. In reasoning and acting as you do, the vow of poverty would cost you nothing; and if your vows do not require daily sacrifices from you, you may be certain that you do not observe them, and that you will appear before God with your promise unfulfilled. It is an error to imagine that you are within the limits of your obligations, because you do not violate your vows in grave matters. For, not to violate your vows, and to fulfil them as becomes a good Religious, are two very different things. Thus, not to violate your vow of poverty, it suffices that you abstain from anything prohibited by the Rule; as, for instance, buying, selling, giving away, lending, or possessing anything in your own name; but to fulfil your vow entirely, to have the merit of holy poverty, it is necessary that you live and act according to the spirit of your holy state; that is to say, that you conform to the prescriptions of the Rule with regard to food, clothing, and everything else you may require. In a word, the Brother who lives according to the Rule, lives according to his vows; and the more he departs from his Rule, the farther does he keep from the perfection of his vows.'

Our pious Founder looked upon the maintenance of the Community spirit and the spirit of poverty as fundamental duties, and he would not permit any Brother, whether professed or simple novice, to appropriate to himself even the smallest object. He wished the Rule to be the same for all, and that subjects, as soon as they were admitted into the Community, should give up everything they had contrary to the usages of the Institute, and keep neither money nor anything else forbidden by the Rule.

One day the Brother Procurator, finding in the desk of a young Brother some books which he had taken from the chapel, or elsewhere, without permission, together with four or five shillings, which he kept concealed, contrary to Rule, brought the whole to Father Champagnat. The Father was extremely pained at such conduct. He sent immediately for the Brother, and, after reprimanding him very severely, he ordered him to leave the house

at once, adding, that since he had acted in such a manner, he was not fit for the Religious life. The Father sent him away, although it was four o'clock in the evening and the snow was falling heavily.

We will conclude this chapter with a more consoling example, which will show us how perfectly our pious Founder practised the virtue of poverty. Two or three days before his death, an intimate friend of his, M. Janvier, Parish Priest of Saint-Julien-en-Jarret, paid him a visit, and, having conversed some time with the Father, asked him, in remembrance of the holy friendship that bound them together during life, for a small wooden crucifix that was standing on his table. 'I should willingly give you what you ask,' answered Father Champagnat, 'but I have made a vow of poverty. I have nothing of my own, and can dispose of nothing. But what I can promise you, is to ask the Superior-General's permission to give it to you, and I am confident that he will not refuse me. The permission was indeed asked and obtained, and the crucifix handed over to M. Janvier. Blessed will the Little Brothers of Mary be, if, docile to the instructions of their venerated Father, and faithful in imitating his examples, they always maintain among themselves the spirit of poverty and simplicity which he has bequeathed to them as the most precious inheritance.





CHAPTER X.

FATHER CHAMPAGNAT'S DETACHMENT FROM HIS PARENTS AND FROM EARTHLY THINGS.

IN giving himself to God, Father Champagnat sacrificed all that he had in the world in order to love nothing but Him, and to belong entirely to Him ; and so he was never afterwards seen to meddle with earthly things. If, during his studies, he spent his vacations at home, he remained a stranger to the temporal concerns of his parents, and only tried to edify them, to instruct them, and to lead them to God as much as he could. When he was ordained priest, and was exercising the sacred ministry, he went home but very seldom, and only when obliged to visit the establishment of the Brothers at Marllhes. In embracing the ecclesiastical state, his intention was to serve the Church, to procure the salvation of souls, and not to be useful to his family. And although his own brothers were in need, they never received any aid from him, he did not even wish them to speak to him of their temporal affairs. One day, however, one of his brothers, being in want of money, came to the Father and besought him so earnestly to lend him a certain sum, that the Father, whose heart was extremely good and tender, allowed himself to be prevailed upon, and lent him the desired sum. But his brother had scarcely left the house when the Father reproached himself with having listened too much to nature, and, fearing that this weakness of his might be a bad example to the Brothers of the Society, he immediately sent a messenger after his brother, to

reclaim the sum just lent, with orders not to return to the house without the money. The Father had no rest until he saw the money laid upon the table.

Detachment from parents and from earthly goods is the first disposition which God puts into the heart of those whom He calls to the Religious life; and this detachment is the foundation of evangelical perfection. *'If thou wilt be perfect,'* says our Lord, *'go sell what thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come follow me.'* (St. Matt. xix, 21). And again, *'If any man come to me and hate not his father and mother, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.'* (St. Luke xiv, 26). Whoever enters Religion with a good vocation, has always this disposition; he is detached from his parents, from the goods he has left in the world, and has no other desire than that of giving himself entirely to God. The good Father was so convinced of this truth, that he did not hesitate to say, that one might ordinarily judge of the vocation of a young man by his dispositions in this regard; and he did not count on the perseverance of those who appeared still too much attached to their families or to the things they had left in the world. *'To persevere in Religion,'* said he, *'one must come entirely, and not be satisfied with putting only one foot into the monastery, like those who come only to look about them, to make a trial, or who, having the means, hesitate to pay the pension of the novitiate.'*

A young man, who had been preparing for a long time to join the Society, came at last, and brought with him the full pension for the first year of his novitiate. In speaking of this young man to one of the Brothers, the Father said to him: *'Such a one has come with a good mark of vocation; I count on him now.'* As the Brother asked what this mark of vocation was: *'It is,'* answered the Father, *'the twelve pounds which he has given me. The young man has earned this money; he would not consent to sacrifice it if he were not detached from earthly goods, and resolved to persevere, notwithstanding the difficulties which he expects to meet with in the Religious state.'*

The pious Founder frequently repeated that, to be happy in Community, one must not come and live like a servant, but like a member of the family. The Sacred Scriptures teach us that a man shall leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife. In the same way, the Religious also, if he wishes to be happy in his

holy state, and to have all the consolations of Religion, ought to leave his father and mother, his brothers and sisters, and all that he has in the world, to cleave to his Superiors, to his Brothers, and to the Society which becomes his family. He, therefore, who does not give himself entirely to his Community, and who does not endeavour to have the sentiments of a true child of the family, is not a Religious, but a servant. Would you like to know the difference between a servant Brother and one who is a true child of the Society? The servant Brother considers his Superior a master, a policeman who watches him; whence it follows that he fears him, dreads him, flies from his presence, hides from him the details of his conduct, and, still more, his defects. He distrusts his Superior, and easily imagines that he is prejudiced against him, that he ill-treats him and corrects him without reason. The servant Brother regards his Brothers as so many strangers, and treats them without charity, without regard or courtesy, without respect or politeness. All absorbed in himself, and engrossed with his own interests, he takes for himself what is best and easiest, without troubling himself about the sufferings, the wants, or the fatigues of his Brothers. The servant Brother is indifferent to the interests of the Community. He cares not whether it prospers or declines, and hence he discharges his duties in a merely perfunctory manner. He has neither zeal nor devotedness for the common good. He is prodigal and reckless, and allows furniture and other things confided to him to go to wreck rather than be at the trouble of taking care of them.

The Religious, who is a true child of the family, acts quite differently. He looks upon his Superior as his father, and loves him as such. He has entire confidence in him, and abandons himself absolutely to his guidance. Convinced that the Superior seeks and desires only his good, the child of the family receives his admonitions and his corrections as so many marks of affection and proofs of the tenderest friendship. Far from hiding or dissembling his faults and shortcomings, he is the first to make them known, and is satisfied only when the Superior is thoroughly acquainted with his whole conduct and all his interior troubles. He considers the members of the Society as his Brothers; and he is ever ready to assist them, to comfort them, and render them service; on all occasions he takes their part, sustains them, defends them, excuses and hides their faults. After God, he loves

nothing so much as his Society, and has nothing more at heart than its prosperity, its development, the preservation of its spirit, the attainment of its object, by procuring the glory of God and the salvation of souls. Being fully convinced that he has to contribute his share to the good of the Society, he endeavours, on all occasions, to be a model of piety, regularity, submission, goodwill, and devotedness. He fears neither pain nor trouble when there is question of procuring the success of the schools and the good administration of the temporal affairs of the house; he stops at no sacrifice when the common good, the edification and welfare of the Brothers, and the service of the Society, are concerned.

It is only the Religious who is animated with these sentiments and this family spirit, who finds in his state the hundred-fold of happiness and contentment promised by Jesus Christ. As he lives only for his Society, devotes himself entirely to the service of his Brothers, and takes every opportunity of obliging them and rendering them service, he is paid in return, and receives a hundred times more than he gives; he is loved and esteemed by all his Brothers, who are sincerely devoted to him, and cheerfully make any sacrifice for him; he has as many servants, or rather, as many friends as there are members in the Community.

As to the servant Brother, not only has he not the promised hundred-fold in Religion, but there is for him neither comfort nor satisfaction of any sort. As he has no real love for his Brothers, and lives for himself alone, he never gains the sympathy of anyone. The Brothers bear with him, and avoid offending him, because Christian charity requires it; but they cannot show him that deference and respect which he has not for others; nor do they evince towards him those sentiments of friendship which he neither understands nor appreciates. And I have no hesitation in saying that there is scarcely anyone more miserable than the Religious who is wanting in this family spirit, who is not devoted to his Society, who bestows all his affections on those he has left in the world, and who lives in the Community as a stranger whose heart and treasure are elsewhere.

‘Detachment from parents,’ said the venerable Father in another instruction, ‘is so necessary to a Religious, that, should he happen to lose it, and allow considerations of flesh and blood to prevail over him, he would, at the same time, lose the Religious spirit and the love of his vocation. I have always remarked that

those who think much of their parents think little of their vocation, and that those who busy themselves much about their parents have but little concern for their own perfection, or even for their salvation. Many a Religious has become a castaway through false compassion for his father or his mother. Several, after becoming apostates, under pretext of assisting their parents, have ruined them by their extravagance, and embittered their old age by the licentiousness of their conduct.

One of the most dangerous snares of the devil is to induce a Religious to look after the temporal concerns of his parents, or, through false compassion, to take an exaggerated view of their wants, and believe himself obliged to help them by means that Religion does not approve of.' The enemy of salvation goes so far as to make some believe that they are justified in abandoning their vocation in order to assist their parents. It is certain that a child is bound to assist his father and his mother when they are not able to provide for their own subsistence; but it is exceedingly rare that a Religious is bound to abandon his vocation for that purpose. In fact, for him to be obliged to do so, it is necessary, according to the opinion of all theologians:—

(1.) That the wants of the father or mother be exceedingly great.

(2.) That there be no other means of helping them.

(3.) That the Religious, in leaving his vocation, be certain that he will be able to succour them.

(4.) That, in undertaking this duty, he do not follow his own will or inclination, and that he be not himself the judge of the gravity of the case, nor of the means of providing for it, but that he be guided by the advice of his Superior, who alone has the right to decide what the Religious ought to do, and how he should do it.

(5.) That he return to his Community and resume his Religious duties as soon as the wants of his father or mother cease, whether by death or otherwise.

A Brother asked permission to leave the Society for the purpose of assisting his mother, who was a widow and had no other child. The father in vain represented to him that this idea was a temptation from the devil, who, jealous at seeing him live in the fear of God, wished to draw him back into the world, where, on account of his weakness and his natural inclinations,

his virtue would soon suffer shipwreck ; that, moreover, instead of assisting his mother, he could only afflict her and make her life miserable. The Father's prediction was soon verified. On leaving the Society the young man did not even go home ; he passed several times before his mother's house without entering it, and the poor mother knew that her son had abandoned his vocation only by the public report of his bad conduct.

Another Brother, who was tempted to abandon his vocation in order to assist his mother in her old days, frequently went to disclose his temptation to Father Champagnat, and ask permission to leave. After having repeatedly exhorted the Brother to combat the temptation, the Father said to him : ' Well, as I know your family, I will tell you what I think of it. Your vocation, in my opinion, is the recompense of the virtues and piety of your mother. God has given her the grace of having a son in Religion. He has wished, in His merciful designs, that you should become a subject of benediction for your family. And you, by abandoning your vocation, will deprive your good mother of the reward of her virtues and generosity. You will rob her of the glory of having given a child to Religion, and you will become a cause of ruin to your family. Instead of performing an act of filial piety, therefore, by attending to your mother, you will be guilty of ingratitude towards her. So, you see now what you have to do. It is not in my power to exempt you from the obligation of following your vocation. It is God who has called you to the Religious state, to Him you have made your promises, and He will ask you an account of them.'

The Brother was touched by these wise remarks, and cast himself at the feet of the pious Founder, exclaiming : ' 'Tis true Father ; it is to the piety and good example of my mother that I owe my vocation. I have been unfaithful to grace, because I am cowardly and I fear to do violence to myself ; I have listened too much to the voice of flesh and blood ; but, for the future, it will not be so. I promise never more to yield to the temptation, and to do all in my power to become a good Religious.' He kept his word, and since then, he never wavered in his vocation, and became a fervent Religious.

' A Religious,' said Father Champagnat, ' by being too humanly attached to his parents, and interfering with their temporal concerns, does not only compromise his own perfection, but

actually the interests of those whom he wishes to serve ; for, to punish the Religious for acting in opposition to the spirit of his vocation, God very frequently permits the things that he interferes with to fail or to turn out badly. A Brother is much more useful to his family by not troubling himself about them, by living piously and detached from temporal affairs, than in seeking to serve them and to advance their worldly interests. St. Louis Gonzaga and St. Stanislaus Kostka have contributed more to the prosperity and aggrandisement of their families, by being holy Religious, than if they had passed their lives in promoting their temporal interests. It is the virtue and sanctity of these two saints that have made their families illustrious, and, without them, the family of Kostka and that of Gonzaga would now be buried in oblivion.'

A Brother who, in the beginning, had given marks of a true vocation, and who had been pious and regular for a long time, began to be led astray by an inordinate affection for his parents. He induced them to visit him in the establishment in which he was placed as Director, and took great interest in all their temporal affairs. These faults, as generally happens, were followed by still greater ones. He lent them money secretly, and incurred expenses on their account. Father Champagnat being informed of these irregularities, was extremely grieved at them, and, with great kindness, explained to the Brother how reprehensible his conduct was, and showed him the gravity of the fault he had committed in violating his vow of Poverty. This correction was received well enough, but the false compassion of this unfortunate Religious for his parents caused him to relapse into the same fault, and this time in a much more serious manner. Again the Father admonished him with mildness and charity, but with great firmness, declaring to him that, if he did not correct himself, evil would befall both him and his parents. The Father's prediction was verified. The Brother, after a fresh fault, abandoned his vocation, and went to live with his own brother. After a short time, this brother, whom he had loved inordinately, and for whom he had sacrificed his conscience and his vocation, robbed him of all his money, and then drove him from the house. A few years later, this apostate Religious fell ill, made his will in favour of a sister of his, and died after experiencing great tribulations. His undeserving brother instituted a lawsuit against his

sister, to set aside the will in his own favour. He did not hesitate to calumniate his deceased brother in the open court of justice, and even to produce false witnesses whom he had bribed. But the justice of God overtook him there, and did not allow him time to see the case decided. In consequence of his exertions, and the journeys he had to make in order to gain the lawsuit, he caught a pleurisy, which, in a few days, hurried him to the grave, without leaving him time even to receive the last Sacraments. It was thus that this miserable Religious, by too great an attachment to his friends, violated his vows, lost his vocation, lived and died in terrible anguish of mind, brought desolation on his family, made his brother a thief, ruined his temporal affairs, and, what is infinitely more deplorable, put him in the greatest danger of losing his soul. Behold how the threat of Father Champagnat was accomplished: *If you do not correct yourself, evil will befall both you and your friends.*





CHAPTER XI.

FATHER CHAMPAGNAT'S LOVE OF MORTIFICATION.

'*THEY that are Christ's,*' says St. Paul, '*have crucified their flesh, with the vices and concupiscences.*' (Gal. v, 24). '*They chastise their body and bring it into subjection* (1st Cor. ix, 27), and strive to fill up in their flesh those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ. (Col. i, 24). The object of truly mortified men, is to supplant in their hearts the love of riches by the love of poverty, the love of pleasures by the love of the cross, and the love of creatures by the love of our Lord. Like St. Paul, they daily die to themselves, to the inclinations of nature, to the life of the senses, and to worldly enjoyments, in order to live for God alone, and for eternity.

It is thus that Father Champagnat lived. His whole life was but one continued immolation to God of the faculties of his soul and of his body, by the sword of mortification. It would be too tedious to give here a picture of his hard and mortified life. Besides, what has been already stated on this subject will give a sufficient idea of it; we have only now to add a few more facts, and give more details concerning some others that were only touched upon.

Naturally austere, he gave his body, as regards food, rest, and comfort, only what he could not refuse it. He made it a rule never to take anything between meals, and he observed it all his life, even when he was engaged in very hard work, and when travelling. He has been known to walk whole days in

suffocating heat, and at the end of his journey, refuse all sorts of refreshment, even a drink of water. To hide his mortification, he said he was not in the habit of taking anything between meals, and that these sorts of comforts were more likely to injure the health than to remove the slight inconveniences caused by a little hunger or thirst. 'And besides,' he added, 'the body becomes used to everything, and it is by not gratifying its desires, that it becomes less exacting. On the contrary, if you drink to-day because you are thirsty, to-morrow, at the same hour, you will feel the same thirst more imperious than to-day. And if you continue thus satisfying the cravings of nature, what will become of the Christian and Religious life, of the spirit of sacrifice and mortification?'

From the time he was in the Seminary, he only mixed a little wine with the water he drank; for a long time he abstained altogether from wine, which he regarded as an enemy of chastity. 'Nothing,' he said, 'contributes more to inflame the fire of concupiscence and stir up the passions than the immoderate use of wine. He who cannot be sober and mortified will never be chaste.' For a long time, he believed that the Brothers could dispense with wine; later on, when he was obliged to permit the use of it, he expressly forbade them to take it pure, except in case of sickness; and he ordained that it should be mixed, half wine and half water. At his meals he usually partook of two dishes only, and when he was alone, he would not allow any more to be served up. He was so indifferent about his food, that it was impossible to know what he liked, if it was not that he preferred the simplest and the commonest. He took whatever was offered him, and never complained, however badly prepared the food might be. He made no other complaint of the Brother cook than that of being too particular about the food served up to him, and if it appeared to be somewhat nice, he would not taste it.

When he visited the Brothers in the establishments, he lived with them, partaking of their simple and frugal fare. On these occasions, he would never allow the Brothers to prepare anything extra on his account, and they could not please him better than by keeping to the ordinary fare of the Community. Several times he reproved Brothers Directors for departing from the Rule in this matter on his account, and sent back the dishes that were served

up, over and above the regular number. He never took his meals at the presbyteries but in extremely rare cases, and when he could not well do otherwise.

He was obliged once to spend a whole week in a house, on account of a flood which rendered the roads impassable. The Community being very poor, could give him nothing to eat all the time but potatoes and white cheese. He was so much pleased with this fare, and so edified by the Brothers' simplicity and their spirit of poverty, that, afterwards, he frequently expressed his satisfaction to the Brother Director, and sounded the praises of his white cheese. Arriving in another establishment, just at dinner time, the Brother Director began to excuse himself and to express his regret at not having anything fit to offer him; the Father kindly said: 'Don't be disturbed, my dear Brother. I will dine with you, and what you have will do me.' 'But, Father, we have nothing but salad and cheese.' 'And potatoes, have you none?' 'We have some, but they are not prepared, and it would require some time to cook them.' 'Go and bring some; I will help you to peel them. By putting all hands to the work, it will soon be done.' The potatoes were brought, and he helped the Brothers to peel them; and as the Brother cook was new at his work, and did not know how to prepare them, the good Father gave him a lesson in cooking, and fried the potatoes in his presence.

On another occasion, he arrived after a long journey, and the Brother cook was going to prepare dinner for him. 'Never mind, Brother, never mind,' said the Father, 'just give me what was left after the Brothers' dinner.' 'There was nothing left, Father.' 'And that meat that I see in the corner.' 'It is spoiled, Father, and the Brothers could not eat it.' He takes the meat, tastes it, and expresses his surprise at the delicacy of the Brothers. Then, after having eaten some of it for his dinner, he requested the remainder to be kept for his supper. It is, nevertheless, certain that the meat smelt, so much so that the Brothers, who were not hard to please, could not eat it; but Father Champagnat's love of mortification did not permit him to examine it too closely, and every time that an occasion offered of making a sacrifice to God and mortifying his taste, he took good care to profit by it.

After this, it will not be surprising that Father Champagnat so often recommended the Brothers to be abstemious and mortified

in their food. According to him, this sort of mortification is the A B C of the spiritual life, and he was convinced :—

(1.) That those who cannot repress gluttony or intemperance will not easily overcome the other vices, and will always be faint-hearted in the practice of virtue.

(2.) That those who cannot control their taste, and are slaves to sensuality, will be unable to do violence to themselves when required to resist more delicate and more dangerous temptations.

(3.) That impurity is always preceded by gluttony and idleness. Indeed, faults of gluttony were those that he was most unwilling to pardon. He would not allow the Brothers to eat or drink anything between meals, and anyone who was known to have tasted a fruit or anything else, without permission, was publicly reprimanded and punished. ‘Do you not know,’ said he, ‘that Adam fell, and with him, the whole human race, for having committed a similar fault? It appears a small matter to eat a fruit, to take a mouthful of bread, or any other such trifle, but it is a great gratification of nature, an act of sensuality; it inflames the passions, weakens grace and piety, and thus it exposes the soul to the greatest dangers. Those who cannot deny themselves in these things, and who follow the inclinations of nature, are exposed to the greatest falls. Whoever wishes to be strong, and not to fail in great combats, must be mortified and overcome himself in small things.’

He was extremely grieved, when he heard certain Brothers murmur and complain of the food. ‘We have not come into Religion,’ he would say, ‘to be well treated and to want nothing; but to mortify ourselves and do penance. Sensual Brothers are Religious only in name and habit. I have always remarked that those who think much of their bodies, care little for their souls, and those that take excessive care of their health, give themselves little trouble about their perfection. Furthermore, experience shows, that those who complain of the food are men who, at home, lived in want, and have become Religious to make sure of an easy and comfortable subsistence. Those Religious who lived in abundance at home never complain in Community, although many things may be wanting to them, or are not to their tastes, for they came into religion to suffer and immolate themselves to God by mortification. They are always pleased to be

treated like the others, and know how to turn their privations and sufferings to good account.'

The good Father looked upon his body as his greatest enemy, and ceased not to torment it and make it suffer. From the time of his seminary life, he afflicted it with discipline and hair-shirt, and he continued all his life the use of these instruments of penance. One day, having invited into his room the young man whom he had chosen to become the first stone of his Institute, after having spoken to him on several edifying subjects, he drew from a small box two hair-shirts and a discipline, and showed them to the pious youth. 'Do you know what these are for?' asked the Father. 'No, sir,' answered the young man. 'It is the first time I have ever seen the like.' 'Guess what they are for.' 'I don't know what they can be for; maybe you will be so good as to show me.' 'Not just now; it is sufficient for the present that you have seen them; but later on I will give you a set of them, and teach you how to use them.' A few months later, when the Father had trained him to the practices of the interior life, he taught the young man how to use the instruments, and gave him a discipline and a hair-shirt, which the fervent novice used so resolutely that Father Champagnat was obliged to moderate his zeal.

Although the pious Founder highly esteemed corporal penances, he did not impose any on his Brothers, if we except the fast on Saturdays, not that his intention was that they should not perform any, but he preferred to leave this sort of mortification to the personal discretion of each, and to the wisdom of the Superiors. Besides, he understood that, for the greater number of the Brothers, the labours and sacrifices inseparable from teaching might well take the place of corporal penances. Each time that he explained the chapter of the Rule on Mortification, he did not fail to add: 'Although the Rule does not prescribe any corporal penances, it does not follow that we are not to perform any. He who desires to imitate Jesus Christ and the Saints will not fail to impose some on himself; but in this no one should do anything of his own will, and without the permission of the Superior, who will not oppose his fervour when his health will not suffer by it.' He added, smiling, 'A little of the discipline does no harm, and it is even necessary for some.'

But corporal mortification had no value in his eyes, unless

it was accompanied by interior mortification. It is the latter which he practised above all, and especially recommended to the Brothers. To his mind, and according to his explanations, this sort of mortification comprises :—

(1.) *The mortification of the passions* ; principally of pride, self-love, inordinate affection for creatures, attachment to one's own will, and the predominant passion. 'One may save one's soul,' he said, 'and be an excellent Religious, without any rigorous fasts or bodily macerations ; but it is impossible to save our soul, and still more to labour for our perfection, without combating our passions and doing continual violence to ourselves. Many may have good and legitimate reasons for dispensing with the fast and the discipline, but no one can have any reason whatever for dispensing with the obligation of repressing his evil inclinations, correcting his defects, and reforming his character. There are Saints who have done very little corporal penance. We do not read that the Blessed Virgin ever practised any ; but all the Saints, and the Queen of Saints at their head, excelled in interior mortification and the custody of the senses, its necessary consequence. We should therefore wage a constant warfare against vanity, the desire of gaining the praises of men, against our own defects of character, which may render us disagreeable to those with whom we live, and be an obstacle to the good we might do among the children ; against curiosity and the pleasure of hearing the news of the world. Each one should charitably bear with the defects of his Brothers, and with everything that may displease him. He should likewise support with patience an injury or reproach which he has not deserved, and be charitable towards persons who blame him, contradict him, or persecute him, and render them good for evil.'

On this head, Father Champagnat has left us striking examples. All his life he was criticised, blamed, and persecuted one way or another, and he ever denied himself the satisfaction so dear to nature and self-love, we do not say of complaining of his opposers and persecutors, but even of justifying his conduct. He carried the spirit of self-denial so far as to speak well of the persons who injured him, and to render them every service in his power. A neighbour of his, a vulgar and irreligious man, for several years annoyed him in every possible manner. He insulted the good Father, wrote letters to him, threatened to maltreat the

Brothers, and destroyed an embankment which served to retain water for the garden. The only revenge the pious Founder took for so much abuse was to be patient and charitable to his enemy. He prayed and asked prayers for him, and had the happiness of gaining him to God. This man died, leaving a lawsuit pending between himself and a neighbour. Father Champagnat interposed his good offices, and succeeded in having the affair concluded in favour of the widow and orphans of the deceased.

(2.) *The mortification of employment*, which, according to our pious Founder, consists, 1st, in being perfectly indifferent as to places or occupations which obedience may assign to us. 2nd, in striving, by every means, to discharge as perfectly as possible the functions intrusted to us by Providence, and in making good use of all the occasions of mortification and self-denial which they may offer us. 'This sort of penance,' added Father Champagnat, 'is the more agreeable to God, as it is always according to His holy will, cannot be vitiated by self-love, is the most common, and necessarily brings with it the practice of the most excellent virtues. Another advantage of this sort of penance is that it can be practised every day, and at every hour of the day. Take, for instance, a Brother who has charge of a class. At every hour of the day, he has opportunities of performing acts of charity, devotedness, zeal, and patience; he has to keep a constant watch over himself, to observe becoming modesty and gravity, so as to restrain and edify the children. He has to do continual violence to himself, in order to bear with the rudeness and all the other defects of his pupils; to make himself understood by the youngest and least intelligent, and always to repeat the same things. What a treasure of merits for a Brother who knows how to make a good use of so many occasions of mortification and self-denial!'

In this sort of mortification the example of Father Champagnat is beyond all praise. We shall never be able to understand what an amount of self-sacrifice it must have cost him to share the hard life, the labours, and privations of the Brothers; the labour it cost him to refine their manners, to instruct them, to correct their faults, to train them to virtue, to confirm them in their vocation, to make them good teachers of youth, and true Religious. What devotedness, what charity, what patience, what spirit of mortification he must have possessed to enable him to blend his existence with that of poor young men, coming from

the mountains, remarkable only for their ignorance, coarse habits, and all the defects common to persons who have received no education ; to live with them, to work and pray with them, to serve them, to take recreation with them, and show them, as he did, all the tenderness of a father.

Although the greater number corresponded with his care and his kindness, and were a source of great consolation to him, it is not the less true that their education caused him much trouble and anxiety, and many sacrifices. It is true also that the levity and want of piety in others frequently filled his heart with bitterness, and was for him a long exercise of patience and mortification.

But his virtue rose above all this, and, notwithstanding all the trouble and vexation of his position, he was never seen giving way to irritability or ill-humour, breaking out in complaints or reproaches, or giving the least sign of annoyance or discontent. If it was necessary to give any warning, reproof, or correction, he always did it with the greatest kindness, and in a manner to raise courage and inspire confidence. One felt that it was a father who spoke, and that he had nothing in view but the greater good of the person he was obliged to correct. Nevertheless, it sometimes happened that his reproof or correction was badly received, and some even forgot themselves so far as to say very harsh and painful things to him. On these occasions, instead of using his authority or displaying any severity, he kept silent ; he began to pray for the ungrateful parties who thus abused his kindness and his forbearance.

On one occasion, a Brother was much offended at a reproof which, however, had been given him with the utmost kindness ; but, after a few hours' reflection, seeing the gravity of his fault, he went and cast himself at the feet of the good Father, to beg his pardon, beseeching him to forget the injury, and not to bear any ill-will against him for it. 'I ! to have any ill-will against you !' exclaimed the Father. 'Ah ! my dear Brother, God forbid ! There never entered into my heart the least spark of hatred or ill-will against you or any one of my Brothers, thanks be to God !' In pronouncing these words he raised the Brother from the ground and embraced him. We could relate a great number of similar facts.

(3.) *The mortification of one's state.* This sort of mortification

is no other than the exact observance of the Rule. Fidelity and punctuality in the observance of Rule, immolates the whole Religious by a perpetual sacrifice which is repeated every moment of the day. One can easily understand that, to be faithful to all the regular observances; that is, to pray, to study, to keep silence, to fulfil one's employment, to practise poverty, obedience, humility, modesty, charity, and all the other virtues of Religion, one must have the sword of mortification constantly in hand, and do continual violence to oneself. 'He who lives thus,' added Father Champagnat, 'performs a continual penance, which is imperceptible to the eyes of men, but is most agreeable to our Lord, and highly meritorious for heaven. In one word, such a one lives according to God. Do you understand that? He lives, not according to man, or to the flesh; not according to his passions, his whims, his caprices; not according to himself and his own will; not according to the world, much less according to Satan; but according to God, according to the examples of Jesus Christ and the Saints. Such a life, it must not be denied, is hard to nature, and it is not without reason that the Saints call it a martyrdom. In fact, to live according to God, that is, according to Rule, one must wage continual war against the flesh, the passions, the world, the devil. One must immolate to God all the faculties of the soul and all the senses of the body.'

As usual, Father Champagnat confirmed his teaching by his examples. Thus he was always first at the Community exercises, at prayer, at work; the first to practise poverty, humility, modesty, and all the other religious virtues; the first to sacrifice himself for the glory of God, the sanctification of the Brothers, and the interests of the Society. It must not be imagined that this fidelity to Rule cost him little; to him, as to all those who are faithful to it, it was a never ending source of mortification and self-denial. The following remark is a sufficient proof of this: 'It is now more than twenty years,' he once said to a Brother, 'since I began to rise at four o'clock in the morning, and still, I am not yet accustomed to it; every day, it is a trouble and sacrifice to me.' 'Really,' he added, 'when I think of it, I pity our young Brothers who must feel this very much. There are things one never becomes accustomed to; early rising is one for me.' Although he found this rule so unpleasant, as he admits himself, he never failed to rise punctually at the first signal; and it may

be said of him as was said of St. Vincent of Paul, that the second sound of the bell never found him in the same position as the first. He usually rose before four o'clock, for he was so busy during the day, that he was frequently obliged to take from his sleep the time required to say his Office, and to devote himself to the holy exercise of meditation which to him was a necessity as well as an enjoyment.

This punctuality in rising, continued all his life. Even in his last years, although he was habitually sick, and the Brothers besought him to take a little repose which he himself felt to be necessary, he could not be induced to stop in bed in the morning, and as soon as he heard the bell ring he was up. Someone having remarked to him, that he treated his body too severely and that it was not allowed to overburden nature in such a manner:—‘If we listened to nature,’ he said ‘we would require dispensations half the time, especially after reaching a certain age; and, on the plea that we are labouring under some slight infirmities, the Rule would be discarded altogether, and we should retain nothing but the name and habit of Religious. Is it reasonable on our part to sacrifice our perfection, our duty, and our souls, in order to preserve the health of the body, or to spare it some slight passing pains?’

‘When I was a child,’ says St. Paul, ‘I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child. But when I became a man I put away the things of a child’ (1 Cor. xiii. 11). Father Champagnat imitated the great apostle, both in his childhood and in his manhood. When he was a child it was a great cross to him to have to rise in the morning. Every time his parents called him and forced him to rise he murmured to himself: ‘When I shall be grown up and be my own master, I shall go to bed and sleep as I like.’ When he had become his own master it would have been a greater sacrifice for him to stop in bed, notwithstanding his natural inclination for sleep, than it was to rise when he was young. It is thus that grace and the spirit of mortification change men. But, alas! how many Religious there are who are men only in appearance, and who, as far as sentiments and behaviour are concerned, remain children all their lives! They appear to have come to Religion only to take care of their health, to procure the conveniences of life, and to live long. ‘Such men,’ says St. Teresa, ‘always find pretexts to satisfy nature at

the expense of the Rule. To-day, they do not rise at the appointed hour or neglect some other rule, because they have a headache; to-morrow, because they were ill the day before; and the next day, for fear they might fall ill.' 'Woe to those monks,' exclaimed St. Joseph Calasanctius, 'because they prefer health to holiness!'

(4) *The mortifications sent by Providence*, such as sickness and all other bodily ailments, temptations, drynesses, desolations, and all the trials of the spiritual life; the inclemency of the seasons, cold, heat, and all the occasions of suffering, arising from our employments, the places and climates where obedience has sent us, the houses in which we live, trials, and afflictions of all kinds and from whatever quarter they come. 'These sorts of penance,' said the pious Founder, 'are most pleasing to God, because they come directly from Him, and by accepting them, we perform, at the same time, acts of mortification and acts of conformity to His holy will.'

A postulant, requesting to be admitted into the Society, asked what were the special penances prescribed by the Rule. 'There are none,' answered Father Champagnat. As the young man appeared surprised, and even scandalised at this, the good Father added: 'Although the Rule does not oblige us to wear the hair-shirt or to take the discipline, you will have plenty of occasions of practising mortification, if you wish to profit by them. The Community life, teaching, fidelity to the Rule, offer a large field of privations and sacrifices to those who desire to renounce themselves and to suffer for God. First, you will begin by those practices which suffice to make a holy Religious of you; later on, we may add to these, if necessary.'





CHAPTER XII.

HUMILITY OF FATHER CHAMPAGNAT.

ST. AUGUSTIN, speaking of the obligation incumbent upon all Christians to practise humility, does not hesitate to assert that this virtue is the most essential, the most important of all. 'If you ask me,' he says, 'what, in the Christian Religion, is most necessary to be observed, I shall answer, humility; and if you ask me the same question a hundred times, I shall answer each time, humility. Moreover, if you wish to know who it is that I consider the best of men, I shall answer, the most humble.' St. Cyprian, in a sermon on the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, says; 'The first step in the practice of virtue, like the first step of our divine Lord in this world, is to become humble; for, the foundation of sanctity has ever been humility.' 'The edifice of perfection,' says St. Augustin, 'can have no other foundation than humility; and the depth of this foundation, ought to be in proportion to the height of the edifice.' St. Chrysostom teaches us the same, in these words: 'If your alms, your fasts, your prayers, your mortifications, and all your other good works, have not humility for their basis, you labour in vain; your work will fall in ruins.' St. Gregory teaches the same doctrine, but in other words: 'He who strives to gather much virtue without humility, is like a man who gathers dust and casts it to the wind which instantly carries it away.'

It was belief in these truths that inspired Father Champagnat

with such a special love for humility, and that afterwards induced him to make the practice of this virtue, the distinctive characteristic of his Institute. When he resolved to give himself entirely to God, he made a serious examination to find out his defects, and he resolved, above all, to combat pride, which he justly considered the greatest enemy to virtue, and the greatest obstacle to perfection. For a long time, he made his particular examen on this subject, and he composed a prayer, which he recited daily, and in which he asked of our Lord, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin and his patron Saints, for the virtue of humility. He made his spiritual reading in the *Livre d'Or*, or in the *Contempt of Oneself*. These two small volumes were his favourite books; he read them and meditated upon them all his life.

He had such lowly sentiments of himself, that acts of humility appeared not to cost him anything. He lived and acted in the midst of the Brothers as if he had been the servant of all, sharing their labours, and always choosing for himself what was hardest and most disagreeable to nature. How many times has he not been seen to carry mortar, to clean the stable and the offices! Whenever there was anything hard or unpleasant to be done, he was always ready to take part in it, and the Brothers were so accustomed to see him act in this manner, that they scarcely noticed it.

At the close of a retreat at Belley, his brother-priests having requested him to address a few words of edification to them, he objected, alleging his incompetency; but forced at length to yield to their importunity, he spoke for a few minutes to the great satisfaction of all present; but, seeing that he was listened to with marked attention, he stopped on a sudden, and exclaimed: 'I only abuse your patience and make you lose your time; you know and practise all these things better than I.'

One day, returning from the Retreat with the same Fathers, some of whom were preparing to go to the foreign Missions, he seized their portmanteaus, saying: 'Allow me to carry these for you; I will have at least some share in the good you will do.' As the Fathers objected, he added, 'Allow me, I am from the country and used to hard work.' At the same time, he seized the bags, slung them over his shoulder and carried them a considerable distance.

Neither the success of his Institute, nor the great good which his Brothers did, and which was highly spoken of by all parties, ever altered the lowly sentiments he had of himself. The foundation of the Society and its progress,' said he on several occasions, 'is the work of God and not ours. It is He who has done all. It is to the protection of Mary that we are indebted for this blessing and for all our success. As for ourselves we are fit only to spoil what God has confided to us, and we ought continually to pray, that He may not withdraw his protection from this Community on account of our faults.'

Travelling, one day, with two or three of his Brothers, an ecclesiastic, who happened to be in the same conveyance, was struck with their modesty, and asked him who these Religious were. 'They are Brothers who teach school for little country children.' 'By what name are they known?' 'They call themselves Little Brothers of Mary.' 'Who founded this Society?' inquired the ecclesiastic. 'It is hardly known,' answered the Father, somewhat embarrassed. 'A few young men joined together, and drew up a Rule in keeping with the object they had in view; a curate gave them some direction; God has blessed their Community, and made it prosper beyond all human expectation.' After these words, which he uttered with great simplicity, he changed the subject of conversation.

Someone remarked to him one day: 'Father, many persons say that wonderful things happened in the beginning of your Society.' 'There is perhaps more ground for this report than you imagine,' said the Father, 'for is it not really a miracle, that God should have employed such men to begin this Work? This, in my opinion, is a great wonder and the best proof that He Himself is the Author of it. He has chosen men without virtue or talents, men destitute of all human means, to found this Community, in order that all might redound to His own glory, and that no one might ever doubt that He alone has done everything for us.'

These sentiments of humility accompanied Father Champagnat all his life, and became stronger even as years went on. They caused him to say, shortly before his death, when someone remarked how much the Society would feel his loss. 'I am useless, perfectly useless; nay, more, I am convinced, that I can

only be an obstacle to the good work, and that the Community will prosper more after my death than during my life.'

It now remains for us to show what he did to inspire the Brothers with humility, and to make them love this virtue. In founding his Society, Father Champagnat proposed two things, namely: to procure Christian Instruction for poor country children, and to honour Mary by the imitation of her virtues and the propagation of devotion to her. But the Blessed Virgin who excelled in all the virtues, was more especially remarkable for her humility; and, besides, teaching little children, being of itself an humble employment, he wished the spirit of humility, simplicity, and modesty, to be the distinctive mark of the new Society. That the Brothers might fully realise his meaning, he gave them the name of *Little Brothers of Mary*, in order that their name itself might ever remind them of what they should be. This word *little*, which hurts the feelings of some persons, and is an enigma to others who look upon it as superfluous and useless, because they do not know the spirit of the Congregation, has not, therefore, been given to the Brothers at hazard or without motive. In the mind of the pious Founder, this word ought to teach them that the spirit of their vocation is a spirit of Humility; that their life ought to be humble, hidden, and unknown to the outer world; that humility ought to be their favourite virtue, and that it is by the daily practice of this virtue that they will most effectively promote their own sanctification, and that of the children confided to them. This word *little* is, as it were, the seal and the mould of the Institute; it is the mirror which continually reflects the spirit of the pious Founder, and points out to each Brother, what ought to be his own spirit and character.

After giving the Brothers to understand, by the very name he gave them, the spirit by which they should be animated, he laboured unceasingly to fashion them to humility and simplicity. On admitting them to the Novitiate, the first lesson he gave them was a lesson of Humility. He recommended them to labour earnestly to acquire this virtue, as being the foundation of all the others. The first book that he put into their hands was the *Livre d'Or*, a short treatise on humility. Each was told to read and meditate it carefully, in order to become thoroughly penetrated with the virtues and sentiments which this work

aims at imparting to the heart and mind of the reader. It was for the same reason that he employed the postulants and the Brothers at manual work, that he trained them to household duties, and desired that poverty and simplicity should appear in the food, clothing, and dwellings of the Brothers; for, in a true Religious, poverty and humility ought to be two inseparable companions.

Pride was the first vice which he aimed at correcting in the postulants and the young Brothers, because he regarded it as the greatest obstacle to Humility and to the true spirit of the Institute. He detected this vice, under whatever shape it appeared, and opposed it wherever he perceived it. Thus, he continually humbled those who showed any vanity or self-sufficiency, either by reproving them publicly or employing them in the lowest offices; or if he perceived that knowledge puffed them up, he would remove them from teaching, and confine their studies to the most elementary subjects.

A Brother, in teaching Catechism, having employed some high-sounding words, the Father, who had been listening, sent for him after class, and said to him: 'I was very much grieved at your silly pretensions during your instruction. Why do you not employ words which the children can understand? What can your pupils make of the words *Celestial Sion*? Would you not have been far better understood if you had simply said Heaven? If you had the spirit of your state, if you were humble and modest, instead of yielding to the inspirations of vanity, instead of forming fine phrases, you would speak simply, and in a manner to be understood by the youngest and most ignorant of your children.'

Another Brother, in writing to the good Father, having used some big words, the Father answered: 'Brother, I do not understand your letter; come and explain it to me.' When the Brother came, the Father gave him a severe reprimand, and concluded in these terms: 'True Little Brothers of Mary endeavour to imitate their holy Mother, and to learn her spirit; for this purpose they practise simplicity and modesty, and employ the plainest terms, both in speaking and writing. Those, on the contrary, who, like you, lose their time in constructing high-sounding expressions, in order to pass for learned, while they know nothing, have not the spirit of the Blessed Virgin, the

spirit of the Institute, but they show the spirit of pride. Do not be guilty of this fault again ; for, the next time, you will not get off with a simple reprimand.' The Brother promised not to do the like again, and he kept his word.

Father Champagnat had a marked aversion to flattery, and it was well known that to praise him sufficed to make him run away. One of his favourite sayings was that of Holy Scripture : *Praise not any man before death* (Ecc. xi. 30) ; and, speaking in a more familiar way, that he had no faith in the relics of saints who were still alive. 'Praise,' he said, 'may do the greatest harm to young Brothers ; for it is by being ignorant of their own virtues and good qualities that they preserve them ; whereas, if you bring them into notice by exaggerated praise, the demon of pride will take advantage of it, and rob them of their treasure.'

On one occasion he went with a Brother Director to visit the Mayor of the parish, who spoke in the most flattering terms of the school and of the capacity and devotedness of the Brother. On leaving the Mayor's house, the Father said to the Brother : 'All these praises and flattery seem to have pleased you very much. Oh, what bosh and nonsense ! I am greatly afraid it will turn your head. I speak frankly, because I love you, and you appeared to take in all that as Gospel truth. I tell you now, that, if you believe such stuff, you are lost.' The pious Founder was quite correct in his appreciation. The Brother, proud of his talents and his little successes, lost his piety, the spirit of his state, and abandoned his vocation.

To combat pride and acquire humility, Father Champagnat recommended the four following means :—

(1.) *To labour to know oneself.* 'When the devil,' he said, 'suggests to you some thoughts of vanity, and holds up before your mind your good qualities, turn the picture ; consider your defects and all the evil you have done ; or else, enter into the abyss of your nothingness, see what you are before God, and what you have of your own. In examining yourself seriously, you will see two things ; first, that there is but little good in you, and that this little is the work of God ; second, that you are full of vice and defects ; that there is no crime, however enormous, that you may not commit, and that your corrupt nature does not incline to ; that, if you have not fallen into grave disorders, it is solely to the mercy of God that you are indebted for it, according to these

words of St. Augustin : "There is no sin committed by man, that another man may not commit, if the hand of God does not restrain him."

(2.) *To reflect often on the advantages of humility, and on the evils produced by pride.* In recommending the little work we have mentioned above, Father Champagnat once asked why it was entitled *Livre d'Or*, Golden Book ; and, giving the answer himself, he said : 'It is because humility, of which it treats, is among the virtues what gold is among the metals. Gold, as everyone knows, is the most precious of metals ; it is also the rarest and most sought after. With men, when they wish to bestow uncommon praise upon anything, they call it golden, or they say it is all gold, which means that it is not simply good, but very good and perfect. It is the same with a Religious who is truly humble ; it may be said of him, all is gold there, for all his virtues are pure, solid, and genuine.

'Humility is a balm which preserves virtues. Pride is a poison which taints and corrupts them. It vitiates the best actions before, during, and after their performance. The best actions, when performed under the influence of pride, lose their lustre and merit, and are changed into vices. Pride is like a rent in the roof, which lets in water, causes the beams and rafters to rot, and brings down the whole house in ruins. Pride is not like the other vices, which ordinarily oppose but one virtue ; pride destroys them all. The practice of virtue is impossible to those who are the slaves of pride. In fact, to be pious, to treat often with God in meditation, to frequent the Sacraments worthily, without being humble, is impossible. To practise obedience, to follow the direction of a Superior, to be indifferent as to places or employments, without being humble, is impossible. To practise charity, to live in peace in Community, to support the defects of others and yield to them when necessary, without being humble, is impossible. Take away humility and you ruin all virtue. It is not without reason, then, that our Saviour tells us : *Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart* (St. Matt. xi., 29) ; it is not without reason that He gives us such striking examples of humility ; He knew the necessity of this virtue for us. He knew all the harm that pride does to us. But what is incomprehensible, is the pride of man in the presence of this profound humility of his God.'

(3.) *To be determined to practise obedience and charity.* The most common and most dangerous faults, which are usually the openings of pride, are murmuring, retorting, receiving the orders of Superiors with coldness or indifference, and carrying them out in a careless and self-willed manner, refusing sometimes even to obey; boasting and seeking to domineer everywhere, failing in respect towards the Brothers, and retaining feelings of antipathy against those who do not please us. Now, obedience and charity will cause us to avoid these faults; moreover, every act of obedience or charity is, at the same time, an act of humility. 'And, therefore,' says Father Champagnat, 'nothing is so effectual in combating pride as the practice of these two virtues. Give me a House in which the Brothers allow themselves to be guided and directed as little children; in which they bear with one another, and love each other, for charity covers everything, and there will never be the least division. Union will be perfect there, and such a House will be a paradise; whereas the House in which there are proud characters will be a hell, because pride begets insubordination, disputes, and everything that causes trouble and division among the Brothers. Oh! how detestable is pride! I am not surprised that God resists the proud, and that all His predilection is for the humble.'

(4.) *To preserve modesty always and in everything.* The proud like to display their talents, their good qualities; to be known, praised, and flattered; they do their good works with ostentation, to be seen by men. The humble and the modest seek to hide themselves; they live peaceably in Community; they are simple in their deportment, their words and actions. If they have talents, they do not try to show them off; they carefully avoid all insolence or haughtiness with their Brothers, and everything that wounds modesty and charity. As their sole desire is to please God, they do good without noise, and do not seek to be praised and spoken of by men.

'I know a Brother whose example upon this point is worthy of imitation. This excellent Religious, although very talented and highly educated, taught only the little class. He was the certificated master of the school; it was he who wrote all the writing-models for the pupils, and did all the correspondence; and this he did for several years, without any child in the school or anyone outside the Community ever suspecting it. The public

attributed to the Brother Director the certificate, the specimens of splendid writing, and everything in the school which attracted the attention of the children, and won the esteem of the parents. Never did the Brother of the little class say a single word to show the part he had in the success of the establishment; on the contrary, he so carefully concealed his talents and all he did for the good of the school, that no one in the parish knew whether he could write or not. The good spirit, the modesty and humility of this true Marist Brother, are admirable and beyond all praise. It is thus that all the members of the Society should act. Such subjects are a treasure to the Society, and a source of blessing for the Houses which have the good fortune to possess them.'

Indeed, Father Champagnat desired not only that the Brothers should individually practise humility, but he wished them also to regard their Society as the least in the Church. He himself was so penetrated with these sentiments that he frequently advised postulants who applied for admission, to join some other Congregation, particularly that of the Christian Brothers. 'There,' said he, 'you will find all things well established, and perfect regularity; and you will be able to utilise your talents better, and do more good than with us.' One day, M. Douillet, Director of the Little Seminary of La Côte-Saint-André, presented him a young man, of whom he spoke very highly. The good Father asked: 'Why does he not go to the Christian Brothers? That Society will suit him better, and, in his place, I should go there without a moment's hesitation.' He often recommended the Brothers to show the greatest respect for the members of other Congregations, and to render them every service in their power. 'Be very careful,' he said, 'not to envy the success of others, especially those whom God has called to labour, like yourselves, in the Religious state for the instruction of youth. Be the first to rejoice at their prosperity and to grieve at their misfortunes. Never listen to any discourses injurious to them, and be ever willing to yield to them.' The pious Founder was always guided by these wise maxims. The authorities, in several places, earnestly solicited him to give them Brothers to take the place of the Christian Brothers, on the plea that, as the latter did not accept school fees, their salary was too great a burden upon the resources of the parish; but he repelled energetically all such proposals, and protested that he would never

countenance such a step. 'We are not come,' said he to the Brothers, 'to displace the disciples of the Venerable de la Salle. We shall never be capable of that; but we are established to make good what they cannot do, and go to small localities where, according to their Constitutions, they cannot be conveniently established. These excellent Religious are our models; we shall never be able to equal them, but we shall endeavour, at least, to follow their example, and persuade ourselves that the more nearly we come up to them the better we shall do.'





CHAPTER XIII.

FATHER CHAMPAGNAT'S LOVE OF PURITY—HIS EXTREME HORROR OF THE CONTRARY VICE AND OF SIN IN GENERAL.

A MAN who was so humble and mortified could not but be very chaste ; for purity is the fruit and recompense of humility and mortification. At an early age Father Champagnat showed a great love of modesty, and a great horror of every word or action contrary to purity. Although he liked very much to play and amuse himself with the children of his own age, says a person who knew him particularly in his childhood, he became grave, showed his displeasure, and even retired when any of his comrades permitted themselves, in his presence, the slightest action contrary to modesty. His love for holy purity increased much during his studies, in consequence of the instructions which he heard on this subject, in the Little Seminary ; and, understanding then that purity is a gift of God, and that we cannot have it of ourselves, he earnestly asked it of our Lord and the Blessed Virgin. This was one of his principal intentions in his prayers, his communions, and his frequent visits to the Blessed Sacrament. But, being fully convinced that his prayers would not be heard unless he, on his part, should adopt the means prescribed by Religion to all men to preserve perfect purity, he kept a constant watch over his heart, his thoughts, and his actions, in order to avoid everything that might give rise to temptations and the suggestions of the devil. As idleness, intemperance, and pride, are sure causes of

the vice of impurity, he waged incessant war against them, and applied himself, in a special manner, to the practice of the contrary virtues. It was by the continual exercise of these virtues, by prayer, the love of our Lord, and tender devotion to our Blessed Lady, by vigilance, and the avoidance of all dangerous occasions that he arrived at that perfect purity which, in a mortal body, rendered him like unto the angels.

As the possession of a virtue always includes the grace of communicating it to others, he had a special gift for inspiring the love of purity, and consoling, relieving, and encouraging those who experienced violent temptations against this beautiful virtue. It very frequently sufficed merely to make those humiliating and distressing temptations known to him, to be freed from them. Some have even asserted that, to be delivered from these temptations, they had only to resolve on going to see the Father.

Persuaded that, to keep intact the holy virtue of purity, the surest means is to avoid all dangerous occasions, the pious Founder has given his Brothers the wisest rules to save them from the snares of the devil, and protect them against anything that might be a danger to their virtue. Thus, he wished them to live apart from the world, and never to go from home without a real necessity ; to be always two when they pay any visit, and to be brief with all parties, but more especially with persons of the opposite sex, who can be admitted to the parlour only. Moreover, he wished the parlour door to be kept open during the whole time of the interview.

In their intercourse with the children, the Brothers ought to be very reserved and avoid all familiarity, every demonstration of human friendship, everything that is opposed to the strictest rules of modesty, everything that might become an occasion of temptation. He held so much to the observance of these rules, which he justly considered as the guardians of purity, that, each year during the Retreat, he reminded the Brothers of them, and earnestly recommended their observance. He, moreover, obliged every Brother who might have witnessed any infraction of them to give him immediate information of it.

M. Cattet, Vicar-General, on a visit to the Hermitage, while recommending the Brothers to avoid corporal punishment and to correct the children so as not to discourage them, having added that one might, in certain cases, embrace a child who was crying

after receiving a penance, and thus try to calm him and gain his confidence by this mark of kindness. Father Champagnat approached the Vicar-General and remarked to him, that this token of friendship was forbidden by the Rule, and he besought him to withdraw the expression, which he did without hesitation, assuring the Brothers that this Rule was a very wise one.

Although Father Champagnat was extremely kind, and corrected the defects of the Brothers with great indulgence, he always repressed with severity any violation of the Rules we speak of. After having several times reproved a Brother Director who went out alone and easily admitted females into the house, the Father sent for him and said: 'How is it, that, notwithstanding my admonitions and the remorse of your conscience, you still transgress your Rule in such important matters? Do you know that *he that loveth danger shall perish in it?* (Eccl. iii, 27.) Have I not told you that God is not mocked in vain, and that He abandons those who, to the great scandal of the Brothers, introduce such abuses into their houses? I now warn you, that, if you do not change your conduct, divine justice will overtake you and you will not die in the Society.' This severe and prophetic admonition was soon to be realised. The Brother, to whom it was addressed, not having profited by it, committed a great fault and abandoned his vocation.

The good Father said to a Brother who was not reserved enough with the children: 'My friend it is more dangerous for your soul to do such things, than it would be for your body to play with serpents. Fidelity to the Rules concerning this important point and vigilance over yourself, can alone give you security; you can never transgress these rules without exposing yourself more or less. He that truly loves purity avoids even the shadow of danger.'

Another Brother having asked permission to allow a pious lady to visit the house to examine the furniture from time to time, as she promised to keep it in repair and renew it on that condition, Father Champagnat answered: 'I esteem the observance of the Rule which forbids us to introduce females into the interior of our houses, of greater importance than any amount of good this pious lady can do for you. The Society will be lost, the day on which we shall prefer our temporal interests to the observance of the Rule. Besides, persons who wish to do us good,

will do it all the more willingly, when they see us faithful to God and our duty, for our Lord has said : *Seek ye, therefore, first the kingdom of God and His Justice, and all these things shall be added unto you.*' (St. Matt. vi, 33.)

In a conference which he gave the Brothers on the same subject, one of them stood up and said, 'Excuse me Father, it appears to me, that there are cases when it is impossible to refuse to admit these persons into the house.' 'I do not know a single one of these cases,' answered the Father, 'and during these twenty years, not one has occurred in this house, and yet we receive a great number of visits.' 'Then you will never permit us to depart from this rule?' 'No, never, unless the person be accompanied by the Parish Priest or by the Mayor.' 'But if she happen to be a lady of the highest rank, how could one refuse to admit her?' 'If it is the Queen,' replied the Father warmly, 'admit her.' Then he added in a calm and firm tone : 'Females should not be admitted to the interior of our houses ; and those who under specious pretexts, transgress this rule and allow abuses to creep in, become very guilty.'

It was Father Champagnat's love of purity and his horror of the contrary vice, that made him take so many precautions to preserve this beautiful virtue among the Brothers ; but, knowing that the wisest rules and the most active vigilance, would be insufficient without prayer, he constantly besought our Lord, through the intercession of Mary, to grant to all the Brothers perfect purity of soul and body. He wished and he prescribed also that, in the whole Society, there should be special prayers daily offered up to obtain the holy virtue of purity. He often said the Votive Mass of the Blessed Virgin for the same intention : 'Mary,' he often repeated, 'was admirable for her purity ; we, who are her children and glory in her name, ought also greatly to love this beautiful and sublime virtue, strive to practise it in an eminent degree, and labour by every means to oppose and destroy whatever may hurt it in ourselves and in the children confided to us.

The pious Founder had such a horror of the impure vice, that he could not hear it spoken of without trembling. An evident fault against Purity would make him shed tears ; and the guilty parties never found any consideration with him ; he was terrible and inexorable on such occasions.

When the Community was still at Lavalla, as the Novitiate was not numerous, the Brothers, in order to procure some means, received boarders. A postulant who was employed in the boarding school once yielded to a temptation of this kind. The Father, who was then occupied with the building of the Hermitage, heard of it the same day and was disconsolate about it. He immediately repaired to Lavalla, where, hearing that the affair was known to several children and Brothers, he resolved to check the evil and stifle it in its birth by inflicting a terrible punishment on the culprit. He assembled all the Brothers and novices of the house in his room; then when all were standing in a circle round about him, and without having given them any previous notice, he took his surplice and stole and sent for the guilty postulant. As soon as he appeared, the Father, casting a withering look upon him, exclaimed; 'Wretch! since you have not been afraid to crucify Jesus Christ in your heart and profane his living members, you will not fear to trample His image under your feet.' At the same time casting a large crucifix on the floor, before the postulant, and in a voice of thunder, he cried out to him: 'Monster that you are! trample on the image of your God! The crime that you will commit by trampling under foot this sacred sign of your Redemption, will be less than the one you committed yesterday!' The young man was terrified and he cast himself on his knees, crying and imploring mercy. 'Wretched man! What did that little boy do to you that you should rob him of his innocence! Go! You do not deserve mercy!' As the postulant continued to implore forgiveness, and did not rise, the Father exclaimed, 'Begone out of this! You have profaned this house; never set your foot in it again!' The young man was so much terrified and confused, that he did not know what he was doing—so much so that he could not find the way out, although the door stood wide open before him. The Father pushed him out, saying, 'Go, wretch, and never again appear in my presence!'

As soon as the young man was gone, the good Father threw himself on his knees, before the image of Jesus crucified, which was still on the floor, and exclaimed: '*My Jesus, pardon this crime, and all those that have nailed Thee to the Cross! O Jesus, by Thy sacred wounds, preserve us from such an enormous sin, and never permit this house to be stained again by the demon of*

impurity!' Then rising and looking on the Brothers: 'My friends,' said he, 'let us beg of God to preserve us from ever committing such a fault. Let us ask Him also to banish Satan from this house; he has got in, but, by the help of Mary, we will drive him out again. Bring me some holy water.' Then, preceded by a Brother carrying the holy water, and accompanied by all the others, he went through all the apartments, sprinkling holy water all round, and repeating continually, in a sorrowful tone: *Asperges me hyssopo, et mundabor; lavabis me, et super nivem dealbabor.* He concluded this ceremony with a fervent prayer, which he said kneeling, to ask the virtue of purity.

It is impossible to conceive the effect produced on the Brothers by this scene. They were so much affected and terrified by it, that they all trembled and wept, as if they themselves had been the culprits. This happened at about four o'clock in the evening. During the recreation after supper, the impression was still so vivid that not one dared to speak, and the recreation was spent in profound silence.

A few years later, a similar fault was committed by a postulant of twenty-five years of age. The Father having heard of it at ten o'clock at night, an hour after the Community had gone to rest, could not bring himself to allow the culprit to remain in the house till next day. He obliged him to rise, and expelled him immediately. The young man besought the Father on bended knees, to be allowed to remain in the house or in the stables till morning, alleging that it was too late to find lodgings elsewhere. 'No, no!' exclaimed the Father; 'for, as long as you are here, I shall tremble for fear that the curse of God might fall on us.' In saying this, he thrust him out, and shut the door against him. A moment after, a Brother remarked that the young man had left his clothes behind him. 'Go,' said the Father, 'gather up all his things, and throw them to the other side of the river, that we may be entirely separated, not only from him, but from all that belongs to him, and that the water may prevent the contagion from reaching us.'

With the exception of some slight shades of character, or some difference of position or circumstances, the saints all resemble each other in the main; because the spirit of God, by which they are guided and animated, inspires them with the same thoughts and sentiments. There are certain tastes and

inclinations by which we may know all the saints we meet with, for they are all distinguished by certain marks which are peculiar to them. These marks are—(1) A horror and fear of sin. (2) The spirit of piety and love of prayer. (3) The love of Jesus. (4) Zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. (5) Obedience. (6) Trials, the love of the Cross. (7) Humility. There is no saint who does not possess these seven characteristics; and to speak of the first one only, there is not one who did not fear sin more than death itself. The preceding facts in Father Champagnat's life, and some others still to be related, are only specimens of the examples which the saints have left us, and which we read in each page of their lives.

Saint Ignatius of Loyola had so great a horror of sin, that he said: 'I would not dare to pass the night in a house in which I knew there was a man guilty of mortal sin; I should be afraid that the roof might fall in, and crush us all in the ruins.' 'I leave this world,' exclaimed Saint Magdalen of Pazzi, 'without being able to understand a terrible mystery; namely, how a person can so easily commit mortal sin.' Saint John Chrysostom asserted that he would have preferred to be possessed by the devil than to commit a venial sin. Saint Louis, King of France, would have preferred to have all the maladies that afflict mankind, rather than commit a single mortal sin. St. Dorothea said: 'I would prefer that my body should perish, and all my members be cut to pieces, rather than that I should wound my soul by the slightest sin.' An indecent word, the mere shadow of sin, caused St. Stanislaus Kostka to faint; St. Francis of Assisi, St. Benedict, St. Bernard, and many others rolled themselves in the snow, and among thorny bushes, at the very thought of committing a sin.

The most distressing events, accidents, and what the world calls misfortunes, such as afflictions, contradictions, and losses, were unable, as we have remarked elsewhere, to disturb the peace of mind, to alter the gay and uniform character of Father Champagnat. Sin alone affected him in a sensible manner, and imparted to his countenance an expression of grief and sadness. After the example of the saints, he feared only sin. 'To see God offended and souls lost,' he said, 'are two things which I cannot bear; they cause my heart to bleed.' And when he had to witness them, he could not control his feelings, nor abstain from reproving those who were offending God.

In one of his journeys, he was obliged to enter an inn with another ecclesiastic, to take some refreshments. Whilst they were at table, a group of young libertines took their seats beside them, and, without the least regard for their priestly character, indulged in the most licentious and impious talk. For some time, Father Champagnat manifested his extreme displeasure and disgust only by a sad and severe countenance; but, seeing these wretches continue, he could bear it no longer, and, suddenly rising up, he cast a withering look on them, and struck the table a terrible blow, at the same time exclaiming, 'Wretches that you are! If you do not respect yourselves, at least respect others. Either begone out of this, or hold your tongues.' The impious group, terrified still more by the Father's tone of voice and his indignant countenance than by the stroke that startled them, hung down their heads and slunk away without saying a word.

Sin, its woful effects and its terrible chastisements, were ordinarily the subjects of Father Champagnat's instructions. It was by means of these instructions that he reformed the parish of Lavalla, and that he gained to God his first Brothers. Profoundly convinced of the truth of these words of the Holy Ghost, *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom*, he never ceased in his instructions and in his private intercourse with the Brothers, to return to the same truths. His lessons were not lost. He had the happiness of making this salutary fear penetrate so deeply into their hearts that it became for them the solid foundation of that high perfection to which they attained. It was remarked that all the Brothers had extremely timorous consciences, that the shadow of sin and the slightest danger of offending God alarmed them. One of them said: 'I have such a horror of mortal sin, and so great a fear of committing it, that the bare mention of it appals me, and makes me run away as from an imminent danger.' It was proposed to the good Brother Anthony, who was sick at Bourg-Argental, to bring in an old woman to attend him during his illness. 'Take care you do nothing of the kind,' he answered; 'I prefer to die rather than to see a woman enter the house, and be served by her.' As the matter was urged on him, he said: 'You lose your time; and I declare that, if she come, no matter how ill I am, I shall take refuge in the school-room.'

Father Champagnat was not satisfied with imbuing the

Brothers with a horror of mortal sin, he, moreover, strenuously exerted himself to inspire them with an extreme hatred of venial sin and of the slightest faults. Travelling, one day with Brother Louis, he began, as usual, to speak on pious subjects, and in particular, on the enormity and malice of venial sin. 'This sin,' said he, appears a mere trifle to many; and yet, after mortal sin, it is the greatest of all evils. Yes, all the calamities that afflict the world, wars, plagues, famines, maladies, diseases of all kinds, that afflict humanity, death and hell itself, with its fire and eternal torments, are a less evil, than a venial sin, because all these evils afflict creatures only; whereas, the slightest venial sin afflicts God; because all these evils, hell alone excepted, are for us, if we wish to make proper use of them, occasions of merit; and may procure for us an immense weight of glory; whereas, sin is an unmixed evil, and can bring only misery on us. Whence we should conclude that if, by a single venial sin we could prevent all the evils which we have named, it would not be allowed to commit it.' 'What, Father,' replied Brother Louis, 'would it not be permitted to commit one venial sin to preserve mankind from all the evils that oppress them?' 'No, my dear friend, one should not and ought not to tell a lie although it were possible thereby to deliver the earth from the evils that afflict it. Still more, it would not be permitted to commit venial sin when, by doing so, one might convert all the sinners.' 'But, if this be so, it would be better for us to shut ourselves up at home, far from the occasions of sin, than to expose ourselves to the dangers of the world by teaching children.' 'This reasoning is wrong; for the education of children, far from placing you in the necessity of offending God, offers you, on the contrary, the best means of avoiding sin and destroying it, not only in yourselves, but also in others.' 'Father, since sin is so great an evil, I think the best and surest thing for each one to do is to preserve himself from it, and take, for that purpose, the surest means in his power by being entirely separated from the world, even from the children, since our functions in their regard expose us to several faults which we would avoid by attending to ourselves only.' 'Here again, my dear Brother, you are mistaken; for, to avoid one fault, we should not commit a greater; and this you would do, by not fulfilling the obligations of your vocation, by thinking of yourself alone, by becoming

selfish and wanting in charity towards your neighbour. What would you think of a man who, finding the house on fire, would be content to save his own life and leave his brothers and sisters to perish in the flames, when, by exposing himself a little, he might save them? When some danger threatens us, and when our Brothers are also exposed, it is not enough to ward off the danger from ourselves; Charity demands that we should preserve our Brothers also. Besides, the principal motive that ought to lead us to fly from sin and detest it is its offence against God. Now, sin offends God in all men; so that, if we hate it in ourselves only, and not in our Brothers likewise, if we seek to preserve ourselves alone from it, and if we do not strive to make others avoid it, we not only do not love God, but we detest sin only imperfectly. We avoid it only because of the evils it brings upon us; instead of fearing it, combating it, and avoiding it, because it offends God, and is the cause of the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ.'

Such were the sentiments of our pious Founder concerning venial sin. May the Little Brothers of Mary become thoroughly penetrated with them, and, after the example of their Father, fear sin and fly from it, as from the greatest of evils!





CHAPTER XIV.

FATHER CHAMPAGNAT'S LOVE OF WORK.

MAN is born to labour, says the Holy Ghost, by the mouth of Job, *and the bird to fly*. (Job v, 7). Man is not obliged to labour, simply in consequence of the nature of his being, but also by a special command of God. The Holy Scriptures declare that after creating Adam, God placed him in the terrestrial paradise that he might work in it and keep it. Moreover, after his fall, this law was strengthened by a new Commandment which God gave him ; to eat his bread in the sweat of his brow, and to till the earth by the labour of his hands. Our pious Founder, therefore, by making it a rule for us to labour, has not imposed any new law on his disciples, he merely reminds them of the command which God, by His sovereign authority, has imposed on all men.

But in this, as in all things else, our good Father instructs us by his example, and was the first to practise what he requires of us. Labour was never burdensome to him, and from his childhood he engaged in it with pleasure. We have seen that, while yet at home, he put his hand to all kinds of work, and succeeded in everything. As he was very intelligent, naturally skilful, and worked with ardour and diligence, he formed himself under his father, and still more by his own industry, to the most useful occupations in ordinary life, such as agriculture, masonry, carpentry, etc.

In the early days of the Society, the Father's expertness at these different works was of the utmost utility, as it enabled him, with the help of the Brothers, to do a great many things that would have entailed enormous expense, if it had been necessary to employ tradesmen. With the assistance of the Brothers, he built the house at Lavalla, and a great portion of the buildings at the Hermitage was done in the same manner, as well as the repairs, furnishing of the house, the enclosures, and improvements of the property. His love of work, and still more, his humility, led him to put his hand to everything. To build a wall with the masons, work with the plasterers, lay down a floor with the carpenters, quarry stones with the quarrymen, dig in the garden, clear a field, carry stones, or wheel out manure; it was all the same to him, nothing was beneath him; and in these different works, he was always remarkable both for the quality and the quantity of the work he did. The strongest workmen declared that there was no use in striving to compete with him, for he always did more work than any of them. His example stirred up the most indolent, all worked hard when he was present, and no one would dare to remain idle or refuse an employment, however unpleasant or lowly it might be.

One day one of the quarrymen, who was strong and energetic, and had the reputation of never shrinking from any difficulties, said: 'Father, we have given up the cutting of that rock; it is so hard that we only lose our time at it.' The Father, who wanted the rock to be cut away at all costs, because water oozed out from it against the building, and thus rendered the apartments unhealthy, said to him, jocosely: 'What! you have no more courage than that! I am not surprised you could not cut away the rock, for your strokes would not pierce the sole of my shoe.' Then, turning to another, he said, 'And you, you have no more pluck than a half-drowned chicken.' This sharp raillery, together with his example, soon produced its effect. The workmen, seeing him seize a pick, and strike the rock with such force that pieces flew about in all directions, took up their tools, and began to work with so much energy that, next day, the whole mass of rock had disappeared.

It is unnecessary to remark that he worked less from taste than through necessity, and that manual labour was the least important of his occupations. To study, to instruct and educate his Brothers,

to write his correspondence, to attend to every part of the administration of the Society, to visit the schools, to prepare, to study and meditate the Rules which he intended to give his Community, to receive all kinds of persons who came to transact business with him, to see privately the Brothers and postulants for their direction and personal wants ; such were the occupations that absorbed his time, exhausted his strength, broke down his constitution, and brought him to an early grave.

We may state here what he did to inspire the Brothers with a love of work and an abhorrence of idleness. Independently of the common law which subjects all men to labour, the religious life, being by its nature a life of devotedness, of penance, and mortification, is thereby a life of labour and fatigue. This, Father Champagnat never failed to tell the postulants when he admitted them. The first disposition he required of them was the love of work ; the first trial to which he submitted them was some manual or other occupation ; and he invariably dismissed those who showed a dislike for work, or, as he said, were afraid to hurt their elbows. His conduct in this respect was in perfect harmony with the ancient Founders of Religious Orders, who considered the love of work as an indispensable condition to be received into Religion. St. Jerome, St. Benedict, and Cassian assure us that idleness was a cause of exclusion in all the Communities which existed in their times. Founders of modern Religious Orders have not been less severe on this important point ; and everywhere, the love of labour has been regarded as an indispensable condition for being admitted into Religion.

The object of the Society being the Christian education of children, it naturally follows that study and teaching are the two great occupations of the Brothers. But as the Rule obliges them to attend to their household duties themselves, and as they also require some exercise, they are requested, besides studying and teaching, to apply themselves to domestic labours and garden work, cooking, maintaining order and cleanliness, and doing all that is required in a well regulated house. It was the good Father's wish that all the Brothers and postulants should, as far as possible, serve some time in each of these employments, and learn to discharge them properly and according to

the spirit of the Society. For this purpose he required three things :—

(1.) That each one should receive, with entire submission, the post and employment assigned him, and should not desire any other.

(2.) That he should apply himself, with great earnestness, to the perfect discharge of his duty.

(3.) That he should be constantly occupied and never remain idle. With regard to this last point, it may be remarked, that he did not require much to be done, above all, if the work happened to be laborious ; but he did not allow anyone to lose time, nor to perform his task in a careless manner, nor to sit down to take a rest, while working outside, as such a posture generally indicates laziness or negligence, besides the danger one is exposed to of catching cold, by sitting on the ground.

A Brother, who was somewhat careless but was otherwise a good Religious, had been sent to a field to remove a heap of stones. After carrying some to the place indicated, he sat down on the heap and began to throw the small ones to the spot. Father Champagnat perceiving him from his window, resolved to correct him in a manner that would touch his self-love and lead him to correct a defect of which he had several times ineffectually admonished him. Calling a young Brother to him he said : ‘Take this cushion to the Brother yonder and tell him, I sent it for him to sit on.’ On seeing the cushion and still more on hearing the invitation to sit down upon it, the Brother was covered with confusion ; he resumed his work and did not raise his head till dinner time. But what annoyed him most was the cushion, which he had to carry back to the Father. Circumstances however favoured him so, that he succeeded in leaving it in the Father’s room without being perceived. This good Brother made up his mind never to expose himself again to receive another such lesson, which was exactly what the good Father wanted.

In his instructions, Father Champagnat never ceased to exhort the Brothers to love work and to shun idleness. ‘Labour,’ said he, ‘is indispensable to preserve health of body and purity of soul. It is necessary for man’s physical and moral improvement ; it is necessary even for his happiness. In fact, things are perfected by action, and deteriorated by inaction. Stagnant

water becomes corrupted, unused iron becomes corroded, uncultivated ground becomes covered with weeds and brambles; an untenanted house becomes dilapidated, and falls into decay more than if it were occupied. It is movement, it is action and use, that make all these things proper and useful to man. The Brother who does not care for work, and has an aversion to books, is more imperfect, morally and physically, after ten, twenty, or thirty years in Religion than he was on the first day on which he came to it. His mind is less capable of reflection; his thoughts, his sentiments, and his inclinations are more carnal; his soul has less force and energy, it is less fit to resist temptations and to practise virtue; his body, through want of action, is oppressed by bad humours and infirmities, and cannot endure the slightest labour. Such are the terrible consequences of idleness.'

Once, while the good Father was conversing with a Brother, an insane old man, whom the Brothers kept through charity, passed before them, and, as was his custom, walked about in a childish manner. On seeing him, the Brother said: 'There is one at least who is happy! He has nothing to do.' 'How?' warmly replied the Father, 'you call a man happy because he has nothing to do! O my God! preserve me from such happiness, which I consider a great misfortune.' 'There is no man,' continued he, 'more miserable, or more to be pitied, than one who lives in idleness. Such a man has nothing on earth but animal satisfaction; he is completely ignorant of the happiness and enjoyments of virtue; his life is less than the existence of a brute.' The Brother was taken aback at this answer, and was never again tempted to call those happy who live in idleness.

Father Champagnat often remarked that, even if man were not bound to work by the express command of God, a Brother would be obliged to do so:—

(1.) *To avoid temptation and preserve his virtue.* The Holy Ghost has said: *Idleness is the mother of all vices.* It is the cause and principle of the greatest temptations and the most enormous sins. The devil loses his time in tempting a man who is occupied; but he always succeeds with those who give way to idleness. With regard to this, he related the following story: A saint once heard two devils communicate to each other the result of their evil suggestions to two men. One said: 'I lose my time tempting that brute of a stone-mason; he is constantly bent over his stones;

he is ever busy with his stones, and thinks of nothing but his stones. If I suggest some bad thought to him, his only reply is a stroke of his mallet, so that I have no chance with him. This man will never be a great saint, because he does not act sufficiently from supernatural motives; but he will save his soul, for I shall never succeed in giving him a love for vice.' The other devil answered: 'It is quite the contrary with me. The man whom I have to tempt has nothing to do: I have only to suggest to him, in the morning, the evil I want of him during the day, and he will often do more than I expect of him.' 'Behold,' concluded the Father, 'what happens to those who are idle. A Religious who is prone to this vice, is exposed to the greatest falls; and were he, by a special grace, preserved from committing grievous sins, sloth, which is one of the capital sins, would suffice to make a reprobate of him. Thus the barren tree is cut down and cast into the fire, simply because it is barren; and the unprofitable servant is cast into exterior darkness, although he is accused of no crime but sloth.'

(2.) *To persevere in his vocation.* On this point Father Champagnat said to one of his principal Brothers: 'I am convinced that nearly all the young Brothers who have left the Society, lost their vocation simply because they yielded to sloth; not that this vice was the immediate cause of their leaving, but because it led them to grave faults, and these faults, after giving them a distaste for their vocation, induced them to abandon it. In fact, to my mind, sloth is the greatest enemy of religious vocations; and the faults proceeding from it are the most pernicious of all to young Brothers.'

After this, one can easily understand why the pious Founder attached such importance to keeping the Brothers at work, and why he so frequently recommended the Brothers Directors to keep the young Brothers constantly occupied. 'The Brother in charge of the kitchen,' said he 'should be expeditious with his household duties, so as to be able to spend the greater part of his time in school, helping the other Brothers to teach, and, if there is not a sufficient number of pupils to require his assistance, he ought to go all the same and employ the time in study. The greatest service a Brother Director can render a young Brother is to keep him so busily occupied that he may not have a moment's leisure. If he leaves him to himself,

and allows him to be idle, no matter what his good qualities may be, he is in the greatest danger of going astray. I have known a great number of good subjects, who, to-day, would be excellent Religious, who would be the glory of the Society, but who have lost their vocation, because their Brothers Directors did not keep them occupied and did not train them to virtue.'

(3.) *In order to qualify him for his duties.* 'But of what should a Brother render himself capable?' 'A Brother,' said Father Champagnat, 'should labour to become capable of filling any post—any employment in the Society. He should know how to cook, to cultivate the garden, to teach the little class, to superintend the children, and to fulfil any other employment that may be entrusted to him. To this end, he should have a liking for manual labour and be ever ready to try his hand at all these occupations; he should like study, and apply himself to it with diligence and assiduity. In the novitiate and establishments I often notice things being spoiled or wasted, because they are not taken care of or are not used in a proper manner, and nothing pains me more, on those occasions, than to hear some one say, I cannot do this; I am not used to work in the garden, or to take care of such things; I don't know how to cook, etc. A Brother ought never to be obliged to speak in that manner, for he should learn to do all these things. It is the same as regards study and the subjects we have to teach; we should not rest satisfied with a superficial knowledge of them, we ought to study them thoroughly, until we have a perfect knowledge of them.'

To stimulate the Brothers to study and establish emulation among them, he frequently gave them competitions during the vacations. Moreover, during many years, so long as they were not too numerous, he made them pass a public examination on all the subjects taught in the schools, and he kept a record of the number of marks each one had obtained, so that, the following year, he might be able to judge of the progress he had made. To render it necessary for the Brothers to learn the different kinds of writing, he obliged all those who taught the first and second classes to write their own copies for the pupils, and would not allow them to use lithographed models. He also prescribed that, every year, in coming to the retreat, each Brother should bring at least ten models in his own handwriting; and this, with a view to establish emulation, and test the progress of each.

To give the Brothers Directors a love of work, of order, and exactness, and to train them to the good administration of the temporal affairs of the houses, he not only examined the account books himself, but also established a competition in the proper keeping of these books. A commission formed of the principal Brothers was appointed to examine them under the three heads, regular entries, exactness of the details required by the rules and usages of the Society, good writing. A list was then made out, showing each one's place according to merit, and was handed to Father Champagnat.

In fine, to prevent anyone from neglecting his studies during the year, or postponing till the last months the preparation for the examination, he established quarterly conferences. The subjects to be treated of in these conferences were determined by a circular, and each Brother had not only to study them carefully, but to treat them in writing. He usually presided at these conferences himself, which entailed on him many a long and painful journey ; but nothing daunted him when there was question of inspiring the Brothers with a love of study and of improving their efficiency.

It is unnecessary to add that the study of Religion is the one he recommended most. He wished it to take precedence of all the others, and that the Brothers should devote at least an hour to it every day. 'It would be a disgrace,' said he, 'for a religious teacher not to know Religion sufficiently well ; it would be a real scandal if he were less fit to teach Catechism than to teach other subjects. A Brother cannot, without being guilty, neglect the study of Catechism ; because the fruit of his instructions, will always be in keeping with the care he takes in preparing them. Whence it follows, that to teach Catechism without preparation, is to render it almost useless. To neglect the study of Catechism is a fault which is followed by many terrible consequences. In the first place, it exposes the catechist to have all his life but an imperfect and merely superficial knowledge of Religion ; it is a transgression of the Rule, and a scandal to the Brothers ; it disqualifies the teacher to give religious instruction to the children and to train them efficiently to virtue ; it is to abandon the object of the Society ; it is to render the schools altogether secular ; it is, in a word, to fail in the first and most important duty of the teacher which consists, above all, in giving a Christian education to the children.

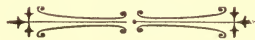
‘Do the Brothers reflect on these terrible consequences, when they neglect the study of Catechism? If they seriously thought of them, they would rarely find any legitimate excuse for omitting it. Some say, they have no time; vain excuse! Since they find time enough to study other subjects, to do many unnecessary things, perhaps even to amuse themselves; then again, there must be time for it, since in their Rule, there is an hour which is specially appointed for it, and which they are not allowed of their own authority to devote to anything else. Others allege, as an excuse, that they have read several times all the Catechisms in their library. The study of Religion does not consist in reading these sorts of books only, but also, in the assiduous reading of ascetic works, of the lives of the Saints, the history of Religion, and in meditating on what you have read.’ On hearing these last words, one of the Brothers asked him, ‘if it would be allowable to employ in reflection and meditation, part of the time appointed for the preparation of Catechism.’ ‘Perfectly allowable,’ answered the Father, ‘and I consider, that he who, after reading a good book during half-an-hour, should spend the other half-hour in reflecting on what he has read, would do well. It is the best way to fathom the subject and to learn how to present it, and make it interesting to the children.’

One day, the good Father asked a Brother to tell him what had been the Saint whose name he bore, and to relate some of the principal events of his life. The Brother, although pious and learned, answered: ‘Excuse me, Father, I must confess, that I do not know the life of my Patron.’ ‘What, Brother!’ exclaimed the Father, ‘you have remained up to this, without reading and meditating the life of the great servant of God whose name you have the happiness to bear. That is a shame for you. What is the use of your bearing the name of a Saint? You might as well have had that of a pagan. Are you not aware that the Church bestows on us the names of Saints, that we may study their lives and imitate their virtues? Again, you who ought to engage your children to read the lives of their Patron Saints and to imitate their virtues, should be the first to do what you have to recommend to them. A Brother,’ added the Father, ‘ought frequently to read the lives of the Saints, not only for his own edification, but also to draw from them suitable examples to

confirm, when occasion offers, the truths of Religion that he has to teach.'

(4.) *Not to trouble the order of the House and not to be a burden to his Brothers.* That peace and charity may reign in a religious house, it is necessary for each one to fulfil in a becoming manner, the employment confided to him. Now, he who does not like labour, discharges his duties badly and prevents others from duly performing theirs. For example, if the Brother Cook has not the meals ready at the proper time, he causes the Brothers to be discontented and exposes them to murmur and complain; he prevents regularity and sets the whole house in disorder. If, through idleness or want of care, he prepares the food badly, or if he wastes things, he may seriously endanger the health of the Brothers, and he will most assuredly compromise the finances; for a bad cook is the ruin of the house. The same may be said of the Brothers engaged in teaching; whoever does not perform his own task, increases that of the others, who are obliged to do what his idleness induces him to neglect.'

In fine, although, during his life, Father Champagnat never ceased to give his Brothers example in regard to work, and seized every opportunity to inspire them with a love for it, although he made the wisest rules to keep the Brothers constantly occupied and to preserve them from sloth, his greatest subject of remorse, at the hour of death, and what he most reproached himself with, was, that he had not been exacting enough with regard to work, that he had not sufficiently recommended the Brothers to avoid idleness. When on his death-bed, he said in a sorrowful tone: 'I have to blame myself for not having kept the Brothers sufficiently at work. Superintend them well on this point, keep them constantly occupied, for no vice does more harm to Religious than that of sloth!' May the Little Brothers of Mary never forget these words of their dying Father, and, like him, may they generously apply themselves to work and have the greatest horror of idleness.





CHAPTER XV.

FATHER CHAMPAGNAT'S LOVE FOR HIS BROTHERS, AND HIS ATTACHMENT TO THEM.

NEVER did a Father more tenderly love his children than Father Champagnat loved his Brothers. His heart, naturally good and full of charity for all men, overflowed with affection for the members of his Society. He loved all his Brothers equally, the young as well as the old, the imperfect like the most virtuous and those who gave him most consolation. None ever went to see him or wrote to him, without receiving some mark of affection; his letters are full of these and similar expressions: 'You know, my dear Brother, that I love you and that I am devoted to you in Jesus Christ. You know how dear you are to me, and how much I feel all your troubles.' Or in writing to the Brothers Directors, he would say, 'Tell your Brothers, that I love them as my children, that I often think of them and continually pray for them.' He wrote to the Brothers of an establishment which he was to visit in a few days; 'I long to see you all, to embrace you, and tell you all my affection for you, in Jesus Christ. Nothing could have given me more pleasure than what you say in your letters, that you are all well and content. Your happiness and contentment will last as long as you are united and love one another.'

In every one of his circular letters he speaks of Charity. His attachment for all the members of the Society is so tenderly

expressed in these letters that we cannot forbear giving a few extracts from them. In January, 1836, he wrote: 'My dear Brothers, it is with the greatest pleasure that I think of you daily and present you all to our Lord in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. But to-day, I cannot repress the urgent desire I feel of testifying to you my paternal tenderness. You are, my dear Brothers, the special objects of all my solicitude; all my thoughts and desires are for your happiness. But you understand, this happiness which I desire for you, is not that which worldlings seek and expect to find in the possession of temporal goods; I desire and ask for you a far greater and more perfect happiness; that of serving God with fervour, of fulfilling all your obligations with great fidelity, of labouring daily to detach yourselves more and more from creatures, to give yourselves entirely to Jesus and Mary, and, in all things, to follow the inspirations of grace. Such are the blessings I wish you. Again, I desire, my dear Brothers, that union and charity, so much recommended by the beloved disciple, should always reign amongst you; that those who have to obey should do so with humility, and that those who command should perform this duty with meekness and charity; it is by this means that the peace and joy of the Holy Ghost will ever abide amongst you. Another thing which I specially ask of God for you, is a great zeal for your perfection; and as it is only by the exact observance of your Rule that you can acquire this perfection, I conjure our Blessed Lord to give you a great love for your Rule and a special grace to observe it in all its points. Courage then! my dear Brothers, the trials and sufferings of life last but a moment, *and are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come that shall be revealed in us.* (Rom. viii, 18). Ever remember the words of our Saviour: *You shall be hated by all men for my name's sake; but he that shall persevere unto the end, he shall be saved.*' (St. Matt. x, 22).

In a letter written on a similar occasion, to the Brothers of an establishment, he said: 'I have no need to tell you that I wish you a happy New Year; for you know that I live only for you. There is no true happiness which I do not ask Almighty God for you every day, and which I am not ready to procure for you, at the cost of the greatest sacrifices.'

But it was not in words only that he showed his love for them, he gave them practical proofs of it by his works. In fact

he was constantly occupied with the spiritual and temporal wants of each one of them. As soon as a Brother appeared before him, his paternal solicitude, at once discovered his wants. When sending anyone to an establishment he always recommended him to provide himself with what was necessary for him, and, when the Brother went to take leave of him and to ask his blessing, the Father never failed to inquire if his outfit was complete.

Once, a number of Brothers went together to take leave of him; as usual he inquired if they had everything they needed; and as they all answered in the affirmative, he noticed a young Brother who was sent out for the first time. 'And you, my young friend,' he said, 'is your outfit quite complete? I am sure you have forgotten something. Let us see, how many pairs of stockings have you?' The paternal care of the good Father had guessed right; the improvident young Brother had not so much as thought of his stockings, and was going away with only the pair he had on his feet.

The good Father frequently recommended the Brothers Directors not to leave the Brothers in want of anything they might require, such as food, clothing, stationery, or anything else, in keeping with their employment, and to supply those things readily, and without obliging the Brothers to ask for them several times.

When he saw any Brother arriving from a journey, in a state of perspiration, he would send him at once to change his linen, to get a warm drink; and he recommended him to avoid cold draughts, and to retire for some time into a warm apartment. A single neglect or imprudence on such occasions, said he, may cause a mortal illness, or produce some tedious infirmity. Once, a number of Brothers arrived on a rainy day during the vacations; as they required to change, the Father sent for the Brother Procurator, who, happening to be out at the time, and having the key of the wardrobe with him, Father Champagnat, impatient to procure comfort for his children, seized a tool, burst open the door of the wardrobe, and supplied them with linen and clothes. Many a time, when some Brothers were leaving for their post, or had just arrived from a journey, if the cook was not ready, he would himself serve them at table.

One day, having given a young Brother a letter of Obedience

for an establishment not far off, the Father opened his desk to give him some money. As he had only two-and-a-half francs in the drawer, the young Brother said : ' I do not want any money, for I can go to the place without spending anything.' ' It is true, my child,' answered the Father, ' but something unforeseen may happen on the way, and I do not want you to be in need and have no means of relief. It is true, we have nothing left, but Providence will not abandon us ;' in saying this, he handed him half of what he had. At bed-time, he was seen going round the apartments, particularly the dormitories, to make sure that all the Brothers had gone to rest, that the windows were closed, and that no one was exposed to danger.

But, if our pious Founder evinced so much kindness towards the Brothers, when they were in good health, his solicitude was greater still, when they were ill. He wished the wants of the sick to be always provided for, before the wants of those in good health, and he spared neither care nor sacrifice to procure whatever was necessary for them. When the house of the Hermitage was built, not finding a suitable place for an infirmary, he had a wing added to it, purposely for the accommodation of the sick. ' I could not feel satisfied,' said he on this occasion, ' so long as we had not suitable apartments to accommodate these good Brothers, who have spent their health and strength in labouring for the children. It is but right and just, that we should pay special attention to them and procure them whatever is necessary to recruit their health, which they have so generously sacrificed for the glory of God and the good of the Society.'

Afterwards, not being quite satisfied with this infirmary, because of its proximity to the river, he had a larger and more commodious one built. He organised a dispensary in it and had it supplied with all the medicines necessary for the sick. He confided the care of this dispensary to one of the senior Brothers whom he had specially trained for this purpose. Several other intelligent, devoted, and charitable Brothers were given him as assistants to serve the sick under his direction ; and, every day, they had to give an account of their patients to the Father. But all this could not satisfy his tender affection for them ; he paid them frequent visits, to make sure that nothing was wanting to them, to console and encourage them, to teach them how to sanctify their sufferings, and when there was occasion for it, to

prepare them to die a happy death. As soon as a Brother fell sick in an establishment, the Father brought him to the infirmary that he might be properly attended to.

One day after the Community had retired to rest, Father Champagnat having gone to see a Brother who was dangerously ill, the Brother, after listening to the words of consolation addressed to him, said: 'Father, I am quite confused at so much goodness on your part, and I confess that it is a great pain for me to give so much trouble to my Brothers, and to cause so much expense to the Community, for which I have done nothing.' 'Oh, Brother!' exclaimed the Father, with animation, 'what a mistake you are under! what a bad thought you have there! A sick member is not a burden to a Community, but rather a subject of benediction. You are more useful to the Society, and you render it greater service in supporting your illness with resignation, than if you were teaching school. It is not any trouble to us to serve you, but a consolation; therefore, banish all such ideas from your mind, should they return again; for I should not be able to sleep to-night if I knew you were troubled in this way.' After this the good Father blessed him, embraced him, and once more advised him to combat such unreasonable thoughts. The sick Brother was extremely touched by these marks of affection, and thenceforth he was entirely cured of his temptation.

The good Father, who loved the Brothers as his children, wished them to love one another as Brothers. In his instructions, in his private intercourse with each of them, in his correspondence, and on all occasions, he never ceased to recommend them to love one another, to edify one another, and to live together in peace and union. 'You well know,' he once wrote to the Brothers of an establishment, 'that I love you all in Jesus Christ; this is why I so earnestly wish you to love one another, as children of the same Father, who is God, of the same Mother, the Church, and in one word, as children of Mary. Could this divine Mother see with indifference, any of us entertain sentiments of ill-will or of antipathy against one of her Brothers, whom she loves perhaps more than she loves us? Oh! I beseech you, let us never cause such a pang of sorrow to her motherly heart!'

To see union and charity reign among the Brothers, was his

greatest delight and consolation. In one of his circular letters, calling the Brothers to the retreat, he wrote : 'How pleasant, how agreeable it is for me to think that, in a few days, I shall have the sweet pleasure when clasping you in my arms, to say with the Psalmist : *Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.* (Ps. cxxxii. 1). It is indeed, very consoling for me, to see you all having but one heart and one soul, forming but one family, seeking only the glory of God, the interests of Religion, and fighting under the same standard—that of His Holy Mother. Farewell, my dear friends, I leave you all in the sacred hearts of Jesus and Mary, centre of love and unity.'

The great desire he had of seeing Charity reign amongst the Brothers rendered him ingenious in devising means and occasions to recommend the practice of it. 'My dearly beloved, my dear Brothers,' he said in a circular letter at the beginning of the New Year, 'let us love one another. On this occasion I cannot find any words more conformable to my inclinations and affections. In fact, if I question my heart, my feelings, the pain I feel at the slightest disgrace that might overtake you, your troubles and anxieties, which are also mine, your misfortunes, which afflict me as much as they afflict you, my twenty years' labour and anxious solicitude, as well as my sincere affection for you ; all these seem to say that I may, without fear, address you in the words which the beloved disciple puts at the head of all his epistles : *My dearly beloved, let us love one another, for Charity is of God.* (1 St John iv, 7). The wishes I daily form for you are quite different from those which worldlings try to express. They wish one another earthly possessions, honours, and pleasures ; and I, my dear Brothers, I daily implore our divine Master at the Holy Altar, to pour down on you his choicest gifts and most abundant blessings, to make you avoid sin, the only evil to be feared, to confirm you in the practice of the virtues most necessary to Religious, and above all, to children of Mary. Finally, I beseech our common Mother to obtain for us all a happy death, so that, after having loved one another here on earth, we may love one another for ever in Heaven.

Father Champagnat's frequent instructions and exhortations on Charity were not fruitless ; he had the consolation, so dear to his fatherly heart, of seeing this virtue reign among the

Brothers; and with it, peace and union which constitute the happiness of Religious Houses. But, desiring that Charity might never cool in the hearts of his children, he, after the example of Jesus Christ, recommends it to them in his Spiritual Testament, as the expression of his last wish; and to render this his last request more sacred, more forcible and pathetic, he expressed it in the form of a prayer, being fully convinced that his loving children could refuse nothing to their dying Father. 'I beseech you, my very dear Brothers,' he said, 'with all the affection of my soul, and by all the affection you have for me, to act so that holy Charity may always abide among you. Love one another as Jesus Christ has loved you. Be of one heart and one mind. May it be said of the Little Brothers of Mary as of the first Christians, "See how they love one another!" This is the most ardent desire of my heart, in the last moment of my life. Yes, my very dear Brothers, attend to the last words of your Father; they are the words of our dearly beloved Saviour: *Love one another.*'

The love which Father Champagnat wished the Brothers to have one for another, ought to be an effective love, and he desired that it should consist principally in four things.

(1.) *In rendering one another service on all occasions*; in taking one another's place in school, in assisting one another in their employments, in communicating to one another the little means that their experience may discover for establishing emulation among their pupils, making themselves loved by the children, and training them more easily to knowledge and piety; in encouraging and consoling one another in their troubles and afflictions, in treating one another with respect and politeness; in a word, in being always ready to oblige one another. 'In the Society,' said he, speaking on this subject, 'it is not only temporal and material things that ought to be in common, but intellectual ones also, such as each one's talents, which should turn to the advantage of all. I say the same as regards the goods of the body, health, and strength, and those of the soul, virtues. The Brother, therefore, who has acquired special knowledge and tact in the art of teaching, or directing others, ought to communicate the same to his fellow-Brothers; and he who is strong and robust, ought to lighten the burden of those who are weakly or in delicate health; in fine, each one should

act in such a manner, that all the spiritual goods that God has bestowed on him, may turn to the advantage of all his Brothers, by praying for them and constantly giving them good example. It is thus, that we should understand and apply this article of the Rule. *The Brothers shall have nothing of their own; everything in the Institute shall be in common.*'

(2.) *In excusing and hiding one another's faults.* On this head, the good Father has left some very wise rules. One of these rules obliges the Brothers Directors to cause the young Brothers to be respected, to maintain their authority, to excuse, as much as possible, the faults they may commit in school; and it expressly forbids them to punish or even reprove a Brother in presence of strangers or the children. Another rule forbids the Brothers to relate anything disedifying that may have happened in the establishments, to communicate to one another the little antipathies they may have felt for certain Brothers, the difficulties they may have had with them; and it also forbids them to communicate to anyone, but the Superior, what they may have perceived contrary to the Rule in the Community or in the conduct of their Brothers.

The reputation of the Brothers was so dear to the good Father, that, with a view to maintain it, he went so far as to forbid anyone to make known to whomsoever the residence of any Brother. 'It may happen,' said he, 'that a Brother does not succeed in one locality, either through want of experience, some peculiarity of character, or because of something else, while he may do perfectly well in another post; it may happen even, that a Brother has to be removed on account of some imprudence or other. Now, if you tell the Parish Priest, or anyone else, where the Brother is removed to, these persons may have intercourse with the authorities, or with some of the people of the locality, in which the Brother is placed; they may publish his defects, or the cause of his removal, and thus produce an unfavourable impression against the Brother and prevent him from succeeding. Consequently, when anyone asks you where such or such a Brother is placed, answer simply, "I cannot tell you."' "

¹⁰⁰ In fine, Father Champagnat would not permit the Brothers to speak to one another of any Brother's shortcomings, nor to speak of anyone, but in a favourable sense. 'It is not less necessary,'

he said, 'to preserve the reputation of the Brothers among the members of the Society than in public. A Religious has even a greater right to the esteem of his Brothers, than to that of externs; for, if he has a bad name in public, he may be consoled by the thought that he enjoys the esteem and confidence of his Brothers; but if he is held in bad repute by his own, by those amongst whom he is obliged to live, the Community life becomes a torture to him; he finds it impossible to support it, unless he is possessed of extraordinary virtue. Besides,' added the Father, 'we are the more obliged to avoid all manner of detraction and backbiting as it is so easy, in speaking of the defects or faults of our Brothers, to render ourselves seriously guilty.

'1. Because a trifle is always magnified into a great fault; at least its gravity is always increased by passing from one to another.

'2. Because a defect or a very slight fault that one makes known, concerning a Brother, may give a bad opinion of him, and prejudice against him those with whom he has to live, destroy their esteem for him, cause dissension and disunion, and be a source of trouble and disorder during a whole year.

'3. Because, such backbiting may engender in the heart of the injured party, such a hatred and aversion to the detractor, that several years may not suffice to remove.

'4. Because one has little or no scruple regarding these faults, which are looked upon as trifles, they are often overlooked in confession, and thus one is exposed to commit sacrilege; for it frequently happens, that certain detractions, certain words against Charity, which are esteemed but slight faults, are in reality mortal sins. Faults against Charity, therefore, in whatever way they are considered, are extremely dangerous, consequently the Brothers ought to avoid them with the greatest care.'

(3.) *In supporting each other.* 'There is no one without his defects,' added the pious Founder, 'some have more, some less, but all have defects. It is therefore certain that no matter how pious and virtuous a Brother may be, he will still have some defects, that will render him disagreeable to others, and such being the case, the best thing to do is to support charitably his defects, as we should wish him to support ours.'

A Brother Director complained of the defects of his Brothers,

saying, that he could neither sympathise with them nor support their way of acting, which displeased him very much. The Father at first tried to cheer him, and suggested the many motives we have for bearing with one another's defects; but, seeing that the Brother would hardly listen to the advice given him, and continued to accuse his Brothers and exaggerate their failings, the Father said: 'My dear friend, you are too severe towards others and too indulgent towards yourself. You see the mote in your Brother's eye, and perceive not the beam in your own. You would wish your Brothers to be perfect and to have only good qualities; whilst you are doing nothing to correct your own defects, and whatever in your conduct displeases them. It has never occurred to you, that there are many things reprehensible in your conduct, that you are the most imperfect Brother in the house, and that it requires great virtue to be able to endure you, or to live in the same house with you. I confess that I have often admired the patience of the Brothers under your direction, and the charity with which they bear with you without complaining. As for myself, I cannot hide from you, that I find so many defects in your character—although I am convinced that you are a good Religious—that I could not agree with you. Be more reasonable, treat these young Brothers with more consideration; but above all, do not forget that they have far more to suffer from you, than you have to suffer from them.'

This Brother, who was very virtuous, but of a harsh and rigid character, acknowledged his error, profited by this wise correction, and henceforward was milder, more charitable, and less exacting; so that peace and union once more reigned in the Community.

(4.) *In admonishing one another charitably on account of their failings and their violations of Rule.* The pious Founder made admonition of faults an article of Rule. This admonition ought to be made every eight days at the Chapter of Faults. After each Brother has accused himself of the exterior faults which he has committed, the Brothers who are present should remind him of his failings, and the faults which these have given rise to, if he has omitted them in his self-accusation. Another way of making this admonition, and one much recommended by Father Champagnat, consisted in one Brother watching specially over the conduct of another, who should have asked him to do so, for

the purpose of charitably pointing out to him all the faults and failings into which he might see him fall. This sort of admonition was practised with much fruit in the beginning of the Society. In fine, a third way of performing this act of charity, consists in the Brothers remarking to one another with cordiality, simplicity, frankness, and as occasion offers, whatever in their conduct, their class, or employment requires to be reformed, particularly anything against the Rule, or that might disedify their neighbour; it consists also in encouraging one another by good example and good advice. 'You see for instance,' said Father Champagnat, 'that a Brother is sad, annoyed, or has difficulty in fulfilling his employment. Do not abandon him to himself; show him that you sympathise with him, console him, encourage him, suggest to him some means to overcome or at least to combat this sadness. You remark another who cannot bear to be reprov'd by his Brother Director, he complains, he murmurs, and censures the manner in which he is treated; tell him in a friendly manner that he is wrong, that the Brother Director is right and merely does his duty; show him the gravity and the evil consequences of his fault, exhort him to submit and to correct himself. An admonition given in this way cannot but have a good effect; it is generally the most effectual means of bringing a Brother back to his duty and renewing his good dispositions.

Moreover, in such cases, admonition is not only of counsel, it is of obligation, and he who should fail in this duty, might sometimes render himself very guilty, particularly, if he took the part of the Brother who has been reprimanded; for then, besides destroying the work of the Superior and nullifying the correction, he would be encouraging the Brother in his obstinacy and insubordination. On such occasions, it happens sometimes that certain Religious, who are too indulgent or too narrow-minded, say: 'This Brother is treated with too much harshness; he is not so guilty as he is represented to be; there should be more consideration for the weak.' I answer such Religious: 'Why do you judge your Superior? Why do you accuse him of harshness? Do you think you are more enlightened than he is? Who has told you that this Brother is not in the wrong? Is it to be

indulgent to allow a sick person to die through yielding to his caprices and permitting him to do what is injurious to him? If you had the spirit of zeal, you would understand that, to fight against sin, to correct the guilty, is to be good and indulgent, and that, to act otherwise, is to be wanting in charity. By supporting this Brother, by approving or by excusing his conduct, you do more harm than he does. He who hinders a wound from being dressed, becomes more guilty than he who made the wound. One does not always kill by wounding; but by preventing the healing of the wound one causes death. This Brother, whose faults you excuse, and whose passions you flatter, will perish, because you have not had the charity to correct him, nor to allow his Superior to correct him. Moreover, your fault suffices to destroy the peace and concord which ought to reign in a Community, to introduce a bad spirit into it, to ruin the authority of the Superior, and to paralyse all his efforts for the good of the Community.

Father Champagnat very strongly condemned another abuse, which consists in taking offence at an admonition given by another Brother, or in receiving with a bad grace a reprimand from the Superior: 'This defect,' said he, 'is entirely opposed to the religious spirit, it is an unmistakable proof of the spirit of pride. He who cannot bear to be reprimanded, never corrects his defects, he performs his employment imperfectly, and, as a rule, fulfils it badly. A Brother who requires to be humoured, who cannot bear a remark, will be a very imperfect Religious, a subject of embarrassment to the Superior, and a troublesome member who will cause the whole body to suffer. To fear admonition, is an infallible mark of pride or want of sense. To appreciate correction, from whatever part it comes, is a certain proof of sound judgment and solid virtue.'





CHAPTER XVI.

WITH WHAT CARE FATHER CHAMPAGNAT CORRECTED HIS
BROTHERS' DEFECTS AND TRAINED THEM TO VIRTUE.

It was, above all, in correcting his children's defects and training them to virtue that Father Champagnat showed the love he bore them. As he had a profound knowledge of the human heart, and knew that man, in consequence of original sin, is subject to all sorts of defects, and carries within him the principle of every vice, he was not surprised at the faults of his Brothers, and he would often say: 'It is natural for man to fall, and if God withdrew His Grace from us and abandoned us to ourselves, we might commit all sorts of crimes.' Like a kind physician whose compassion is excited by the sufferings of his patients, the good Father was deeply moved, but never irritated, by the faults of his Brothers. He was sometimes seen to reprove certain Brothers with great firmness; but he never displayed any passion or angry feelings towards the guilty. He did not approve those who began the correction by upbraiding the culprit with his fault, but he would endeavour, first of all, to insinuate himself into his good graces, to gain his love and confidence, and make him acknowledge his fault; then he would kindly give him the means of correcting himself.

His corrections were usually given in the form of advice; and consisted in making known, with simplicity, in an open frank

manner, what was to be done, or avoided. When the first admonition produced no effect, he repeated it in the same manner and without ever exhibiting any ill-humour. A Brother Director, having received badly a correction given him with great meekness, the Father wrote to him: 'My dear friend, if you wish me to correct you of your faults, you must not take offence at it; for it is not by either of us losing our temper that we shall succeed in correcting you, but by practising humility, patience and charity.'

He had a supreme dislike for a scolding disposition, and he was never known to be guilty of this fault. When the correction was given, he forgot the fault; and if the guilty party happened to mention it to him again, he would say: 'All right, my dear friend, all right, I have forgotten your fault; don't think of it any more, but only try to do better in future.' If he caught anyone in fault he only cast a reproving look at him, or blamed his conduct in a few words. Once, on entering the kitchen, he found the Brother in charge of it mounted on the stove, and declaiming some drollery to the Brothers who were listening to him. By way of correction, the Father simply said: 'Most edifying, indeed, in a Brother who should give good example!' 'This short reprimand,' said the Brother afterwards, 'fell upon me like a thunder-bolt, and made a greater impression on me than half-an-hour's scolding could have done; it effectually corrected me of the levity to which I was naturally inclined.'

On another occasion, a young Brother who had many good qualities, but who was somewhat giddy, meeting the Father one evening at the foot of the stair, and taking him for a Brother, jumped on his back, saying: 'Not a word now, but carry me up.' The Father did not say a word, but carried him up, and the Brother did not perceive his mistake until he saw him go to his room and enter it. Then he blushed for his fault, and had no doubt that it would bring down on him a heavy penance. During two or three days, the Father left him in this state of suspense; then sending for him, and seeing him confused and downcast, said to him in a severe but paternal tone of voice: 'How long are you going to remain a child? Are you come here to distract the Brothers and disturb the house? That will do for this time. I will give you a year to correct yourself completely of your levity. Be very careful to combat this defect, if

you wish me to forget your past nonsense ; if you do not, I warn you that *you owe me.*'

On finding another Brother in fault, the Father simply said the same words, *you owe me.* 'It is true,' answered the Brother, 'but I promise never to be under the obligation of paying you.' 'That is all I want,' said the Father, 'see that you keep your word.' To understand this expression, it is necessary to know that the good Father had for principle, to pardon the first two faults, and to punish only the third one. Hence this expression so familiar to him. 'The first fault I pardon ; the second, you owe me ; the third, you pay me.' The Brother to whom he said, you owe me, had therefore committed his second fault ; and in promising never to pay, he promised never again to be guilty.

Even in the greatest and most severe corrections, he was ever kind and indulgent. After fully showing the culprit the gravity of his fault, he encouraged him, spoke to him of his good qualities, and indicated the means he should take to develop them and make them turn to the correction of his defects. 'Man is so weak,' he would say, 'that it is dangerous to show him only his frailty and the dark side of his soul. To raise him up and give him strength to combat his bad inclinations, it is necessary to speak to him of his good qualities and the virtuous dispositions which Providence has placed in him, to teach him how to cultivate these, and make him understand that they are given him as a remedy for his defects. He was careful also to take into account the aggravating or extenuating circumstances that might accompany a fault, such as the occasion, the age and character of the guilty person. Generally he was extremely indulgent towards the young, provided they were animated with good sentiments and gave proof of good will.

To a Brother Director who somewhat exaggerated the defects of his inferiors, he answered : 'He who can see only the defects of his neighbour, has not the spirit of Jesus Christ. To be just, it is necessary to take cognisance of his virtues and good qualities. Is it not a most edifying and consoling thing, to see more than three hundred young men pass whole years without deviating from the path of duty, and without, as it would appear, committing any grave faults ? Amongst so many Brothers, there are undoubtedly some whose conduct is more or less reprehensible ; but if these Brothers are imperfect, if they commit faults in

Religion, where they are sheltered from all dangerous occasions, they would commit far more had they remained in the world. Let us not be too exacting and let us make some allowance for human frailty, and be careful not to demand of them, through an ill-regulated zeal, a degree of perfection altogether beyond their age and capacity.'

Another Brother Director having expressed to him the great pain he felt at seeing the Brothers of his establishment wanting in piety, the good Father took advantage of this communication to give publicly the following instruction to all the Brothers Directors: 'My dear Brothers, be not surprised if Brothers of from fifteen to twenty years of age, have not in their exercises of piety, the fervour and devotion that you have. This age is the most critical period of life; it is the time at which the passions begin to make themselves felt, and begin to wage that cruel war against man, which ends only at death. During this time, the soul, drawn on one side by sensual pleasure, and borne down on the other by the weight of its miseries, and the combats which it is obliged to sustain, has no relish for piety. The holiest things make no impression on it, and the most terrible truths hardly suffice to arouse it from its lethargy and restrain its evil inclinations. At this age, all men pay a sad tribute, and even those who are naturally good and pious feel very little the unction of grace and piety. This is why, instead of complaining of the want of fervour and devotion of those who pass through this period of life, you should compassionate them, pray for them, treat them with kindness, encourage them, for it might happen that, through a misplaced severity, you would cause them to leave the path of virtue, to throw themselves into the ways of vice and to abandon their vocation. Four things are indispensable to carry these Brothers safely through this time of trial, and to preserve their vocation.

'1. *Make them pray.* But I hear you say, that is exactly what they will not do, and of what we complain. I answer, it is because they have either lost their relish for prayer, or find it very difficult to apply themselves to it, that it is necessary for them, and you should take every possible means which your zeal may suggest to make them assiduous in this holy exercise. Give them good advice, engage them to read works calculated to inspire them with sentiments of virtue and love of their state;

ask them frequently an account of their meditations ; suggest to them to make novenas to the Blessed Virgin, to obtain the gift of prayer, and above all, see that they perform all the exercises of piety prescribed by the Rule.

‘ 2. *Keep them constantly occupied.* Idleness is dangerous to all men ; but to the young, it is a sure cause of temptations and of sin. Consequently, a Brother Director who causes silence to be observed, who insists on making the Brothers study according to Rule, who requires each one to fulfil his employment diligently and zealously, prevents numerous sins every day ; he preserves the Brothers from many dangers and temptations, and renders them the most signal service.

‘ 3. *Encourage them.* At every age, man needs to be encouraged and fortified ; but such help is indispensable above all to young people, because being without experience, the slightest difficulty keeps them back or makes them abandon their good resolutions. As their convictions are not settled, and their imagination is very lively, they easily allow themselves to be persuaded, and follow almost without resistance the impulse they receive. If they be well directed, if they receive good advice and encouragement, they take the right path with a sure step. But if they be left to themselves, and still more, if one be imprudent enough to tell them or to let them believe that the practice of virtue is hard and difficult, that they are not fit for it, or that they are wanting in aptitude for their state or employment, this suffices to discourage them, to make them throw up everything and run blindly into the ways of vice.

‘ 4. *Make them observe the Rule.* The observance of the Rule procures many graces, and wards off great dangers. The little victories which a young Brother gains over himself in observing his Rule, prepares him for great struggles, great acts of virtue ; for, according to the words of Holy Writ : *He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in that which is greater.* (St. Luke xvi, 10). He, on the contrary, who violates the Rule, who follows his own will in the details of his conduct, will be weak on great occasions, and will readily yield to evil temptations. How many Brothers have I not heard say : I cannot resist temptations, if I transgress the Rule. I was miserable, I was overcome, because we violate the Rule, because we do not

rise at the appointed hour, because we do not perform our exercises of piety at the proper time. Oh! how guilty is the Brother Director who neglects the Rule! The slight transgressions, which he takes for trifles, may become the cause of serious faults of which he will have to render an account to God. The Brothers Directors, who have truly the spirit of their state, understand these truths; they employ the means that I have pointed out, and have the consolation of being useful to the young Brothers, of maintaining them in piety, and preserving them in their vocation.'

But the most admirable feature in the conduct of Father Champagnat, is that he was as firm as he was indulgent; but his firmness and indulgence were not so much the result of character and temperament, as the gifts of grace and acquired virtues. He was kind and indulgent, because he was filled with the spirit of Jesus Christ, and this spirit, which guided him in all things, gave him a good and energetic character which caused him to be loved, respected, and feared, at the same time. Moreover, he confessed that, of all the duties of a Superior, correction is the most difficult. 'To discharge it well,' said he, 'requires a great spirit of abnegation and careful avoidance of four defects, which are: a habit of scolding, sulking, hastiness, and weakness of character or weak indulgence. These four defects have the most fatal consequences in a Brother Director:—

'The habit of scolding makes him lose the esteem of his Brothers, provokes murmuring, and is certain to create a bad spirit in the Community. In a Brother who is teaching, this same defect ruins discipline in the school, causes the children to contract a harsh, fretful, unsociable character, and inspires them with a secret aversion for the master and the school.

'An affected silence or sulking, which is a proof of weakness, ruins authority, kills the respect and confidence due to the Superiors, renders inferiors insolent, and leads them to insubordination.

'Hastiness, like hailstorms, inspires terror, keeps inferiors in dread and continual apprehension.

'Weakness of character or soft condescension leads to the toleration of abuses, excuses defects, opens the door to every irregularity, and renders the Superior guilty of all the evil committed in the house or in the school.'

The pious Founder possessed in an eminent degree this spirit of abnegation of which he speaks, and this is why his admonitions and corrections were always accompanied with mildness, firmness, charity, and indulgence. However, with the senior Brothers and those who had more solid virtue, he had less consideration, and he pursued their defects to the last stronghold of self-love. If he perceived that a Brother was vain of his talents, the Father humbled him publicly, sent him to cook, or gave him a low class to teach, or put him to some manual employment. If he saw Brothers losing the spirit of piety, or becoming passionately fond of study, he forbade them all secular study, and confined them to that of Catechism. If it happened that a Brother obtained great success and was too much applauded, the Father, without notice, would remove him and place him elsewhere.

A Brother Director having come to spend the Thursday (which is the usual school holiday in France), at the Hermitage, was sent to work in the garden. After working for some time, the day being cold and snowy, the Brother left off work without permission, went to the stable and began to talk to a young Brother. At dinner time, and after grace had been said, the Father who had heard of the fault, publicly reprehended him, and ordered him to take his soup kneeling in the middle of the refectory. The good Brother received this penance in so religious a spirit, and performed it with so much humility, modesty, and simplicity, that a secular priest who was dining with the Father, was exceedingly edified at it. On returning to his parish, this priest related to some young men whom he brought together on Sundays, what he had witnessed, and they also were edified at it, so much so, that two of them resolved there and then to join the Brothers; they carried out their resolution and became excellent Religious.

When the defects or the faults committed were the result of superficiality of character, of an erroneous judgment, or were of a nature to scandalise the Brothers, he showed himself firm, and sometimes even severe. A young Brother had retained too great an attachment for his parents. In the beginning, the Father had simply given him some good advice to enable him to overcome this inclination; but, having learned that this Brother whom he had sent to an establishment to relieve a sick Brother, had gone without permission to see his mother, the Father sent

for him and dismissed him. One of the senior Brothers being of opinion that this course was a little too severe, was answered by the Father thus : ' A Brother who loves his father or his mother more than his Rule and duty, is a Religious in appearance only. We shall always have too many of this sort of men ; and when they are known to be such, they cannot be too soon dispensed with.'

A postulant who was affectedly neat in his dress, and who, notwithstanding the observations of the Master of Novices had retained certain worldly manners, was reprehended two or three times by Father Champagnat himself ; but seeing that he did nothing to get rid of these ways, the Father sent for him, and told him that the following day he would have to go home. As the postulant began to remonstrate, the Father added, ' You may go, and take with you all these worldly manners, we want none of them here.'

A Brother, on the pretext that he had charge of the horse, and was often away from home, laid up a little store of provisions which he kept in a trunk to be used on his journeys. The Father having been informed of the fault, sent for the Brother and dismissed him that same day. At the council in which the dismissal of this Brother was decided, he said : ' He who is prone to concealment, who does not live like the others, and seeks to gratify his appetite is not made for Community life ; the religious vocation demands an upright and mortified soul, one that loves the common life.'

The pious Founder did not rest satisfied with correcting the Brothers of their faults and imperfections ; he laboured unceasingly to make them advance in virtue ; and his great aim was to render them daily more pious, more humble, more mortified, more detached from creatures and from their own wills, and more faithful to their Rule. He was anxious to see them possessed of solid virtues, and this is why, in his instructions, he insisted with ever increasing emphasis on humility, poverty, mortification and the other virtues which divest man of himself, and of all the faults that lie hidden in the recesses of the heart ; such as self-will, vanity, love of ease, and everything that flatters nature. He had a rare talent for discerning and unmasking these sorts of defects and inspiring others with a horror of them.

He had also a special tact for making virtue loved, for

inducing young people to embrace it, and make generous efforts to acquire it. Knowing that all souls are not called to the same degree of perfection, nor conducted by the same way, and that the best means to make them advance, is to second the grace of God and direct each one according to his own personal attraction, the good Father required of each only the perfection which was in keeping with the degree of grace and dispositions he perceived in him. His method was to ask little at first, to make his disciples advance step by step along the road to perfection; but he would not suffer them to stop short, and much less to go back. 'Go slowly,' said he to those who, borne onward by a passing fervour, wished to undertake too much at a time, or who aimed at things above their strength; 'for virtue does not consist in promising much, or undertaking great things, but in being faithful to our ordinary duties.'

A Brother having submitted to Father Champagnat a long list of resolutions which he had taken during the retreat, after reading them the Father said to him: 'What would you think of a child who would undertake to carry a load which a man in the prime of life could scarcely move? This is exactly what you pretend to do, at least according to this. You may put aside three-fourths of these resolutions, and if you keep the rest well they will suffice to make you a good Religious.'

He took the greatest care to maintain fervour and regularity among the Brothers by exercising their virtue and sometimes putting it to the test. A Brother who was somewhat inclined to vanity, had great talents, and was not wanting in pious dispositions, went to Father Champagnat, one day, and asked permission to buy a treatise on geometry. 'No,' said the Father, 'for I want you to study a science that is far more necessary for you than geometry,—this science is humility.' At the same time taking from his library a work entitled, *Contempt of Oneself*,' he added: 'This book will help you to learn it; you will be careful to read it, to study it, and meditate it all this year. At the retreat you will give me a written summary of this book, as also an account of your progress in the knowledge of yourself and in the practice of humility.' This study and meditation were not useless to the Brother; and the Father had good reason to be satisfied with the efforts he had made to combat pride and to acquire humility. But to complete such a good beginning, and

still further to exercise the Brother's virtue, he did not lose sight of him, and having learned that, during a recreation, he had spoken in a boastful manner of his success in teaching during the year, the Father sent for him and said to him : ' I now give you charge of the scullery and the washing of the dishes ; this employment will suit you perfectly, and it would do you good to keep it the whole year ; I will try to leave you there as long as I can. Be careful to keep all the kitchen utensils in a state of perfect cleanliness, and not to break anything.' Although this Brother was Director, the Father left him to work in the scullery during the two months' vacations.

Another Brother Director, whose obedience the Father wished to put to the test, was working in the garden, when the Brother who had charge of the stable went to him and said : ' Follow me ; the Father wants you.' Both arriving together in front of the privy, the Brother added, ' The Father wants you to go down into the pit and pull out the dead calf that was thrown into it two days ago. When you get it out, I shall help you to drag it down to the river.' When the Director was down in the pit and had taken hold of the dead animal, the Brother shouted down to him : ' Stop ; that will do. I was told not to let you do anything more.'

Two days afterwards, the Father sent for the same Brother Director and said to him : ' You know that we are numerous and that we are in want of a good cook ; it strikes me that you are well qualified for this employment. I give you charge therefore of the kitchen and of everything connected therewith. Be careful to put all things in good order and keep everything clean and tidy.' He was left in this post during the two months' vacations ; not through necessity, but to exercise his humility, his mortification, and his obedience. A few days after this the Father having met the Brother asked him what he was thinking of since he had charge of the kitchen. ' Indeed, Father,' answered the Brother, ' I am so busy, from morning till night, that I have no time to think of anything but what concerns my employment. Besides, I know that I do the will of God when I do yours and that suffices for me ; I do not need to think at all.' The Father was very much edified at this answer. It encouraged him to subject his disciple to another trial. Knowing that he was very much esteemed in the parish in which he taught, and, fearing lest he might become attached to it, the Father made it

appear as if he would remove him during the same vacation. He was actually appointed to another post in which everything was to be begun, and consequently in which there was much to be endured. To know his feelings on the subject and to make sure whether he would allow any complaint to escape him, the Father himself and some of the Brothers watched him during several days. The Brother having gone to the Father to arrange about his new post, the Father asked him if he did not regret leaving the establishment in which he was so well off? 'Father,' answered the Brother, 'I cannot deny that I like very much the post from which you have removed me; but I like nothing more than to obey and do the will of God.' 'Very well,' answered the Father, in that case you may return to your old post, for I have changed my mind on the subject.'

The pious Founder desiring to test the obedience of another Brother Director, and to judge of his docility and good spirit at a time when he succeeded best, and was highly praised by the authorities, sent a Brother to him with the following letter: 'My dear friend, start at once and follow the bearer of this letter. You will not tell anyone, not even the Parish Priest, that you are going away. You are not to inquire what your post or employment will be; but abandon yourself entirely to obedience.' The Brother obeyed these instructions to the very letter, and without saying a word he followed his conductor, who told him his destination only when they reached it, after two days' journey. His occupation was to teach an advanced class under the direction of another Brother, so that he was placed under the yoke of obedience, after having been Director for more than ten years. Two months afterwards, one of the Brothers wishing to know his feelings regarding his new position, said to him: 'It is said that you were greatly mortified at your change, that you find your present position exceedingly painful, and that it needs all your virtue to bear up against it,' to which he answered: 'Let them say what they like, let people talk as much as they please, but don't you believe all you hear.' 'Now, tell me frankly how you felt when you were removed, and what you think of your new post.' 'Since you are so anxious to know it, I will tell you: 'From the day on which I was relieved of the trouble and responsibility of the directorship, I have recited the *Te Deum* every night to thank God for having bestowed on me so great a

favour, and I am so happy in the state of dependence in which I am now placed, that I wish and pray that God may leave me in it all my life. There are men, even among Religious, who do not understand the duties of a Brother Director, and know nothing of the happiness and advantages of obedience—that is why they spread reports to which a good Religious should pay no attention.'

We could relate a great number of similar facts, but these will suffice to show the deep religious spirit of the first Brothers, and how carefully Father Champagnat exercised their virtue, and tried to strengthen and develop it by submitting them to all sorts of trials.





CHAPTER XVII.

FATHER CHAMPAGNAT'S CAREFULNESS IN TRAINING THE BROTHERS DIRECTORS.

THE task of the pious Founder would have been much easier, if he had had to train ordinary Religious only ; but by the nature of their Society and the object of their vocation, the Brothers having almost all to be Superiors, for all, or nearly all, have either Brothers or children to superintend, to direct, and to educate, it was necessary to inspire them all with the requisite qualifications for the proper discharge of so sublime and so difficult a ministry.

In truth, there is nothing so important as the guidance of souls, which caused St. Gregory to say that the governing of men is the art of arts and the science of sciences. 'If there are difficulties in obeying,' adds this holy doctor, 'there are incomparably more in commanding ; and the difficulties are all the greater, when there is question of governing a Community, for in this case, it is not enough to guide the Religious in the exercise of a moral, upright, and courteous life, but it is necessary to lead them to God, and to the highest perfection.' A Community, and, to some extent, the same may be said of a school, is a moral body, of which the Superior is the head and the inferiors are the members. And in the same way that the head communicates its good or its evil influences to the body, so does the Superior of a house, communicate his spirit, his dispositions,

his vices or his virtues to his inferiors; this caused the Holy Fathers to say: 'Ordinarily, as is the Superior so is the Community.' St. Vincent de Paul said: 'The defects to be found in a Community arise, ordinarily, through the negligence of the Superior, and the virtues and good conduct of the members depend on the regularity and wise government of those who direct them.'

Causes usually produce their natural effects. A rose bush produces roses, and an acorn produces an oak. If the Superior be actuated by human motives only, those who listen to him and strive to imitate him will likewise become purely human; whatever he may say or do, he will give them the appearance of virtue, but not the reality. He will communicate his own spirit to them, just as masters impart their peculiarities to their disciples. When a Superior is filled with the Spirit of God, his actions are so many silent instructions which produce good fruit; his words are always effective; and a virtue goes out from him which edifies his inferiors, and renders them better without their perceiving it.' In a word, the Superior is to the Community what the graft is to the tree on which it is engrafted. If the graft is of a good kind, of a good quality, the tree will bear excellent fruit; on the contrary, if the graft is of a degenerate or wild nature, the tree will produce only wild fruit.

The Superior forms his disciples to his own image and likeness. His faults are always imitated—their contagion spreads like a conflagration; they are, as it were, so many original sins which are contracted by all those who witness them. A Superior is the mirror of his Community, and the Community is the echo and the picture of the Superior's conduct; and just as the defeat or the victory in a battle is attributed to the general who commands, so, in like manner, the vices or the virtues of a Community may be ascribed to the defects or good qualities of the Superior.

These maxims were often heard from the lips of Father Champagnat, and he was so thoroughly convinced of the truth of them that he declared the success of the Society to be altogether in the hands of the Brothers Directors. After this we need not wonder that he was so cautious, we might say, even severe in the choice of the Brothers Directors, and that he considered it one of his principal duties to train them for the proper direction of schools and the government of the houses.

To succeed in this difficult task, he employed the three following means :—

(1.) During the two months' vacation time, he gave the Brothers Directors frequent conferences on the direction of houses, the administration of temporal affairs, and school management. In these conferences he entered into the most minute details of the virtues necessary for a good Superior, and the means of acquiring them, the obligations of a teacher, of a Brother Director, and the manner of fulfilling these obligations. At the close of one of these instructions, a Brother Director said to him : ' Father, since the obligations of a Superior are such, there is no advantage in being Director ; and I beg of you to relieve me from this charge, the responsibility of which frightens me.'

' Brother,' answered the Father, ' when God gives us an employment through obedience, he at the same time, imparts to us all the helps and all the graces we need to fulfil it properly ; so that the obligations of our state, far from being an obstacle to our salvation, are, on the contrary, a means of perfection, and an occasion of practising great virtues, if we correspond with the grace given us. To refuse an employment imposed on us by God, is not the way to escape the dangers that threaten our salvation, it is rather exposing ourselves to the greatest of all perils, by withdrawing ourselves from the guidance of Providence, and neglecting the gifts and graces that God sends us. It is running the greatest risk of being condemned like the faithless servant who hid his talent. What would have been the consequence if St. Francis Xavier, under pretext that his mission exposed him to great dangers, had refused to obey the voice of God calling him to the Indies ? This saint would have been accountable to the Sovereign Judge for all the souls who became indebted to him for their salvation and who, without him, would have remained enveloped in the shades of death. St. Francis Xavier was so convinced of this truth, that he said he believed he could not have escaped hell had he refused to preach the Gospel in Japan. It is not our office, therefore, which is the danger to us, but our infidelity to grace ; and he who refuses an office imposed on him by God, assumes the greatest and most terrible of all responsibilities.'

In these conferences the pious Founder allowed the Brothers full liberty to state their difficulties, submit their doubts and

everything that embarrassed them in the discharge of their duties. The Brothers freely used this privilege, and each one made his observations, expressed his opinions concerning questions of administration or the government of the houses, and asked what was the mode of acting, most conformable to the Rule and the spirit of the Institute, in the many various circumstances in which a Brother Director may find himself.

(2.) He often admitted the principal Brothers to his Council, and hardly did anything of importance without having their opinions. He considered that, to initiate the Brothers into the affairs of the Society, to consult them on the Rules he was drawing up, and the mode of teaching which he was to adopt, was a sure means of training their minds, rectifying their ideas, developing their judgment, giving them experience, teaching them to judge, to appreciate things, and to treat matters afterwards with intelligence and success.

Sometimes, after having debated in Council the advantages and inconveniences of some measure, he would confide its execution to one of the Brothers, leaving it to his judgment to transact it for the best. But once the Brother's task was finished, the Father required an account of the manner in which he performed it, praising and approving what he considered well done, pointing out what means should have been adopted to obviate difficulties, overcome obstacles, and smooth down differences; at other times he would simply say, if such or such means had been employed, one would have succeeded better.

(3.) He had frequent intercourse with each Brother Director, to make him render an account of his administration, of the difficulties which he experienced with the Brothers, with the authorities, with the children, or with the parents; on these occasions, he either praised or blamed the Brother's conduct, according to circumstances, and showed him how to act on future similar occasions. In these private conversations, he required great frankness. 'It is not,' said he, 'in concealing your faults and imprudences, that you can be trained or can acquire experience, but in submitting with simplicity your actions to those whose right and duty it is to judge them. In Community, he who dreads control, and is offended at being reprimanded and directed, renders himself incapable of administering affairs, or of directing the Brothers; moreover, he places himself in a position where it

is impossible for him to properly fulfil any employment, and he becomes good for nothing. Man's eyesight, however excellent it may be, is very weak and circumscribed, but with the aid of optical instruments, it searches the depths of space ; in the same way, no matter how great the light and intelligence of a Brother may be, if he is left to himself and his own weak reason, he will see things but imperfectly, and will take a narrow view of them ; he will never be fit for a position of trust, and he will not do the good which God requires of him.'

During the course of the year, each Brother Director had to write to Father Champagnat at least every two months, to give an account of the house, of the Brothers' conduct, of the state of the schools, and to ask advice and instructions how to act in particular cases which had not been foreseen. In fine, to all these means which he took to form the Brothers Directors, he joined fervent prayers, to ask of God suitable men for this important office. It was his often expressed intention that the special object of the daily recitation of the Office of the Blessed Virgin, and the Thursday's Communion, should be to obtain from God good Directors and worthy Superiors.

A good spirit, great devotedness to the Society, much skill in the management of affairs, love of order and economy, fidelity to Rule, true piety, and above all, charity, humility, and prudence, were the qualities and virtues that Father Champagnat required in a Brother, before giving him charge of others. Ability and talents, if not accompanied by these virtues, in a degree at least sufficient to insure the good direction of a house, were not taken into consideration. It often happened that very learned Brothers were not Directors, and occupied but the lowest places in the Community, a state of things which sometimes astonished the public, who judge of things only from exterior appearances. In one parish, the local authorities, after visiting the school, which was in a flourishing state, said on going away : ' One cannot understand the organisation of these Brothers ; they act so differently from other people. The cleverest Brother teaches the infant school, and the one who appears to know least directs the whole Community.' And such was indeed the case, but it did not prevent the school from prospering, for the Brother Director, with but moderate advantages of education, had all the qualities

requisite for the management of the school and the direction of the Brothers.

Although, as a rule, the pious Founder entrusted the direction of the houses only to men of ripe years, still he was not always guided in his choice by age alone. As someone appeared surprised, one day, that he confided the direction of an important establishment to a young Brother:

‘There are,’ said the Father, ‘young men with old heads; and there are old men who will be children all their lives. This Brother although young, has all the essential qualities of a good Director; wisdom, prudence, and judgment. He is therefore more competent to command than many others who are much older than he.’

However, he appointed as Directors only professed Brothers; that is, Religious who had spent a number of years in the Society, who had had time to take its spirit and acquire virtue and experience. ‘Profession,’ said he, speaking on this subject, ‘is a necessary qualification for the post of Director.

‘1. Because it is befitting that the Brothers should be directed, guided, and trained, by a perpetual member of the Society, and not by a stranger or a novice.

‘2. Because Profession may be considered as a proof that one possesses the virtues of a good Religious, and the necessary qualities to be a member of the Society, and to fulfil the end which it proposes.

‘3. Because the direction of souls and the sanctification of children are the work of the Cross—a work which can be done only by the Cross.

‘The functions of a Director, therefore, require Religious marked with the Cross; that is to say, men of sacrifice, men who are devoted and mortified, who know the mystery of the Cross. Now, to know the mystery of the Cross, is to be thoroughly convinced that the works of God are all marked with that sacred sign; it is to look upon the Cross as a mark of success, as the most efficacious means of succeeding in the functions of Catechist to the children and Director of the Brothers. It is impossible to do good without being opposed by the devil and the world. Crosses and afflictions are the necessary portion of those who do the work of God, and labour successfully for the salvation of souls. He, therefore, who fears contradictions, trials, and

persecutions, who is disheartened and disconcerted by the obstacles he meets with, who is hindered and discouraged by the least difficulties, knows not the mystery of the Cross, and is unfit for the post of Director.'

To fulfil any employment in a becoming manner, it is necessary to have a correct idea of the obligations which it imposes. Unfortunately, it is not rare to find persons whose duty it is to direct others, and who are labouring under strange illusions as to the authority with which they are invested, who see in their position only their personal advantage, and an occasion for self-love. Another thing, not less surprising, is to find men sometimes aspiring after superiority. Alas! what blindness! They must be wholly devoid of virtue and the religious spirit to allow such aspirations to enter their breasts. The desire of being Superior is ordinarily a proof that one is not fitted for such a position, and that he knows nothing of the duties and responsibilities of it. It is of such Religious that Father Champagnat spoke in a conference when he said: 'There are Brothers Directors who make their authority consist in teaching the advanced class, in carrying the purse, in taking for themselves what is best in the establishment, in procuring for themselves a thousand trifles and unnecessary things, in making acquaintances in the world and taking all sorts of liberties, in requiring mean services from their Brothers, and sometimes tyrannising over them. How contemptible are such Directors! The Brothers placed under them are really to be pitied. It would need only a few such men to open the door to the most dangerous abuses, to destroy the religious spirit in our houses, to subvert order and ruin the Communities that might have the misfortune to be confided to them. God preserve us from ever entrusting a single one of our establishments to a Brother of this description, to one who would be capable of such conduct.'

The pious Founder having stopped a moment after uttering these words with great force and energy, one of the senior Brothers rose and said: 'Father, everyone feels the truth of what you say, and we trust that God will never permit one of our houses to be governed by a Brother who should forget his duty to such an extent; but, before concluding this conference, we should like you to tell us in what a good Brother Director ought to make his authority consist.' 'Very willingly,' replied

the Father, 'A Brother Director who possesses the spirit of his state, and who understands his obligations, makes his authority consist :—

'1. *In maintaining the Rule and the spirit of piety in the house.* To do so, he himself gives the example of punctuality and regularity; he preaches, he instructs, he shows by his conduct and all his actions what the others should do. After which he insists, with judicious firmness, that the Brothers confided to him perform their duty, observe the Rule faithfully, and act in all things according to the spirit and manner of living of the Society. With regard to this, I will give you a very appropriate answer of a Brother Director. One of his Brothers, who had made the round of a good many establishments, and who had not thereby become more regular, having remarked to the Brother Director that, in some of the houses in which he had been, certain things contrary to the Rule were permitted, and other things were done in such and such a way, and that he did not see why the same should not be done in the house in which he had just arrived. "Brother," answered the wise Director, "here we do not heed what is done elsewhere. We endeavour to observe the Rule as well as we can. So you need not tell me what you have heard and seen in the other houses; but, when you perceive anything contrary to the Rule in this house, be so good as to make it known to me; I promise you that I will do all in my power to set matters right." Behold how all our Brothers Directors ought to speak and act.

'2. *In devoting himself entirely to his duty, to the directing of his house.* In being constantly at the head of his little Community; in presiding at all the religious exercises, the recreations, the studies and meals; in being always the first in the practice of virtue, the first to observe silence, to be diligent in study, to maintain order and cleanliness, to work in the garden and superintend the children. A Brother Director owes all his time, his talents, his care and his labours to his Community. He ought to devote himself to teaching, and to the education of the children; to watch over all the classes, and to know the whole working of them; direct the Brothers and fashion them to virtue, and the requirements of their state, follow them in the details of their conduct, in order to give them, as occasion requires, advice, instruction, admonition, and encouragement; administer the

temporal affairs of his house—such are the duties that should occupy his whole time. He should not engage in any business, nor pursue any study foreign to his employment and his duties as Director.

‘3. *In making himself the servant of all his Brothers*, so as to be able to say, after the example of Jesus Christ: *I am in the midst of you, as he that serveth.* (St Luke xxii, 27). One of his first duties is to form his Brothers to the different employments of the Society. In order to do this he should know how to perform them all himself, that he may be able to give the Brothers practical lessons in everything, by doing before them what they cannot do. A Brother Director ought to rule over his inferiors as a tender mother rules over her children, as a Sister of Charity rules over the sick under her care, by love, solicitude, assiduous care, continual attention to relieve the sufferers, to help the needy, to comfort the afflicted, to encourage the depressed, and provide for the wants of all.

‘4. *In being, before God, the advocate of his Brothers by continually praying for them.* Every Superior ought to imitate Moses, and raise unceasingly his hands to heaven, to invoke the divine mercy on those under his care, and beseech Almighty God to preserve them from the snares of the enemy of salvation. A Brother Director ought to implore by the fervour and perseverance of his prayers, what his lessons, his good advice, and his admonitions have failed to obtain. Good is done by prayer only, therefore, a Brother Director who is not solidly pious, is wanting in grace and divine assistance to succeed in his employment, and to lead his Brothers and pupils to virtue and piety.

‘5. *In watching over the little flock of which God has established him the guardian.* The object of his vigilance ought to be :

‘1st. To know everything that happens in the house and to see that the religious exercises be duly performed, that the Rule be observed, that order and economy be attended to, and that the Brothers discharge their duties with zeal and devotedness.

‘2nd. To follow the Brothers in the details of their conduct, in order to know their defects and their good qualities, their failings and their progress in virtue, all their wants, both spiritual and temporal, with a view to correct what is bad, to maintain and perfect what is good, and to procure for each what

he stands in need of, to acquire the virtues of his state, and to fulfil the end of his vocation.

'3rd. To prevent faults by prescribing to each one what he has to do, by removing everything that might become an occasion of violating the Rule, everything that might disturb the Brothers, or cause them to lose time or recollection ; by correcting and reproofing at seasonable times ; for, nothing multiplies faults so much as impunity.

'4th. To see that all the Brothers be assiduous at the exercises of piety and perform them in a becoming manner, that silence be duly observed, and that there be no abuse in the Brothers' intercourse with the children, or with people of the world. These three points are essential.

'Briefly, a Brother Director ought to make his authority consist, in maintaining the Rule, in devoting himself to the good of his establishment, and in making himself the servant of his Brothers, in praying for them, in preventing by this vigilance, all abuses and all violations of Rule.'

In another conference, on the duties and the functions of the Brothers Directors, the pious Founder said : 'The functions of those who are entrusted with the direction of a house may be comprised under seven heads.

'1. They must teach ; that is to say, the Brothers Directors have the right and authority to command their inferiors, to instruct them, to train them, to explain the Rule, and, in certain cases, to determine the meaning and the application of it, according to the spirit of the Society.

'2. They ought to direct the Brothers according to the Rule, in the employment assigned to them by obedience, in their studies, in the practice of virtue, and in all the exercises of the Community life.

'3. They ought to be vigilant, to keep off all evil, and everything that might be injurious either to individual members or to the whole body.

'4. They ought to keep the Brothers within the bounds of duty, in keeping with the spirit and object of the Society.

'5. They ought to provide with paternal solicitude for all the spiritual and temporal wants of the Community, in such a manner that the inferiors need not trouble themselves about such wants, and may apply themselves entirely

to their own sanctification and the perfect discharge of their duties.

'6. They ought to protect the rights of each one, support the authority of the young Brothers, and oblige the children to pay them due respect and obedience, and when necessary, defend the weak against the strong, the oppressed against the oppressor.

'7. They ought to reprove and punish with charitable forbearance the defects and faults of the good, and treat with becoming severity the transgressors of the Rule, the disturbers of public peace, the promoters of abuses and scandals, for of every Superior it may be said, that *he beareth not the sword in vain.* (Rom. xiii. 4).'

After explaining to the Brothers Directors how to use their authority, and showing them the duties which it imposes upon them, he put them on their guard against the defects that might weaken it, and even ruin it.

He pointed out four; viz., facility in violating the Rule, want of dignity, inconstancy, and susceptibility.

'When you transgress the Rule,' said he, 'you disobey God, your inferiors will disobey you; when you despise the Rule, you despise the will of God, your inferiors will despise your authority, your orders, yourself. How many times have I heard young Brothers say: "I have lost all confidence in my Brother Director, since I began to perceive that he has no respect for the Rule. I shall never esteem that Brother because he is not regular. I feel inclined to despise my Brother Director and disobey him every time I see him transgress the Rule without necessity." Thus it is, that the Brother Director who is not regular, who does not love the Rule, loses his authority and brings evil on his Brothers.

'The want of dignity is not less injurious to authority; and a Brother Director who renders himself too familiar, who yields to levity, to dissipation, to facetiousness, or to anything that is opposed to the gravity, modesty, and reserve becoming a Religious, will never obtain the respect and submission of his inferiors.

'Susceptibility, which consists in taking offence and feeling hurt at mere trifles, and inconstancy which leads one to be constantly changing in manner and dispositions, are two very dangerous enemies of authority. He who has charge of others,

should never be angry or show temper, but when God is offended ; in every other case, he should be impassible. It is but just that the Superior should maintain his rights and authority, but he must not be too jealous of them. To maintain authority it must be restrained within its proper limits ; for, to ask too much, is the means to obtain nothing.'

In fine, Father Champagnat, in his instructions, in his letters to the Brothers Directors, and in his private intercourse with each of them, gave them very many wise and practical counsels to train them to the direction of the establishments. Not being able to insert them all here, we shall mention only the following maxims which were most familiar to him.

'One thing,' said he, 'which is important to understand well, is, that authority is maintained by respect. Now, a Brother Director ought, in the first place, to respect himself. In order to do so, he should always act very prudently, be reserved, grave, and modest in his conduct, discreet in his words, and carefully conceal his defects, his incapacity, his ignorance, and avoid everything that might provoke either censure or contempt.

'He ought, in the next place, to respect his own authority, by using it always with reserve and discretion, never compromising it by giving unjust, extravagant, or unseasonable orders, or by yielding to prejudices, anger, or ill-humour, and reproving or correcting while under the influence of passion or excitement.

'In fine, he ought to respect his inferiors. But, it may be asked, what ought he to respect in his inferiors? Five things, viz., '1. Their person: by being courteous towards all, meek and affable in commanding, treating them as Brothers, as members of the same family, as he would be treated himself.

'2. Their rights: listening to their observations, their excuses, having regard to them when they are well-founded, leaving them perfectly free to apply to the Superior when they wish to do so.

'3. Their authority: being careful not to admonish them before the scholars, or speak to them without respect or attention. A Brother Director may, and even ought, to reserve to himself, the punishing of serious faults ; but he should never prevent the Brothers from chastising the children ; for it would be depriving them of all authority and of the means of disciplining their scholars. It is not by reserving to himself

exclusively, the right to punish, that a Brother Director will make his authority felt by all the children, but by maintaining full and entire, the authority of the Brothers. For this purpose, he should frequently visit the classes, publicly ask information concerning the behaviour of the children, require from the Brothers a minute and written report upon the pupils' conduct and progress, and then bestow praise and rewards on the most deserving, reprove and correct those who have lost time or have been guilty of serious faults.

'4. Their age, if they are old Brothers; their candour, their innocence, and their weakness, if they are young.

'5. Their virtues, particularly their esteem for the Rule, their respect for the Superior, their confidence and openness of heart.

'There are two kinds of authority; judicial or lawful authority, conferred by the Directorship, and moral authority, which arises from virtue, sound judgment, and superior capacity. The first of these authorities is null without the second; hence, the necessity for a Brother Director to be solidly virtuous and to give good example to his Brothers.

'Every Superior ought to act in such a manner as to be able to say to his inferiors, what St. Paul said to the first christians: *Be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ.* (1 Cor. iv, 16).

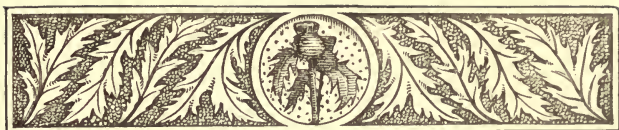
'A Brother Director has as many copies of his actions and conduct as he has Brothers to direct and children to teach. The good or the evil which he does is therefore very great; so also is the reward or the chastisement which he prepares for himself.

'To secure the submission of his inferiors, to gain their confidence and affection, the Brother Director ought to regulate each one's task according to his strength and capacity; for, to require of a Brother more than he can do is an injustice; it is enough to discourage him, and perhaps make him abandon everything. A Brother, whether through want of experience, of character, of aptitude, or because he has not been trained, might obtain but very indifferent results in the school; for the same reason another, in charge of the kitchen, might discharge his duties but very imperfectly. Be satisfied with the good will of these Brothers, and do not discourage them by your discontent, by scolding them and requiring more of them than they can do.

But to treat these Brothers in a proper and just manner, a Brother Director needs the spirit of wisdom and prudence, which is the guiding star of every Superior. This spirit of wisdom and reflection will teach him to appreciate correctly the talents, the aptitude, the strength, and the virtue of each, and to apportion his duties accordingly.

The application of these maxims, so wise and so conformable to the wisdom of God, will assure to each Brother Director, who will make them the guide of his conduct, the respect and submission of his Brothers, will render his burden easy to bear, and he will have the consolation of doing all the good that God requires of him.





CHAPTER XVIII.

WHAT FATHER CHAMPAGNAT DID TO PRESERVE THE BROTHERS IN THEIR VOCATION.

A VOCATION is an affair of the utmost importance; it is the foundation on which the whole edifice of life is based. There is nothing on which salvation so much depends as on the good choice of a vocation, because it is certain that nearly all the sins which a man commits proceed from the neglect of the duties of his state of life. Our vocation is for us the highway to salvation, and our obtaining eternal life principally depends upon it; for, to vocation succeeds justification, that is beatitude. Therefore, whoever breaks this order will only with great difficulty save his soul. Thus speak Bourdaloue and St. Liguori. After having read to his Brothers the words which we have just quoted, Father Champagnat added: 'The advantages of the religious life are so precious, so excellent, that we are unable to understand them; they are so numerous that it would take me whole hours to enumerate them. I shall mention only one, which, to us, is a subject of the most ineffable consolation; and this is, that a vocation to the religious life is a mark of predestination. Nowhere is salvation so certain or so easily attained as in Religion. This assurance of salvation is founded:—

'1. On the words of our Lord Himself, who in the Gospel solemnly declares, that *every one that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for*

His Name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall possess life everlasting. (St. Matt. xix, 29.) Let us not forget that He who makes this promise is Truth itself, and that He always gives more than He promises. For people of the world, it is a terrible truth, *that many are called but few chosen.* (St. Matt. xx, 16.) For Religious it is just the contrary; few are called to this holy state, and many are elected to life eternal.

‘2. On the abundant means of salvation afforded by the religious life. There need be no hesitation in asserting that every facility for working out their salvation is given to Religious; prayer, the sacraments, pious reading, good example, advice of superiors, retreats, actual graces and helps of every kind, are daily lavished on them. Now can anyone believe that God will do so much for the reprobate? If He bestows such abundant graces on Religious, it is because He strongly desires their salvation; it is because He calls them to an eminent degree of perfection, and destines them to a high degree of glory in heaven.

‘3. On the removal of danger. A man may undoubtedly offend Almighty God and lose his soul anywhere, because everywhere man is free, and always bears with him a woful inclination to evil, which he inherits from his first parents; at the same time, one may say that it is almost as hard for a Religious to give himself up to evil, as it is difficult for people in the world to avoid it, and preserve themselves from the dangers to which they are exposed, and the bad examples they have constantly before their eyes. It is certain that there is no state in which one is more sheltered from the temptations and the snares of the devil, than in the religious state. If a Brother who is called to this vocation does not live in grace and virtue, he will fail to do it anywhere else.’

These advantages of the religious state, caused Father Champagnat to say, that it is not given to man to appreciate fully the excellence of the religious vocation, and that a Brother will know only in eternity what God has done for him in this life, how much he has loved him and privileged him. Once, the pious Founder seeing in the distance a Brother without his rabat and taking him for a priest, asked: ‘Who is this priest coming towards us?’ ‘He is not a priest,’ was the answer; ‘he is only a Brother.’ ‘A Brother,’ said the Father. ‘Do you not know that a Brother is something great. A Brother is one

whom God has predestined to a high degree of virtue, and on whom He has special designs of mercy ! He is a man for whom the world is not vast enough and whom heaven alone can satisfy.'

Two young men applied to Father Champagnat for admission into the Society : 'Why do you come here, and what is your motive in coming to us?' inquired the Father. We wish to become Brothers.' 'Do you know what it is to become Brothers? Well, I will tell you; to become a Brother is to engage to become a saint. All the Brothers of Mary must be saints. It is to become such that they ought to labour all their lives and with all their strength. If you are firmly resolved to do so; that is, if you are determined to labour every day of your lives for your own sanctification, and to make every effort to acquire solid virtue, to do all the good you can, you are fit for us; if you are not in these dispositions, if this is not what you propose to yourselves, you would lose your time here; return to your homes and become good Christians in the world.'

After this, one cannot be surprised at the trouble he took to train the Brothers to virtue and to keep them in their vocation. As soon as he perceived anyone to weary or to become discouraged, the Father sent for him and did not let him go until he had dissipated his temptations. One of the most pious Brothers of the house was appointed to watch over the newcomers, and to inform him of those who experienced any difficulty in becoming habituated to the place, and also those who were wavering in their vocation. As soon as one of those was brought under his notice, the Father sent for him, or else he found occasion to be with him; at one time he would take him for his companion on a journey, or he would take a walk with him; at another, he would employ him at some manual work, along with himself, but he would never lose sight of him, until he had strengthened him in the resolve of persevering in his holy state.

He had all kinds of plans, and he used every possible means to banish temptations against vocation, and to inspire courage in those who allowed themselves to be frightened by the trials or the troubles of the religious life. He would make one promise to remain a few days longer, assuring him, if the weariness did not pass away, he would let him go. To another, he would confide some post of trust, telling him how much confidence he placed in him, and that he was sure he would discharge his duty perfectly

well. He would cause one to make a novena, promising that, if his dispositions remained unchanged at the close of it, he would make no further opposition to his leaving. He would advise another to remain a little longer to study, and while the young man was occupied at study, he cleverly inspired him with a taste for the religious life and determined him to embrace it.

A young postulant, after having remained some days, began to weary, and yielding to the inconstancy of his character he returned home. Several years afterwards, he asked to be re-admitted into the Society. Father Champagnat, who knew his good qualities, received him kindly and neglected nothing to make him happy in his state. But the inconstant young man regretting the onions of Egypt, wished to return again to his family. For two or three years, the Father employed every means that his zeal could suggest to make him abandon his idea of the world, and to inspire him with a love for his vocation, but all in vain. One evening, this Brother went to the Father and declared that he had made up his mind to leave, no matter what might happen, and that he would not remain even all next day, which was a Sunday. In fact, he set off at five o'clock next morning. The Father, not being able to induce him to stay, allowed him to go; but hoping against all hope, he addressed fervent prayers to God for this prodigal child, recommending him to the Blessed Virgin, beseeching this good Mother not to abandon him. His prayers were heard. At six o'clock the same evening the Brother returned to the house, went straight to Father Champagnat's room, cast himself at the Father's feet and begged to be received a third time. 'Well! well! my dear friend,' said the Father, 'you are already back! Oh! what pleasure you give me. What made you return?' 'Father,' said the Brother weeping, 'I went about all day seeking a situation; but no one being willing to employ me, I concluded that God was punishing me, and that I had done wrong in abandoning my vocation. Besides, I must confess, that I had scarcely left the house, when I was seized with remorse, and began to regret the step I had taken. This time, it is for good that I wish to be a Religious.' 'Very well, my friend,' said the Father, 'no one in the house knows that you left, and no one shall know. Go, put on your soutane again, be constant and give yourself entirely to God.' In fact, no one in the house was aware of what had happened, except the

Father. From that day forward, the Brother was devoted to his vocation; and became one of the most regular, most pious, and most devoted Directors in the Society.

Another postulant, of good parts, in consequence of some disedifying words he heard from a novice with whom he worked, became disgusted with his vocation, and resolved to leave as soon as possible, so as not to incur useless expense. He went to the pious Founder, asked for his money, and expressed his intention to withdraw. The Father profoundly grieved at the thought of losing a subject on whom he had already founded great hopes, endeavoured to remove the bad impression which the novice had made on the postulant; but he did not succeed, and could only induce the young man to remain a few days longer to have the opportunity of returning home in company with a Brother who was going to the same part of the country. This short delay obtained, Father Champagnat sent for a pious and intelligent Brother who had charge of the kitchen, and said to him: 'I am going to send you a postulant, whom I esteem very much, and who has all the necessary qualities to become a good Brother. A conversation he had with a novice has discouraged him, but I am convinced that if he sees nothing but edifying examples, his good dispositions will soon return. I will send him to work in the kitchen; do your best to gain his confidence, and decide him to remain in his vocation.' The postulant was placed in the kitchen; but notwithstanding the good examples, the good counsels and encouragement of the Brother to whom he was confided, his temptations and his weariness increased to such an extent, that he fell sick. He repeatedly went to Father Champagnat to be permitted to go home; but the Father knew so well how to encourage him, that each time he prevailed on him to put off his departure. In the meantime, the devil who makes use even of the best things to deceive souls, laid a fresh snare for the young man. The Father having given an instruction on the duties and advantages of the religious life, the postulant, instead of being urged by it to persevere in the holy state of which he had heard such praise, was on the contrary, entirely discouraged. 'I know nothing,' said he, 'I have no memory, how then can I remember so many things? and, moreover, my inclinations are so little in keeping with the religious virtues, that evidently I am not made for so holy a vocation.'

The conclusion he arrived at was that he should go off at once, without even waiting till next day. Firmly determined to carry out his resolution, he went after night prayers to the Father's room to take leave of him ; but finding him saying his Rosary, the postulant felt so deeply impressed that he did not dare to disturb the Father. Next morning as he was preparing to leave, the Brother cook accosted him thus : 'Instead of returning to the world, where you have already remained too long, you should go at once to ask the religious habit. You know that there is to be a reception next week, and you must be one of the number.' 'What do you say?' inquired the postulant. 'What need have I of the religious habit? I, who have no intention of becoming a Brother, and have none of the qualities necessary for such a vocation.' 'If you did not wish to become a Brother you would not have come here. As to the necessary qualifications, if you do not possess them now, you will acquire them. Put all these ideas out of your head therefore, and go at once and ask the Father to be admitted at the approaching reception.' At this the postulant felt all his temptations vanish, and after a moment's reflection he went and asked the habit. The Father although somewhat surprised at this change, said to him : 'That is an excellent idea, but it would be well to think seriously before being invested in a habit, which you must not put on unless you are resolved to wear it till death.' As the postulant persisted, the Father added : 'Go to the Brother tailor and tell him to make you a nice soutane.'

From this time forward the thought of returning to the world never troubled him again ; however, to give him time to become fixed in his good resolutions, the reception was put back for a few weeks. At last he took the habit on the 15th of August, 1829, made his profession some time after, and, under the name of Brother Jerome, was, for the twenty-two years that he lived in the Society, a model of all the religious virtues. He was, as Father Champagnat declared, a man fit for any emergency. He had charge, in succession, of the kitchen, the bakery, the garden, and the cellars. He discharged his duties perfectly in all these posts, and everywhere he distinguished himself by his tact, his habits of cleanliness, order, and economy, his love of work, and his devotedness to the Society. 'This excellent Brother,' said Father Champagnat, 'knows very little ;

but by his character and his virtues, he is worth his weight in gold. He is one of those rare and valuable men, whom it is hard to replace, when God takes them away.' The Father liked to relate how many a time he came on the good Brother during the night, going the rounds of the house to see if everything was safe, if the windows were fastened, or if there was any danger of fire. When the Father heard him walk softly along the corridors, although he well knew that it was Brother Jerome, he would sometimes cry out, 'Who is there?' 'It is I.' 'But who are you?' 'Brother Jerome, Father.' 'Oh! it is you, Brother Jerome. But you should not disturb yourself in this manner. What are you doing here at this hour of the night?' 'I was afraid that some window might have been left open, and that the wind might smash it, or I thought there might be danger of fire, and I am making a little round to see that all is right.' 'Everything is safe, Brother Jerome; you may go back to bed.' Nothing gave the good Father more pleasure than this solicitude and devotedness. 'There is a Religious,' said he, 'who loves his Society! He is not like those Brothers who think of themselves only, and always do as little as they can.'

During the last years of his life, the good Brother was employed in leading the horse and in going errands. In these offices also, his virtue was never found wanting. He was so humble, so polite and charitable when there was an occasion of rendering a service to anyone, that he gained the esteem of the public, and was looked upon as a saint. In the midst of so many distracting occupations, he was always closely united with God, and avoided as much as possible speaking to people on the road, so that he might keep recollected. Never would he start a conversation with those he met, but simply answered any questions put to him and exchanged the customary greetings in passing. While leading his horse he piously said his Rosary, or performed his other exercises of piety. Seculars were so accustomed to see him pray, and had so high an esteem of his virtue, that they purposely avoided disturbing him.

This excellent Brother fell a victim to his devotedness. His horse having run away in the town of St. Chamond, the Brother sprang forward to stop him, because, a little further on, the street was crowded with children who were coming out of the school; but, losing his footing, he fell, and the wheel of the cart passed

over his leg, completely crushing it. God, without doubt, in reward of his heroic charity, caused the horse to stop suddenly, just before reaching the children, so that none of them was injured. Brother Jerome was taken up by persons who witnessed the accident, and carried to the Hospital. Although suffering horribly, he uttered no complaint, no moan, no sigh; nay more, he heeded not his own sufferings, and opened his lips only to inquire if the horse had hurt anyone; and great was his satisfaction on learning that no other accident had happened. During the eight days after the accident, he gave examples of every virtue. His patience and resignation were so great, that those who served him or visited him were struck with admiration at them. 'Never,' said the Sisters serving in the Hospital, 'never, have we witnessed so much virtue in a patient. This Brother is not only edifying, he is sublime.' Another fact will show us the uprightness, the purity, and the simplicity of his soul. When brought to the Hospital, a priest hastened to attend to him, and, perceiving the gravity of his case, said to him, 'Brother, I must not hide from you the fact that you are in danger; if you want a confessor I am at your service. Reflect for a little, I shall return in a few minutes.' Half-an-hour afterwards the priest returned. 'Father,' said the Brother, 'it is not long since I have been at confession; I had the happiness of receiving Holy Communion this morning; I have examined my conscience, and, thank God, I find nothing that troubles me.' Such was the virtue, such was the purity of soul of the good Brother, that, seeing himself suddenly placed face to face with death, he finds nothing on his conscience which causes him to fear the terrible passage from time to eternity; this may be accounted for by the fact of his confessing every week, as if he were to die immediately after.

The vocation and example of this Brother offer us some very practical instructions. They show us:—

(1.) What evil may be done by the words and examples of Brothers who have not the spirit of their state, and how dangerous they are in a Community. A single conversation with one of these men had well nigh ruined one of the most promising vocations, and deprived the Society of an excellent member.

(2.) What good may be done by a Religious, when he is

solidly virtuous, as also the power and efficacy of his example and good counsels. In this case, Father Champagnat declared that, had it not been for the prayers and encouragement of the good Brother cook, Brother Jerome would not have resisted the temptation and would certainly have abandoned his vocation.

(3.) They show us the active charity, the zeal and patience of the good Father, in working to preserve the Brothers in their vocation, for it was well known he did for a great number of others what we have related in the two preceding examples.

But it must be confessed, his zeal had not always the same success, and it happened often enough that, after having taken great pains to train certain subjects and to attach them to their vocation, he had the sorrow of seeing them take a dislike for their state, lose piety and return to the world. This cross, we do not fear to assert, was the heaviest of all his crosses. In fact, however painful his other afflictions might be, he found some consolation in them, but in this, the loss of a vocation, it was all bitterness. On such occasions he was often remarked to be unable to eat or drink, so deeply was he affected, so sensibly did he feel the loss of his children. He found no consolation but in resignation to the will of God. 'Alas!' said he, 'I should feel infinitely less pain in seeing those Brothers carried to the grave, than to see them abandon their holy vocation, to cast themselves back on the world.' But his sorrow was further increased by the conviction that the greater number of those who had left the Society, were faithless to their vocation. 'I am convinced,' said he, in an instruction, 'that of those who after putting their hands to the plough, look back, more than three-fourths are truly called and would become good Religious if they corresponded with the grace of God.' Now, the loss of vocation is due chiefly to four causes:—

'1. To violations of the Rule, and above all to the neglect of the religious exercises. A vocation is a gratuitous gift; but not so the gift of perseverance, which is the special fruit of prayer, and the faithful observance of the Rule. He, therefore, who neglects his exercises of piety, or performs them badly, will infallibly lose his vocation.

'2. To want of zeal for the Christian education of children. God, in calling you to the religious state, had in view, not only your own salvation, but also that of the children who are to be

confided to you ; if, therefore, you neglect to teach Catechism, if you are wanting in zeal to train your pupils to virtue and piety, you oppose the designs of God, you resist His will, which requires of you to put these children on the way to salvation by a good education. Now, if you refuse them this blessing, you will be rejected, and your place given to another, who will make a better use of the graces which you abuse, and who will perform the good which you neglect to perform.

‘3. To want of zeal for one’s own perfection. Many Religious lose their vocation because they are not so virtuous as God desires them to be, because they do not correspond with grace, and take no trouble about their perfection. A man who enters Religion only to have an easy life, to enjoy comforts which he had not in the world, will not persevere. The abuse of grace, carelessness in spiritual matters, little voluntary faults, and tepidity, have caused the loss of more vocations than were ever lost by mortal sin and great disorders. But the worst of it is, that those who allow themselves to be caught in the snare of the devil, do not perceive that they have lost their vocation until they have left the monastery, and have consummated their ruin. A vocation to the religious life is the greatest gift of God, after that of Baptism ; it is the portion of privileged souls ; but to persevere in it requires great fidelity to grace and much generosity.’

One day a Brother went to Father Champagnat, and said to him : ‘Father, I am wearied and discouraged.’ ‘What is the cause of your discouragement?’ ‘I feel discouraged because such a Brother has left. I tremble when I see men abandon their vocation, and throw themselves on the world, after spending fifteen years in Community. I tremble lest such a misfortune befall myself.’ ‘The withdrawal of this Brother,’ said the Father, ‘neither surprises nor alarms me. These chastisements, and the faults that provoke them, are personal ; and it is not because that this or that Brother has apostatised that one should yield to discouragement. But here is a terrible truth which ought to make you fear and tremble : *He who does not live as a Religious will not die in Religion.* It is solely because such men do not live as Religious that they abandon their holy state, even after spending the greater part of their lives in Community. A good gardener prunes the trees of his garden

from time to time, if he finds a dead branch, no matter how large it may be, he lops it off; and the larger it is, the more anxious he is to remove it from the tree, to which it is injurious. God acts somewhat in the same manner. He visits the Communities, which are His favourite gardens; and when He finds in them Religious who are devoid of virtue, and dead to the spirit of their state, He cuts them off, that they may not injure the others by introducing the vices and maxims of the world into the Society of the Saints. Therefore, my dear Brother, it is our own lives and our own conduct which ought to make us tremble, and not the misfortune of others. If your conscience bears you witness that you are zealous for your perfection, that you endeavour to acquire the virtues of your state, to fulfil the end of your vocation, and live the life of a good Religious, you have nothing to fear.

‘But if your conscience attests the contrary, you have reason to fear and tremble, for I repeat: *He who does not live as a Religious will not die in Religion.*’

‘4. In fine,’ continues Father Champagnat, ‘the fourth cause of the loss of vocation is self-will, dissimulation, and want of docility. There are few Religious whose vocation is not tried by temptation, and for many, this temptation is the longest and hardest to bear. The reason of this obstinate war is, because the loss of a religious vocation brings in its train innumerable faults, and very often the loss of salvation. The remedy for this temptation, is openness of heart and submission to one’s Superior. He who in such a case, wishes to be his own guide, walks straight to his ruin. He who instead of applying to his Superior and following his advice, seeks counsel elsewhere, walks likewise to his ruin. Whoever seeks counsels in Egypt will perish with the counsels of Egypt. When we heed not the direction of those whom God has appointed to be our guides and conductors, we find to our loss, and by a just punishment from God, a direction such as we have desired. No one is better qualified than our Superior to judge of our vocation; and when there is question of deciding it, to prefer the opinion of anyone else to our Superior, is to deceive oneself and to fall into the greatest possible blindness.’

A professed Brother having neglected his religious exercises and the Rules relating to intercourse with externs, lost completely

the spirit of his state, and applied to Father Champagnat to be released from his vows. Instead of granting him the desired dispensation, the pious Founder brought him to the Mother-House and got him to make a Retreat in order to recover his first fervour. But sometime afterwards the Brother having fallen into the same faults, became so tired of his vocation that he resolved to abandon it. As he knew that Father Champagnat did not approve of the reasons which he alleged to obtain his dispensation, he applied to another priest, and explained his case to him in the manner which the father of lies suggested, and so obtained a decision such as he wanted. When he made this decision known to Father Champagnat, the good Father replied: 'You have gone to seek counsels in Egypt, you will perish with the counsels of Egypt. You tell me that, acting on the advice of a confessor, the Bishop has released you from your vows. I, on my part, declare that I condemn the measures, which, unknown to me, you have taken for that purpose. The reasons which you have advanced to obtain this dispensation, or rather the surreptitious means by which you have obtained it, being null and void, I cannot consent to your abandoning your vocation, and moreover, I declare that if this misfortune should happen to you, you will repent of it.'

In spite of this warning, the Brother withdrew from the Society. A few months afterwards he married. On the very day of the wedding he fell ill, and died after three days of terrible torments. During his sufferings he was heard continually repeating: 'I was deceived! I was deceived! and, I have lost my vocation!!'





CHAPTER XIX.

THE PRECAUTIONS HE TOOK TO PRESERVE THE BROTHERS IN THE
SPIRIT OF THEIR STATE, AND HIS FIRMNESS IN
UPHOLDING THE RULE.

ST THOMAS teaches that, when God entrusts a mission to anyone, He gives him at the same time, the necessary graces to fulfil it properly. We have a confirmation of this truth in the life of Father Champagnat. God who destined him to be the Founder of a Society of pious Teachers of youth, made known to him all the necessary principles for the organisation, development, and preservation of this work. He gave him, at the same time, an unalterable firmness in maintaining these principles, notwithstanding the contradictions of the world, and the opposition of the devil. But what is most surprising and shows clearly that Father Champagnat was guided by the spirit of God, is, that he knew, from the very beginning the means he should adopt to attain the end he had in view in founding the Society. A few pages written with his own hand, in the commencement, leave no doubt on this point; for in them are found the plan, the object, and the fundamental Constitutions of the Society. The Rules which he afterwards gave the Brothers were only the result and development of these first principles.

But as the means should ever be in keeping with the end to be attained, he understood that the Brothers could labour effectively for the salvation of children only by union with God;

and that the more intimate this union would be, the greater also would be their success ; that it was necessary, therefore, in the first place, to give them the most efficacious means to become strongly attached to their vocation and to acquire solid virtue. Meditation, vocal prayer, daily assistance at Holy Mass, spiritual reading, examination of conscience, frequentation of the Sacraments, openness of heart to Superiors, fraternal correction, annual retreats, and religious vows, appeared to him indispensable to enable the Brothers to acquire solid virtue and to persevere in it. He therefore provided them abundantly with all these means of perfection, and he wished them to devote several hours, every day, to exercises of piety.

The vows made by the Brothers, are four in number, namely : the vow of poverty, the vow of chastity, the vow of obedience, and the vow of stability. He justly considered, that these vows are alone capable of fixing the inconstancy of the human heart. Indeed, it is by such promises, according to the teaching of the Angelic Doctor, that the will of man becomes strong, energetic, constant, and resolute in well-doing. ‘Whatever may be the virtue and good dispositions of a Brother,’ said the pious Founder, ‘he may, at any moment, change his mind and abandon his good resolutions ; but, if he is bound to them by vows, his inconstancy is restrained, he is no longer at liberty to look back. Let nature rebel, let concupiscence, let the devil and the world attack him, he remains firm, because his conscience will speak louder than all these together, and he will find peace and contentment in fulfilling the promises he has made to God.’

But it was not enough to supply the Brothers with the means of becoming solidly virtuous, it was moreover necessary to foresee what, in their state, in their employment, and in their intercourse with the world, might become a danger to their virtue ; and to afford them every facility for avoiding it. Four things in this matter called for his special attention.

(1.) *To regulate the zeal of the Brothers and to confine it solely to the end of their vocation.* As we have already remarked, in founding his Institute, Father Champagnat had his plans well designed. His sole object was the Christian education of children, knowing well that this work required all the devotedness of the Brothers, he wished them to consecrate themselves entirely to it, and not to engage in any other work, however excellent it might

be. The difficulty of finding resources for the maintenance of the schools, led the managers, in several places, to offer the post of parish clerk to the Brothers, but such proposals were always firmly rejected, whatever pecuniary advantages this office might have afforded them. In other places, the managers wished the Brothers to teach the elements of Latin to certain children ; in this case too the pious Founder constantly refused, notwithstanding the religious motives that were alleged in order to carry the point. He was asked for Brothers for all sorts of offices ; to serve the sick, to attend to temporal concerns in the Little Seminaries, or to teach the young children in those establishments, to manage model farms, etc. It never entered into his plans to accept any of these invitations. 'They would like,' said he, 'to employ the Brothers in all kinds of employments, under pretext that there is so much good to be done in them. I am well aware that all these are excellent works, but that is not a reason why we should undertake them, for our duty is not to engage in a multiplicity of good works, but to do well the one which Providence has entrusted to us.'

The care of sacristies was another work for which the pious Founder was urgently requested to supply Brothers. It was proposed that the Brothers should take care of the church simultaneously with the school, as a means of employing a greater number of Brothers in the establishment, and increasing its resources ; or the Brothers would take charge of the church only, and then, the principal motive put forward was public edification and the respect due to the holy place. These motives, although excellent in themselves, could make no impression on the inflexible firmness of the pious Founder, who would never consent to supply Brothers, even for the service of the chapel of Fourvière at Lyons. M. Barou, Vicar-General, who earnestly desired to entrust the care of this chapel to the Brothers of Mary, did all in his power to induce the pious Founder to take charge of it ; but not being able to succeed, he said somewhat pettishly : 'M. Champagnat, I do not understand you. The chapel of Fourvière is coveted by several Congregations. At the archiepiscopal palace, where your Congregation is held in high esteem, it was thought that you would consider it a great favour to have the sanctuary of Fourvière entrusted to your care, and that you would feel flattered at being preferred

to so many others; and you dare to refuse! All who take an interest in the matter declare that it is befitting that the altar of Mary should be kept by the Brothers of Mary. If you refuse to give Brothers to the Blessed Virgin, she will not bless you.' 'Very Rev. Sir,' replied the Father, 'I feel exceedingly grateful for the interest you take in us, and I am very far from ignoring the advantages of the offer which you have the kindness to make us; but it appears to me that the reasons which you give would not justify us in abandoning the principle to which we have hitherto adhered, that is, of confining ourselves to teaching, and refusing any other work not connected with the education of children. You threaten me with the Blessed Virgin; I hope she will not be angry with us; for it is to please her, to merit her protection, and preserve her work such as she founded it, that we refuse to take charge of the Sacristy of Fourvière.'

(2.) *To procure what is necessary for the Brothers.* The object of the pious Founder was to provide religious Teachers for small parishes. But here a great difficulty arose, that of finding the necessary means for the maintenance of the schools. On the one hand, it was necessary to provide for the decent support of the Brothers as Religious; on the other hand, the school expenses had to be brought within the limited resources of the parishes. After having, for a long time, consulted God in prayer on this difficult affair, Father Champagnat found three means of overcoming the difficulty. The first was to reduce as much as possible the salary of the Brothers, by adopting for his Congregation a frugal, simple, and inexpensive mode of living. The second was to allow the Brothers to receive school fees; and the third to permit them to keep boarders. By these means, the expenses of the schools were much lightened, and the Brothers were enabled to establish themselves almost anywhere. But, after reducing the Brothers' salary as much as he could, and leaving it within the means of the parishes to provide it, he insisted on its being paid, and he would have preferred to withdraw the Brothers, and shut up the school, rather than yield on this point. 'Everyone,' said he, 'should live by his profession. If the Brothers, whose task is so laborious, have not at least what is strictly necessary for their maintenance, their position is insupportable; and whatever may be their virtue and their zeal for the instruction of the children,

they will be forced to abandon all.' The following was written by him to a school manager, who considered that the Brothers' salary was too high, and did not pay them regularly: 'The sum of twelve hundred francs (£48) which we ask, is quite little enough to support the three Brothers of your school; to reduce it, would be to deprive them, I do not say, of the hard-earned wages of the most painful and most laborious of occupations, but to wrest from them even the poor and unpalatable food they are taking. Besides, in every parish in which we are established, we are paid this sum at least. You know that the Christian Brothers are paid at the rate of six hundred francs (£24) each, a sum which is, no doubt, admitted to be absolutely necessary. We have reduced our salary to two-thirds of what no one refuses to them; I leave it to your own consideration and kindness, to judge whether it would not be harsh and inhuman to still further reduce this very modest salary.'

(3.) *To separate them from the world and render their intercourse with seculars rare.* The intercourse of the Brothers with externs is most assuredly the greatest obstacle their virtue encounters. To remove this never failing cause of evil, Father Champagnat wishes the Brothers to live the life of solitaries in the midst of the world, to remain hidden in the interior of their houses, and to have with seculars only the intercourse which necessity demands. He constantly recommended them to do good without noise or ostentation; to avoid all public show and everything calculated to attract public attention. He drew up for them the wisest and most appropriate rules to render their intercourse with the world rare, and to guard against all the dangers to which this intercourse may expose them. For the same reason, he wishes the school-house to be independent of other houses, the neighbourhood not to be noisy, and the Brothers not to be seen in their apartments, their yard, or their garden. This isolation of the Brothers' residence appeared to him so important, that he would have preferred not to accept an establishment rather than expose the Brothers to the least danger from their neighbours. The following extract from a letter written to a Parish Priest who had not kept his promise in this matter, shows us how anxious the good Father felt on this point: 'If you don't carry out the measures agreed upon for the improvement of the Brothers' establishment, I shall withdraw the Brothers at the retreat. The house they live in is unsuitable

on account of insufficient enclosure. I cannot tolerate any longer that the Brothers be disturbed by the people of the adjoining house, and that they cannot go to the garden without being under the eyes of those persons. If you do not keep your promise to give the Brothers that house which you know is required to complete their establishment, it will be absolutely necessary to wall up the doors and windows which open on to the school yard.' The doors and windows were not walled up, but what was far better, the whole house was given over to the Brothers.

For the same reasons, he would not consent to see the Corporation and other assemblies hold their meetings in the Brothers' premises. Having learned that such a thing was to take place in an establishment, he wrote immediately to the Mayor in the following terms: 'The house which the authorities have given to the Brothers, although somewhat spacious, should be reserved exclusively for school purposes, and if it be intended to establish the Municipal Chambers in it, we shall have to abandon your school, for I cannot allow the Brothers to be continually in contact with the crowds of people who would have to attend those Chambers on business. The Brothers need silence and solitude to fulfil the mission entrusted to them. The sight of so many people of the world, and this unavoidable intercourse with seculars, would necessarily disturb them in their duties, and make them lose the spirit of their state. I hope, therefore, that you will appreciate these reasons, and that as heretofore, and in keeping with our agreement, you will leave the whole building for the use of the Brothers.'

Another matter which appeared of the greatest importance to him, was that the Brothers should attend to all their own domestic affairs, and that women should not be admitted into the interior of their houses. Several Parish Priests with a view to relieve the Brothers, and to diminish their expense on the parish, proposed to allow pious charitable women to cook for them; but he determinedly rejected the proposal; and, in order to prevent for ever such an abuse, he made it a rule, that the Brothers should never employ persons of the other sex to cook for them.

M. Douillet, founder of the establishment of La-Côte-Saint-André, earnestly begged him to allow an aged and very virtuous

woman to attend to the domestic duties of the Brothers, and he supported his request by the strongest and most plausible reasons. But Father Champagnat who understood that a single exception to the Rule, no matter what the motive might be, would become a dangerous precedent, remained inflexible. As M. Douillet persisted in his wish to employ this woman, Father Champagnat positively declared to him, that he would prefer withdrawing the Brothers and losing the house, which he highly esteemed, as it was a nursery of novices for the Society, rather than tolerate a violation of the Rule on this important point. He even wrote on this subject to the Bishop of Grenoble, beseeching his Lordship to induce M. Douillet to desist from his proposal, as otherwise he should feel obliged to withdraw the Brothers. 'We can only retain this establishment,' he said in his letter, 'on the conditions on which it was founded, one of the principal of which is, that our Brothers be allowed to follow their Rule, and that there be nothing changed in their mode of life. Now, if they employ a woman to do their household work, as M. Douillet wishes, it would be an example which could not fail to have the most serious consequences. I do not doubt, my Lord, but you will find these reasons well founded and will approve them,' It required all this firmness to induce M. Douillet to abandon his project.

Not only did Father Champagnat prohibit the Brothers from employing women for their household duties, but as we have already stated, he forbade permitting these persons to penetrate into the interior of the house, and, to show the importance of this Rule, he added, that it should be maintained with rigour, an expression he made use of nowhere else. Moreover, he justly considered, that frequent intercourse, even with men, is an occasion of danger for a Religious, and it was on this account that he forbade the Brothers to take their recreations with seculars, and prohibited seculars from taking part in the Brothers' recreations on the premises. He also forbade the Brothers to write letters or anything of the kind, for externs. In fine, the world appeared to him so dangerous for the Brothers, and he dreaded so much the introduction of worldliness into the Community, even by accident and as it were imperceptibly, that he ordered the entrance door to be kept always bolted when not required to be open.

But it was not enough that seculars should not unnecessarily appear on the Brothers' premises, he made it incumbent on the Brothers themselves, not to show themselves in public without necessity, but to live hidden in their houses, entirely occupied with their own sanctification and the Christian education of the children. To ensure this, Father Champagnat forbids them :

(1.) To make visits without necessity. They should see, from time to time, only the managers and benefactors of the school.

(2.) To leave their own premises without permission and without being accompanied by another Brother.

(3.) To give lessons in private houses.

(4.) To travel, or to visit the other establishments without an *obedience* from the Rev. Brother Superior.

(5.) To eat at the house of the Parish Priest, and still less at the house of any other person.

(6.) To invite seculars to eat or drink in the house.

(7.) To keep up correspondence by letters with strangers, or with those who have left the Society.

It is impossible to say how much the pious Founder insisted on the observance of these Rules. Each year, in his instructions during the Retreat, he referred to these points, and he has frequently declared to the Brothers that they could not neglect them without exposing themselves to the greatest dangers, without losing the spirit of their state, and even their vocation. He asserted, in particular, that the greatest peril for the virtue of a Brother Director, is to be found in the intercourse which he is obliged to have with seculars.

One day, having learned that a Brother Director went out alone, the good Father sent for him immediately, although he lived at a distance of forty-five miles from the Mother-House, and among other things, he said to him : 'Either leave off transgressing your Rule in so important a point, or I shall remove you from your post, and put you to work in the garden all your life.' Having learned that another fell into the same fault, the Father placed in the same house an old and very regular Brother, whom he charged to let him know if this Brother Director still violated his Rule. 'Take care,' said the Father, when appointing him to this office, 'not to be swayed by false indulgence, nor to delay informing me if the Rule be not observed ; for, by acting in such a

manner, you would become accountable for the loss of this Brother.'

(4.) *To give them the means to watch over each other in Jesus Christ.* Knowing that it is not possible, even with the wisest and most detailed Rules, to avoid every danger that might threaten the virtue of the Brothers, the pious Founder, after taking the precautions which prudence and zeal suggested to him, justly believed that fraternal charity might be a safeguard against the dangers which he could neither foresee nor avoid. Deeply impressed with this sentence of Holy Writ: *Woe to him that is alone, for when he falleth, he hath none to lift him up.* (Eccl. iv, 10.) And remembering that our Lord sent His apostles and disciples two by two, he made it a rule never to send a Brother alone. Moreover, he wished the Brothers always to teach school together; that is to say, in adjoining class rooms, separated by a glass partition or at the least by a glass door. In Community, the Brothers should have a common study, refectory, and dormitory. This life in Community is one of the most essential of the Rules of the Society, and no Brother, either by day or by night, during work or recreation, should separate from the others or seek any exemptions. When they go out during their walks, and even while going to church, the Brothers should be together. This community life is evidently a great security against every kind of danger; above all, if it be remembered that the Rule makes it a duty for the Brothers to admonish each other charitably of their defects, their faults, and to make known to the Superior the abuses that may be introduced into the houses, the transgressions of Rule and everything which, in the conduct of the Brothers, might scandalise the public or endanger the interests of the Society.

The happy fruits of this supervision and fraternal charity, afforded great consolations to the pious Founder, and he had no hesitation in saying that many Brothers were indebted to the practice of this act of charity, for having escaped great dangers, having persevered in virtue and in their vocation. 'The observance of this Rule' he said, 'is a barrier against abuses and scandals. It is the safeguard of the Brothers and of the Institute. It enables the Superior to know what is reprehensible in the conduct of the Brothers, to take the necessary means to bring them back to a sense of their duty, to maintain

the Rule, and to prevent or correct abuses. But that fraternal charity may produce these good results, the Brothers ought, in the first place, to give good example, good counsel, and charitable admonition to those who require it; secondly, they ought to inform the Superior and make known to him the conduct of any Brother who neglects his duty, or easily transgresses his Rule.

‘Fraternal correction, as prescribed by the Rule, is not a mere counsel, it is a duty, and he who neglects it, becomes accountable for the fault of his Brother. If there were no receivers of stolen property, there would be no thieves; this is why the former are as guilty as the latter.’

In Community, if there were no receivers, that is to say, Religious who fail to practise fraternal charity, and who cover with the cloak of perfidious indulgence, the faults of their Brothers, instead of making them known to the Superior, there would never be serious transgressions of Rules and no abuse could creep into the houses. These words account for the Father’s insistence on the subject of fraternal charity, and the obligation of all the Brothers to edify one another, to charitably admonish one another, and to guard one another in Jesus Christ.

A Brother who had some remorse of conscience for having failed in this point of charity, confessed his fault to the Father from whom he received the following advice: ‘You did wrong, and you repent of it; God be praised. Beg our dear Lord to pardon you and also the Brother whose fault you kept concealed. My dear friend, if we wish to have no regret at the hour of death, let us always be straightforward. Let human respect or false indulgence never cause us to lose sight of the glory of God and the true interests of our Brothers. Do not forget that not to inform the Superior, is to be wanting in charity, it is to become answerable for the loss of your Brother who has gone astray, and who would be brought back to the path of duty by a charitable admonition from the Superior. You are bound therefore, my dear Brother, to repair the past by greater fidelity to the Rule regarding fraternal charity.’

During the two months’ vacations, the pious Founder gave the Brothers a conference, every day, on the Rule, explaining each article in succession, replying to the observations made by the Brothers, and insisting, with great force, on the importance of the Rules, on their advantages, and on the evils which their

transgression always brings on the transgressor himself, as well as on the Society at large. But what appeared most remarkable to those who had the happiness of assisting at his instructions, was that, in treating each year the same subjects, and saying in substance the same thing, he was always new and interesting in his explanations.

Sometimes, instead of a conference on the Rule, he had some chapters read from the writings of Rodriguez or of Saint-Jure, in which these authors treat of the Rules. One day he stopped the reader, and said, with emotion: 'My dear Brothers, I cannot forbear interrupting this reading, however excellent it be, to acquaint you with something that afflicts and alarms me. I mean that species of incredulity which I remark in some of you, concerning the necessity of the Rules, and the strict obligation for every Religious to observe them. Rodriguez, whom we have several times read, Saint-Jure, whom we are reading just now, and the Holy Fathers, whose testimony they produce, all teach us that the Rules are absolutely necessary for Religious to acquire the virtues of their state. They say that to violate them easily, is to renounce perfection and to risk one's salvation. Yet these Brothers, by a strange blindness and detestable presumption, dare to call in question the teachings of the saints, the sentiments of these pious authors, and tax with exaggeration what they have said concerning the importance and necessity of the Rules. The disposition of these Brothers is most dangerous, as it may lead them into every sort of excess. Animated with such sentiments, they will lay aside not only the Rule, but their essential duties, the vows, the Commandments of God, the practice of virtue, and their vocation. The number of those who are in this miserable state, without knowing it, is happily very small; but there are others who, though thoroughly convinced of the necessity of observing the Rule in important matters, believe that they can, without danger, dispense with it in small matters. This is one of the most dangerous snares of the devil. These Religious, by being faithless in little things, commit a great number of slight faults, continually resist the grace of God, derive little benefit from the Sacraments and the religious exercises; they fall by degrees, and without knowing it, into a state of tepidity, and lose all love and relish for their vocation. Sometimes even, this state of things leads them so far, that they wander from the

right path without perceiving it. Oh, how many have I known who saw the abyss only when they were at the bottom of it !

‘I will tell you something that will astonish you all. These tepid Religious are more dangerous in a Community than scandalous Religious, they are more to be dreaded, and are more pernicious to others ; first, because, thanks be to God, scandalous Religious are exceedingly rare, and are cut off from the Society as soon as they are known ; secondly, because their conduct is at once the object of universal reprobation. But it is not so with tepid Religious. Like fruits, which though pleasing to the eye, are rotten at the core, these Religious appear more virtuous than they really are, and hence they are esteemed more than they deserve. As no one suspects them, others easily yield to their influence and adopt their principles ; they imitate their conduct and even glory in thinking and acting in all things as they do, so that their example becomes extremely contagious.

‘1. Because these Brothers being generally faithful in great things, are considered virtuous and conscientious.

‘2. Because they have the reputation of being reasonable, tolerant and indulgent.

‘3. Because they know how to colour, with various pretexts, and plausible excuses, their relaxed and irregular ways, their failings and the liberties they take.

‘4. Because they commit these faults without the least scruple, and thus lead others to believe that their conduct is irreproachable and that there is no harm in imitating them.

‘5. Because their bad example being of daily occurrence, one is insensibly led to imitate them, seeing the weakness of human nature, which always tends to relaxation.

‘Tepid Religious, those who bend the Rule to suit their caprices, have a terrible influence ; it is impossible to say all the harm they do by word and example. It is they who represent the Superiors as exacting, harsh, severe, and unreasonable men, and rob them of the respect, the esteem and confidence of the inferiors. It is they who render ineffectual the good example of the pious, the fervent, the regular, and punctual Brothers, and who make them pass for narrow-minded, scrupulous, and punctilious men who know not how to live. It is they who bring the Rule into contempt, representing it as an inconvenient burden, a heavy yoke to be dispensed with as much as possible.

It is they who destroy regularity, who become the promoters of disunion, abuses, and disorders in Communities. It is quite true, therefore, that the Brothers who are tepid and negligent, who easily transgress the Rule, are the great enemies of the Society; as it is equally true, that the pious, humble, regular, and solidly virtuous Brothers are its true friends, its pillars and protectors.'

In another conference, our pious Founder said: 'To be exact in the observance of the Rule, is to do the will of God in all things; to advance with giant strides in the way of perfection; to procure for oneself all the consolations of Religion; and, to assure, as much as possible, one's salvation. Yes, be faithful to your Rule, shun public attention, avoid intercourse with seculars, keep yourselves concealed in your own houses, and you will love your vocation, you will have peace of soul, you will receive the hundred-fold of grace and consolation, which our Lord promises to those who have left all things to follow him. Observe your Rule, observe it faithfully, and I promise you Paradise.' 'You ask me,' he wrote to a Brother, 'what means you ought to take to advance in virtue. I know none better for you than fidelity to your Rule.' 'If you are faithful to your Rule,' said he, to another, 'I answer for your salvation.'

The good Father was not content with giving his Brothers these solid instructions; he gave them besides, the example of regularity; being always first at the Community exercises, and observing all the rules of the house, as much as his occupations would allow him. If, by accident, it happened that the Brother appointed to ring the bell for rising in the morning, forgot to do so, and did not rouse the Community while the clock was still striking, the Father would run and ring the bell himself. To accustom the Brothers to great punctuality he prescribed a penance for the Brother who would arrive last at a Community exercise; also, if anyone stopped away from an exercise, he was bound to inform the Superior and ask a penance, if the absence was wilful or the result of negligence. It was thus that the good Father employed every means that his zeal could suggest, to accustom the Brothers to regularity and to the Community spirit.



CHAPTER XX.

HIS ZEAL FOR THE GLORY OF GOD AND THE SALVATION OF SOULS.

ZEAL is both the fruit and the incontestable proof of charity. Indeed, one cannot love God without wishing Him to be known, loved and served by all men; without feeling grieved at seeing Him offended; and without desiring to procure for one's neighbour, those spiritual blessings by which he may attain eternal life. Man's zeal is ever in proportion to his charity. He who has great love for God, is eaten up with zeal; he who loves little, has but little zeal. The saints, who all excelled in charity, have likewise all excelled in the virtue of zeal; but they exercised it differently, and according to their respective states and circumstances.

The whole life of Father Champagnat was but one continuous work of zeal, and the reader has only to remember the principal circumstances of it, to understand to what perfection this venerable ecclesiastic attained in this virtue. 'To love God,' he would sometimes say, 'to love God and labour to make Him loved, ought to be the whole life of a Brother.' In these few words, and without knowing it, he has portrayed himself, and given his whole history. To aim at union with God, by the practice of the most excellent virtues, and labour to gain souls to Him; such was the object of his whole life. Follow him from the moment he resolved to embrace the ecclesiastical state

down till his death, at all times and in all places, you will find him occupied in works of zeal.

While he pursued his studies, he employed all his spare time during the vacations in catechising the children of the village, in visiting the sick, preparing them for a happy death, in consoling the afflicted and teaching them to sanctify their sufferings, in reading pious books and giving familiar instructions to his relatives, his neighbours, and a great number of people who listened to him with pleasure. Although wholly devoted to his clerical studies, he nevertheless found sufficient time to form the plans of his Institute, to treat of this important affair in his long communings with God, and thus, to become thoroughly penetrated with its spirit and the principles on which it was to be based, so that he was quite prepared to begin it on the first day of his sacred ministry.

Appointed curate at Lavalla, he reformed the entire parish by his zealous labours. Confessions, instructions, catechising the children, visiting the sick and the schools, private interviews with those who had neglected to approach the Sacraments, occupied almost all his time; moreover, he found time to teach the Brothers, to train them to virtue, and to be good catechists, by correcting in their manner and mode of teaching everything that might prevent their success in this important function. He was diligent in finding out where there was any good to be done. If it came to his knowledge that there was disunion in a family, he hastened to establish peace and concord among its members. When there was a public distribution of bread to the poor in the neighbourhood, he never failed to be present, in order that spiritual alms might not be wanting. On these occasions he addressed a few words to the poor people, exhorting them to support their privations without complaint; to sanctify their poverty by submitting to the will of God, by humility, by patience, and by being careful to unite their sufferings with those of Jesus Christ.

Although his zeal inclined him to all the works that might promote the sanctification of his neighbour, he had a special attraction for those whose object was the Christian instruction and education of youth. He felt a great consolation, and even a kind of relaxation, in teaching Catechism to the children and inspiring them with virtue and piety. He would frequently

stop in the streets, or wherever he met any children, to hear them repeat the mysteries of our holy Religion, to enquire if they attended school, and to give them a word of advice. He sometimes passed whole hours in teaching Catechism to the little shepherds, and other children whom he found in the fields, or in houses when he went to visit the sick. In his journeys if he fell in with children, he immediately started a conversation with them, and after a few moments he would kindly ask them if they had made their First Communion, or if they attended the instructions in the church. He would adroitly learn from them if they knew the principal mysteries and the great truths of salvation; and he would almost imperceptibly teach them or make them repeat the mysteries after him. He was often heard to say: 'I cannot see a child without feeling urged to teach him how much Jesus Christ has loved him, and how much he ought in return to love this divine Saviour.'

Sometimes in seeing groups of children idle in the streets, left to themselves and running about, he would say: 'See those children who perhaps do not know Jesus Christ, and are still ignorant of the consoling truths of Religion, that God is their Father, and that they are destined to see Him in heaven. Poor children! how I pity you! how guilty your parents must be to allow you to grow up in ignorance without taking any care of you! What good the Brothers could do,' he added, 'if there was a good school here; those children would not be in the streets, where they see so many bad examples, and learn nothing but evil. They would be in school, sheltered from the dangers of the world, learning virtue and piety, and acquiring such instruction as would be useful to them in after life.'

The sad state of so many children growing up without education, made him ardently desire to have Brothers. One day, passing by a number of workers, all young men of about twenty years of age, after considering them a while, he said: 'What fine novices they would be if they joined us! What a pity they are for the world! If they knew the happiness of serving God and labouring for the salvation of souls, how soon they would leave all things to enter our novitiate.' Then, he added, 'The happiness of the religious life appears to me so great, and I so ardently desire to have Brothers to give to all the parishes that have none, that I rarely meet young men without feeling the

same desire and asking God to call them to this grand vocation.' He often prescribed novenas in the Community, to beg of God to send him subjects, and this was one of the principal intentions he had in his exercises of piety. But firmly convinced that the Brothers do good, only in so far as they have the spirit of their state, he considered it one of his first duties to train them in solid virtue, to make them good catechists, and to inspire them with great zeal for the sanctification of the children. This capital point was his everyday occupation, and the great object of his solicitude. The instructions which he gave them on this subject would fill volumes, but not to be too long we shall give here only a few of his thoughts on this matter.

The first thing which he endeavoured to impress on the minds of the Brothers was the object of their vocation. 'Do not forget,' said he to them, 'that the primary instruction which you ought to give the children, is not, properly speaking, the end which we proposed to ourselves in founding this Society; it is only a means to attain this end more easily and more completely. The object of your vocation is to impart Christian education to children, that is, to teach them catechism, the prayers, and to train them to piety and virtue.

'The Parish Priests who call you to their parishes, entrust you in a great measure with this part of their ministry. As soon as the parents send you their children they leave you the whole care of their religious instruction, and take no more trouble with their religious education, to make them pray or go to confession; they believe that they have fulfilled their obligations on this important point, when they have confided their children to you. If, therefore, you were to neglect the instruction and Christian education of your pupils, besides offending God and failing in the first and most sacred of your duties as teachers, you would betray the confidence of the Pastors of the Church and the Founders of your school; you would abuse the good faith of the parents who send you their children, that you may give them, above all, good religious principles; you would ruin this Institute, by abandoning the object for which it was founded, and you would oppose the designs which God had in establishing it. Let no one, then, under pretext that he has to teach secular subjects neglect the Catechism, or say that he cannot devote to this exercise all the time prescribed by the Rule. Remember that your first object

is to impart a Christian education to the children confided to you, that we have consented to teach them secular science only that we may thereby have it in our power to teach them Catechism every day, and, thereby, be able to impress more deeply in their minds and hearts the science of salvation. History, grammar, drawing, and all other similar subjects ought to be in your hands, like so many baits to entice the children to school and to keep them at it.

‘Do you know what the missionaries do in savage countries? They take little mirrors, knives, boxes, and many other objects of the same kind, which they present to the savages in order to attract them. They promise them these toys, if they will listen to them and allow themselves to be instructed, and, whilst their attention is excited by these objects, the missionary speaks to them of God, and instructs them in the truths of Religion. Do likewise with your children. Show them pages of fine writing, praise drawing, geography, and all the other subjects taught in schools, but do not forget that Catechism is *the* lesson, and that it should always hold the first place. Moreover, be careful that all the subjects you teach turn to the service of Religion, nourish the faith and piety of your children, and lead them to the love of God and of the Church.’

Father Champagnat had a special talent for doing what he here recommends to the Brothers. In one of his visits, having entered the school during the lesson in drawing and geometry, he commenced questioning the boys to test their knowledge of these subjects, then he added: ‘My dear young friends, I see with pleasure that you know how to measure a field. That is very good indeed, and it may be useful to you later on; but do not forget to learn how to measure Heaven. One learns to measure Heaven by learning how much it is worth, what is to be done to gain it, and what it cost Jesus Christ to procure us a place in it! Oh! my dear boys, it is there that we find something to measure; its extent, its surpassing beauty, its infinite riches! You know the scale of proportion; you have just shown it to me; can you tell me what is the scale of Heaven! My dear children, it is the commandments of God; if you know them and keep them, they will serve you as a ladder by which you may reach Heaven.’

On another occasion, finding the children at French history, he asked, ‘What is the lesson for to-day?’ ‘It is the reign of

Clovis,' was the answer. He then heard the children describe it, and when they came to the battle of Tolbiac, he stopped them and then asked: 'What does the history of this battle teach us? I see you are puzzled. Well! I will tell you, if you promise me not to forget it. This story teaches us three things.

'1. The power of prayer. Clovis only addresses himself to God in a short ejaculation, and this short prayer obtains him a glorious victory.

'2. That piety, that is to say prayer, is profitable for all things, that it obtains for us the protection of God, and success even in temporal matters when they are in the order of Providence, as well as in spiritual matters. Thus, prayer may obtain for a general, victory over the enemies of his country, for a workman, success in his trade, for a pupil, intelligence to learn his lessons and to make progress in his studies.

'3. That prayer may, with a far greater certainty, obtain for us a victory over the enemies of our salvation. Every day, my dear children, we are obliged to go to war and to fight against the devil who tries to make us offend God and lose our souls; but we shall always come off victorious, if, like Clovis, we pray, if we call Jesus to our aid, if, as Clovis did, we promise to serve Him and to have no other God but Him.'

One day, when the good Father was himself giving the Brothers a lesson in geography, and the subject being the capitals and other important towns of Asia, when they came to Jerusalem, he asked, 'What do you remark concerning this town?' When the Brother had answered in the words of the geography which he was learning, the Father said, 'This town, since the death of our Lord, stands unique in history for its vicissitudes. It has changed masters seventeen times, that is, it has been possessed by the princes of seventeen different dynasties. It has belonged to and still is in the hands of the most inveterate enemies of Christianity; but, notwithstanding all these changes, in spite of all the machinations of the wicked, and of hell, the Holy Sepulchre has always been respected, the public worship of the Christian Religion, has been constantly maintained therein, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass has been constantly offered up and the faithful of every nation have never ceased to visit the Tomb of our Lord. Thus are fulfilled the words of Holy Writ, a veritable prophecy: *Rule thou in the midst of thy enemies.* (Ps. cix, 2.)

The Sepulchre of our Lord remains intact; moreover it is respected and venerated; it is glorious, although in the hands of the wicked, of the persecutors of the Christian Religion, of the enemies of our Lord; an evident proof of His power, His goodness, and His immense love for men. Yes, it is the love that Jesus Christ has for sinners, that induces Him to leave in their hands His Sepulchre and all the places which He consecrated and sanctified by His presence, by His sufferings, and by the mysteries of His sacred life. He wishes that Calvary on which He suffered and died, and that the Tomb in which He was laid, should remain in the hands of His enemies, to remind them continually of what He has done for their salvation. The vicissitudes of Jerusalem are also a figure of the sinner who abandons God to give himself up to vice and wickedness and who has as many masters, or rather tyrants, as he has got passions.'

It was thus that the good Father made every lesson subservient to piety and made all secular knowledge serve him to teach Religion to the children, and to cultivate at the same time, their minds and their hearts.

Our pious Founder was never more eloquent, or more pathetic, than when he spoke of Catechism, of the means of gaining children to God, and of the good that a zealous Brother may do. The coldest, the most indifferent, could not listen to him without being moved to form a resolution to teach the Catechism to the best of their ability for the future. 'My dear Brothers,' he once said, 'how exalted is your employment in the sight of God! how fortunate you are to be chosen for such a noble office! You do what Jesus Christ did, while here on earth; you teach the same mysteries, the same truths; you do what the Apostles, the Doctors of the Church, and the greatest Saints did; you perform a duty which the angels contemplate with envy, but which it is not given to them to discharge. You have in your hands the price of the Blood of Jesus Christ; your children will, after God, be indebted to you for their salvation. The divine Saviour gives you the most precious portion of His church to cultivate. He confides to you the most cherished portion of His flock, the children! The children whom He calls to Himself, whom He wishes to see gathered around him. *Suffer the little children to come unto Me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God.* (St. Mark x, 14.) The children in whom

He takes His delight. *My delights are to be with the children of men* (Prov. viii, 31)—the children whom He caressed, whom He blessed. And this divine Saviour, to induce you to take great care of these tender children, to respect them, to treat them with kindness, says to us: *Amen I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to Me.* (St. Matt. xxv 40.)

‘To bring up a child, that is, to instruct him in the truths of Religion, to train him to virtue and teach him to love God, is a duty greater and more sublime than that of governing the world! To teach a child a lesson in Catechism, a prayer, such as the *Our Father* or the *Hail Mary*, is a greater and more meritorious act in the sight of God than to gain a battle. A Catechism, I mean a well taught Catechism, is more profitable than the greatest penances you can perform; this is the teaching of St. Gregory the Great. “He,” says this holy Doctor, “who macerates his body by the austerities of penance is less agreeable to God and has less merit in his sight than he has who labours to gain souls to Him.” Have you ever clearly understood this? And our Lord, who is Truth itself, assures us that *he that shall do and teach*, the Christian truths, the Commandments of God, *the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.* (St. Matt. v. 19.) In the same way as among men, we call those great, who distinguish themselves by their genius, their noble sentiments, their glorious deeds, and their eminent worth, so does God call great, those who keep His holy law, and who, by their lessons and good examples, induce others to observe it.’

‘My dear Brothers,’ he said in a Retreat, ‘sometimes you are frightened by the thought of the faults of your past life; you fear death, you tremble at the thought of hell. Listen to what the Holy Ghost says by the mouth of St. James: *He who causeth a sinner to be converted from the error of his way, shall save his soul from death and shall cover a multitude of sins.* (St. James v. 20.) How many sins you may prevent! How many souls you may save! How many children you may preserve from hell! How many times, therefore, do you redeem your own soul, by saving that of your neighbour! How many times you cover the multitude of your sins, if you diligently fulfil the ministry entrusted to you; if, by your vigilance and careful superintendence, you prevent your children from offending God! The number of faults that you may prevent is incalculable. You have eighty

and sometimes a hundred and more children in your school. If these children were not with you they would for the greater part be in the streets, in bad company, where they would learn to swear, to blaspheme, and commit other acts equally wicked. I say, therefore, that should you really not teach them anything, but merely keep them off the streets, you would be doing an immense good ; for perhaps there is not one of your pupils, who, if left to himself, would not commit several faults which you prevent by keeping him in school. St. John Francis Regis said : "*If I can prevent but one mortal sin, I shall consider myself well rewarded for all my labours.*" How much then ought you to esteem your holy state in which you may be able to prevent hundreds of sins every day ! Count the days you have spent in teaching school, the number of children you have taught and superintended ; you will have an idea of the good you have done, and may yet do.

‘ But some will say that there is indeed much good to be done among the children, and that they are easily formed to virtue ; but they add, with sorrow, that very few of them persevere in these happy dispositions, and that, when they grow up, they are nearly all led astray by the torrent of their passions. To this I may answer that, to preserve the innocence of these children for some years, to train them to the practices of virtue and Christian piety, to give them solid religious instruction, and enable them to make a good First Communion, all this is of itself a great good. But the fruit of your labours does not end there. The children whom you have brought up with care, having known the charms and attractions of virtue, knowing by experience how good God is, and how happy one feels in His service, will, if they happen to go astray, more easily return to the path of virtue. As they will not find in the pleasures and enjoyments of the world that happiness which they expected, they will leave the ways of vice and return to the practice of virtue.

‘ See the prodigal son ; what is it that urges him to return and cast himself at the feet of his good father ? It is the contrast he makes between the possessions and happiness he enjoyed in his father’s house and the wretched state to which he was reduced since he left it. If he had not known his father and the happiness of being near him, he would most probably never have thought of returning to him and throwing himself into his arms to recover his friendship.

‘A good First Communion is a pledge of salvation—I was going to say a mark of predestination ; it is one foot in Heaven. We see in the Gospel, that our Lord bestowed graces and blessings wherever he was well received, and that He foretold only misfortune to those who did not profit by His visit, to those who received Him badly. When a man enters a house on peaceful and friendly intent, if he is badly treated, he leaves it with indignation and resolves never again to enter that house. Such is the manner in which our Lord usually acts when He enters a heart for the first time ; if He is badly received, if He finds there His enemies, the devil and mortal sin, He withdraws never to return. One of the reasons why so many persons keep away from the Sacraments, is because they profaned them the first time they approached. To enable a child to make a good First Communion, is therefore to procure him the most precious of all gifts ; it is to place him and fix him in the way of salvation, it is to give him the surest and most efficacious means to persevere in it and be all his life a good Christian.

‘But, to prepare a child for his First Communion, is not the work of a few days, it requires several months and sometimes even several years. Indeed, it takes sometime to give a child solid instruction, to correct him of his defects and lead him to virtue, to inspire him with sentiments of piety, with love and esteem for the law of God and the habit of religious practices. In the same way, it is only by long continued and oft repeated lessons and instructions, that he can be brought to understand the importance of the action he is going to perform and thus made to acquire the dispositions necessary for it. You ought, of course, to prepare your children for their First Communion, by a few days’ retreat ; but this retreat which may be productive of the most happy fruits, and which I advise you to make with all possible care and zeal, is only the proximate preparation and the last effort to dispose your children to receive our Lord worthily. The remote preparation should be begun when they have reached the age of eight or nine years ; from that on, you should speak to them of this great act, of the dispositions it requires in them, and of the means they should employ to prepare themselves for it.’

During the eight years that Father Champagnat was curate at Lavalla, he did exactly what he here recommends to his

Brothers. As we have already noticed in his life, he assembled the very little children to catechise them, to teach them to say their prayers and assist with modesty at the offices of the Church, and to speak to them of their First Communion. He heard their confessions every three months, superintended them in the church, recommended them to avoid bad companions, and to attend school; he also urged them to pray to our Lord, to the Blessed Virgin, and to their Guardian Angel, for the grace to make a good First Communion. When the time for First Communion approached, he was still more assiduous in looking after them and teaching them Catechism; he obliged them to assist at Holy Mass almost every day; he heard their confessions more frequently, and, at length, terminated this long preparation by a retreat of several days, during which he was constantly with them, in order to inspire them with the holy dispositions which are necessary for a worthy reception of Jesus Christ.

In speaking of the First Communion, he never omitted to recommend the Brothers to combat the false shame which often makes children either slur over or conceal their sins in confession. 'One of the most dangerous snares of the devil,' said he to the Brothers, 'is to exaggerate the gravity of faults, to cause young people great confusion concerning them, to make them believe that, if they mention them in confession, the confessor will scold them, and keep them back from their First Communion. Combat this dangerous temptation, and say to them: "Children, your faults are not always so grievous as they appear to you; frequently the devil makes you believe that certain things are mortal sins, when, in reality, they are only trifles. Besides, however grievous or numerous your faults may be, they will never surprise your confessor, and they will not render you unworthy of making your First Communion, if you confess them and detest them sincerely." Instruct them carefully on the necessity and the integrity of confession. Endeavour to inspire them with an extreme horror of sacrilege, and make them understand well that the greatest evil that could befall them would be to profane the Sacraments. It is of the utmost importance to insist on this point, and to return to it frequently. If your instructions are carefully prepared, and if you illustrate them by a few well selected examples, they will never be fruitless.'

'True zeal,' said Father Champagnat in another instruction,

'is generous and constant. It should be so ; for the salvation of a soul is something great, and it deserves to be purchased at the cost of many sacrifices. To procure it, God the Father gave His only Son ; Jesus Christ became man ; He subjected Himself to all our infirmities, sin excepted, He laboured thirty-three years, He shed His Blood and sacrificed His life, He gives Himself in the Holy Eucharist and immolates Himself daily on our altars. If we wish to gain children to God and co-operate with Jesus in their salvation, we must, after the example of our divine Saviour, sacrifice our health, our strength, our labours, and if necessary, our very life. The salvation of a soul is not to be purchased at a lower price ; this is easily understood, since each soul cost the Blood of a God-Man. A Brother who has not this zeal and devotedness is unworthy of the mission entrusted to him. A truly generous zeal recoils from no sacrifice, it never spares itself ; it seizes every occasion of being useful to the children, of instructing them, of correcting their defects, of training them to virtue and leading them to God ; it makes itself all to all ; it assumes every form and employs every means to procure their salvation. The Brother who never loses sight of his children, either by day or by night, who follows them everywhere, who sacrifices his studies, his rest, his recreations to be always with them, to keep them in the path of duty and preserve their innocence, who, everywhere, attends to their education and their sanctification, has a truly generous zeal. I sometimes hear Brothers say, that teaching is laborious and they wish to be exempted from it. If they knew the value of souls, and how pleasing it is to God to contribute to the salvation of even one of them, fifty years teaching would cost them nothing, if by this, they could put one soul on the road to Heaven. Others find the children hard to manage, vulgar, ungrateful, full of defects, and cannot bear to be with them. Such Brothers have no zeal at all ; they have not the spirit of their vocation, the spirit of Jesus Christ, and know not what it is to do the work of God. If the children were perfect, they would not need your care ; it is precisely because they have defects that it is necessary to give them a good education, that there is much merit in teaching them, in bearing with and training them.

'See what it cost the Apostles to convert the world. All of

them gave their lives in the accomplishment of this task. See also what is done by the missionaries to instruct the savages of the New World and of Oceanica; they expose themselves to every kind of danger, to every privation in order to procure the salvation of these poor people; and can we expect to save our souls without suffering anything? Can we seek an easy and comfortable life? or should we complain when we meet with contradiction on the part of the children or their parents, if such is our way of acting? Alas! we know little of the ways of God! Our thoughts and our sentiments are altogether carnal! It was by the Cross and by His sufferings that Jesus Christ redeemed the world, and we would labour for the salvation of souls by the enjoyment of pleasures and the gratification of nature! With such sentiments as these, we need not expect our ministry to be productive of much fruit.

‘But another thing not less necessary than generosity, and a thing which is the mark of true zeal, is to pray for the children confided to you. Your instructions, your good counsels, and even your corrections, are seeds which you sow in the minds and hearts of your children; but, to grow and produce fruits, these seeds must be watered by prayer. Without moisture, the earth can produce nothing; without prayer we can do nothing, either for ourselves or others. The more defects certain children have, the harder they are to manage, and to train up, the less profit they derive from your care and instructions, so much the more ought you to pray for them. Such children are brought to God only by prayer; therefore recommend them every day to our Lord and to our Blessed Lady. Your perseverance in praying for them, is the greatest act of charity you can do for them; it is the surest means of changing them and leading them back to the path of virtue.’

After this discourse, which he pronounced with great energy, a Brother stood up to ask, if, on the festivals of the Blessed Virgin and other feast days, when there is service in the church, the Brothers would not do well to give a full holiday to the children so as to have more time for recollection and prayer. ‘My dear friend,’ answered the Father, ‘on such days you can do nothing better than stay with your pupils. Assemble these little children in the school, make them pray, let them learn the Gospel of the day and recite it; give them a short instruction on

the mystery which the Church commemorates ; bring them to the services of the Church, this is for you the most excellent of all prayers. It is an act of charity and zeal more pleasing to Mary, than if you passed the whole day prostrate before her altar. Besides, you could not choose a more fitting occasion to give your children an instruction regarding the Blessed Virgin, and I do not believe that there is one Brother who could make up his mind to pass a Feast of Mary, who is the Mother, the Patroness, the Model and first Superior of this Society, without speaking of her to the children. For, a true Marist Brother is not satisfied with loving and serving this august Virgin, he strives to make her loved and served by all his pupils, and he employs every means that his zeal and piety can suggest, to inspire them with profound respect, unlimited confidence, and filial love for this divine Mother. Devotion to Mary tends to spread itself, and it is a proof that one is wanting in this precious devotion, when he does not seek to propagate it and communicate it to others.'

The Rule prescribes teaching Catechism twice a day. In the beginning of the Society, the Brothers taught it even three times a day : for, every evening, the children of the village, whether they attended school or not, met at the house, and one of the Brothers taught them Catechism for an hour ; moreover, the Brothers went, especially on Sundays and Thursdays, to teach Catechism in the hamlets of the parish. Afterwards, some younger members, having lost somewhat of the spirit of zeal which animated the first Brothers, thought it sufficient to teach Catechism once a day. They made the proposal to Father Champagnat ; and, in order to make him enter into their views and prevail on him to accept their plan, they said there was not time enough for other subjects. 'My friends,' said he, 'our timetable provides a suitable time for each branch you have to teach, and although this time might seem rather limited for some of the subjects marked in your programme, it is not that which is allotted to Catechism that ought to be curtailed but rather some of the less important branches of primary instruction.' 'Father,' answered one of the Brothers, 'to me they all appear important for the success of our school.' 'Yes,' replied the Father, 'but the Catechism contributes more than all the sciences to the success of the schools, and besides, it is indispensable to the child for his good conduct, his prosperity in temporal affairs, and above all, for the

success of the great affair of his eternity.' 'But, Father, allow me to remark that the Christian Brothers, who certainly esteem Catechism as much as we do, teach it only once a day.' 'That does not prove that you should teach it only once a day.

'1. Because it is very probable, that if the Venerable de la Salle founded his Institute in our days, he would prescribe the Catechism to be taught twice a day by his Brothers. Indeed, when the Congregation of the Christian Brothers was founded, more than a hundred and fifty years ago, the parents, who, at that time, were eminently religious, educated their children themselves, and the Brothers had only to complete in the school the instructions which the children received at home. Unfortunately, now-a-days, things are completely changed; for the greater part of the parents neither know nor practise their Religion; they are completely absorbed in temporal concerns and take no part whatever in the education of their children; they leave that entirely to you. It is therefore necessary at the present time, to teach Catechism in school oftener than was done formerly.

'2. Because our children are not so long at school as those of the Christian Brothers. In towns, children go to school at an earlier age; they remain longer at it and attend more regularly; besides, they are generally more intelligent, and being accustomed to speak French, instead of *patois*, like the country children, they understand much better the instructions given them. As to us, our schools being nearly all in country places, we have the children only some months in the year. They are often grown up when they are sent to us, and as soon as they are wanted to work they are withdrawn. It is, therefore, necessary for us to take advantage of the short time we have them at school, to instruct them sufficiently in the truths of salvation, and, for that purpose to teach them Catechism twice a day. It has frequently been necessary even to teach it three times a day, when the children were preparing for First Communion, otherwise they would not have been sufficiently instructed. Besides, although we teach Catechism twice a day, we do not devote more time to it than the Christian Brothers do. They teach it half-an-hour on ordinary days, an hour on the eve of a holiday, and an hour and a-half on Sundays and festivals; this gives them five hours a week. We have not more.'

But it was not in his instructions only that the good Father

endeavoured to inspire his Brothers with a holy zeal for the sanctification of children ; in his private intercourse with them, and in his letters, he was ever returning to this subject. In a circular addressed to all the houses of the Society he said : ' I ardently desire that, after the example of Jesus Christ, our divine model, you should have a tender affection for the children. Break to them the spiritual bread of Religion with a holy zeal ; make every effort to lead them to piety and to engrave on their hearts sentiments of virtue that can never be effaced.'

' Tell your children,' he wrote to a Brother, ' that God loves all those among them who are good, because they resemble Jesus Christ who is infinitely good, and that He also loves those who are not good, because He expects them to become good. Tell them that our Blessed Lady loves them, because she is specially the Mother of all those children who attend our schools.'

After giving excellent advice to a Brother Director ' to help him to do good in the trying position in which he was placed, the good Father said to him : ' Never cease telling your children that they are the friends of the saints, the children of Mary, the members and co-heirs of Jesus Christ ; that this divine Saviour eagerly desires to possess their hearts, that He is jealous of them, that it is with the greatest sorrow that He sees the devil take possession of them, that He is ready, were it necessary, to die again on the Cross to prove His love for them. Say to them, " Do you know, children, why God loves you so much ? It is because you are redeemed with the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ, and you may become great saints without much trouble, if you sincerely desire it ; for the good Jesus promises to take you on His shoulders in order to save you the fatigue of walking ! Oh ! how miserable those amongst you are, who feel a dislike for their Catechism and learn it badly ; they will not have the happiness of knowing and loving this amiable Redeemer." '

' Endeavour to teach Catechism well,' he wrote to another ; ' spare no pains to train your children to virtue. Make them thoroughly understand that, without piety, without the fear of God, they can never be happy ; that there is no peace for the wicked, that God alone can make them happy, because it is for God alone that they are created.' ' My dear friends,' he wrote to the Brothers of another establishment, ' do all in your power for the prosperity of your school. Never lose sight of the great

amount of good you can do ; this good and the immense reward awaiting you, cannot fail to stimulate your zeal and excite your courage. See the tender affection the Saviour of the world has for children, He openly blames the Apostles for keeping them back from Him. You, my friends, you not only do not prevent the children from approaching the divine Saviour, but you make every effort to lead them to Him. O ! how favourably you will be received by Him at the hour of death ! How generously He will repay the sacrifices you have made in teaching your children ! What glory ! what happiness this ever-liberal Master prepares for you, He who will not leave unrewarded even a cup of cold water given in His name, and who has pledged His word to accept as done to Himself whatever you do to these little ones !'

'You ask me,' he said to a Brother Director, 'to tell you what are the best means to succeed in your employment, to secure the prosperity of your establishment. Here are the means which I consider the most efficacious.

'1. Interest the Blessed Virgin in your favour, and for this purpose, forget not to look upon her as the first Superior of your house, and consequently do nothing of importance without consulting her. Place yourself, your Brothers, your children, your whole house under her protection. Do all in your power to promote her honour, and to inspire devotion towards her. Apply to her in all your wants, and tell her that after you have done your best, so much the worse for her if her affairs do not succeed.

'2. Take every possible care of the poorest, the most ignorant, and the dullest children ; show them every kindness, interrogate them often, and be careful to show on all occasions that you esteem them, and love them all the more, because they are less favoured with the gifts of fortune and of nature. Destitute children are in a school, what the sick are in a house—subjects of blessing and prosperity when they are looked upon with the eyes of faith, and treated as the suffering members of Jesus Christ.

'3. Be diligent in combating sin, and for this purpose, exercise unwearied vigilance over your children, for it is only by this means that you will be able to preserve their innocence and make them avoid evil. Strive to inspire them with an extreme horror of mortal sin, and remember that if you have the happiness of preserving them from it, and banishing it from

your establishment, God will infallibly bless your school. It is here that one may say with the Apostle: *If God be for us who is against us?* (Rom. viii, 31.) If God be with you and your children by His grace and His love, nothing can injure you. On the contrary, if sin and the devil enter your establishment, it will perish, or at least it will be on the brink of destruction, although it were patronised by the authorities and all the influential people of the country.

‘Employ these three means, my dear Brother, and I will answer for the success of your establishment; tell your children that I never go up to the altar without thinking of you and of them.’ Then he adds: ‘O! how I should like to teach the children, and to devote myself in a more special manner to lead them to virtue!’

We cannot more fittingly close this chapter, than by relating how the pious Founder himself sometimes concluded his instructions on the necessity of teaching Catechism well. After saying everything his zeal could suggest, to make the Brothers thoroughly understand their obligations on this all-important point, he terminated thus: ‘In speaking to you in this manner I am performing a duty of conscience; it now remains with you to perform yours. If you fail to do it, if you neglect to instruct your children, to form them to piety, you may render yourselves very guilty; you will have to answer before God for the soul of each of them, and He will demand an account of you for all the faults which ignorance of Religion, and want of education will have caused them to commit.’





CHAPTER XXI.

HIS CHARITY TOWARDS THE POOR.

FATHER CHAMPAGNAT did not confine his charity to the spiritual works of mercy ; he also assisted the poor in their corporal wants, as much as the limited resources of the Community permitted. He was moved to this act of Charity by three causes :—

(1.) His kindness of heart, which would not suffer him to see his neighbour in want, without being touched with compassion and feeling impelled to help him.

(2.) The great love and respect which he entertained for our Lord made poor for us, of which we are reminded by the poor who are his images.

(3.) His ardent desire of labouring for the salvation of souls, which almsgiving afforded him an opportunity of satisfying. In giving alms, he always addressed a few words of edification to those who begged for help. If it was a child who asked him an alms, he would question him to see if he knew the principal mysteries of Religion, and then would give him as occasion required, an exhortation or a short instruction.

On a visit to Paris, when he alighted from the conveyance, several little children ran up to him, and as they were accustomed to do, asked him for a halfpenny. ‘Willingly,’ said the Father, ‘if you know your Catechism.’ He began at once to question them on the principal mysteries, and great was his sorrow to find a little boy, ten years old, who was completely ignorant of

them. In giving him an alms, the Father said to him: 'My child, I shall pass this way again in about a month, and if you have learned the mysteries I will give you five sous. The boy promised to ask his comrades or others to teach him, and he kept his word. When Father Champagnat returned that way, he noticed the same little fellow running towards him and crying out: 'Sir, I have learned my Catechism, will you give me the five sous you promised me.' He knew the mysteries very well; and it was with great pleasure that Father Champagnat gave him his reward.

When he was appointed curate at Lavalla, he found a number of poor negligent parents who allowed their children to grow up in ignorance of the truths of Religion, by not sending them either to school or to Catechism; he took these children, placed them with the Brothers, and provided food and clothing for them. In the course of the first year he had twelve of them; during the following years the number increased, and he took in as many as the house could accommodate. He did not confine his charity to the children only, all the poor of the parish felt its effects, as every one of them was assisted by him. To some of them he procured bread, to others clothing or linen. He had suitable food prepared for those who were sick, and appointed two Brothers or other charitable persons to attend them during the night.

One day, he was called to attend a sick person. He hastened to visit him, and found a poor wretch, all covered with ulcers and lying on a little straw, with only a few rags to cover his nakedness and his sores. Touched with deep compassion at the sight of so much misery and suffering, he first addressed a few words of consolation to the sick man; then, hurrying home, he called for the Brother procurator and told him to bring immediately a paillasse, sheets, and blankets, to the poor man. 'But, Father,' said the Brother, we have no paillasses except those which are in use.' 'How!' replied the Father, 'you cannot find a single paillasse in the house!' 'No, Father, not one; and you may remember that I gave away the last one, only a few days ago.' 'Well then,' said the Father, 'take the one in my bed and bring it at once to him.' The good Father often divested himself of some part of his personal effects, to supply the wants of a poor person or of some Brother.

On another occasion he was requested by a pious person to visit an unfortunate man, who, although a cripple, sick, and plunged in the deepest misery, vomited forth horrible blasphemies against Religion, and grossly insulted and abused those who had the charity to assist him in any way. The good Father made every exertion to soften the hardness of this man's heart, but all in vain; he was obliged to withdraw, in order not to occasion fresh blasphemies. Arrived at the house, he said to the Brother whose duty it was to take alms to the poor: 'There is only one way of gaining that man, and that is, by doing him good, and answering his insults and blasphemies by kind services. Charity, and Charity alone, can work his conversion. Therefore, you must procure him all that he stands in need of; let someone constantly remain beside him to serve him, to stop with him during the night, speak kindly to him and pray earnestly for his conversion; but be careful, for some time yet, not to speak to him about Religion, so as not to give rise to new blasphemies; God will do the rest.' This prudent advice was punctually followed and with the most happy results. The sick man, seeing himself surrounded with so much care and attention, and treated so charitably, was at last moved by it, and one day, cried out: 'O! I see now that Religion is true, since it inspires you with so much devotedness and such charity; nothing else could have made you, not only support me, which is of itself a great deal, but also serve me and bestow on me more care than could be done by my own friends or servants if I had any.' He then asked for Father Champagnat, to whom he made his confession, after asking pardon several times, for having received him so badly at first. The man died shortly after, in the most christian sentiments, and fortified with the Sacraments of the Church.

About the same time, Father Champagnat was called to the bedside of a sick woman to hear her confession. He found her in a very destitute condition, even without fuel to make a fire. After hearing her confession, he consoled her, exhorted her to put her trust in God and to offer Him her privations and sufferings; but, knowing that in such a situation, kind words are not sufficient, he sent her whatever she required in the way of food, clothing, and firing. He further procured a nurse to attend her by day and night, and engaged a doctor to give her, through charity, the benefit of his professional skill.

The woman having died, the good Father adopted her child. This child, in consequence of the long illness of his mother, and her extreme poverty, had received no religious principles, but had already contracted vicious habits which spoiled his character, and having corrupted his heart, rendered useless the assiduous care bestowed on him. The Father confided him to the Brothers, who supplied him with everything he needed as regards food and clothing. They placed him at school, endeavoured to teach him the principles of Religion, and to correct his defects and bad habits; but instead of profiting by so much care, and of being grateful to his benefactors, he repaid all their kindness by insults, ingratitude, and insubordination. Accustomed to rove about and to follow his own evil inclinations, he could bear neither the restraint and regularity of the school, nor the lessons and paternal counsels of the Brothers. Several times he ran away, preferring to beg his bread and live in misery than to bend his rebellious will and to submit to discipline. Each time, the Brothers took him back and used every means that zeal could suggest to correct him, to attach him to the place and to inspire him with better sentiments; but disheartened by their ill-success, they at last besought Father Champagnat to send him away; 'for,' said they, 'we lose our time with him and, sooner or later, we shall be compelled to dismiss him.' The pious Founder, whose zeal was more constant and more indulgent, requested them to have patience and to pray for the little wretch; but, seeing that they persevered in demanding his dismissal, he said to them: 'My friends, if you want only to get rid of this poor orphan, it is a very easy matter; but what is the use of casting him on the streets? If you abandon him, is there no fear that God will ask you an account of his soul? Are you not afraid also of losing an occasion of practising Charity and zeal, and thus depriving yourselves of the merit of placing this child on the path of virtue? If you cast him off, God will give someone else the grace to bring him up, and you will regret, when too late, the impatience which deprived you of a golden opportunity of doing good. We have adopted this child; we must not abandon him. We must keep him, although he is exceedingly troublesome, and does not correspond to the care we bestow on him; we must labour unceasingly to render him such as we want him to be. Moreover,'

added he, 'take courage, God will not permit all the sacrifices you make and the many acts of charity you perform for this orphan, to be lost. Pray earnestly to God for this child. I am sure that, ere long, he will give you as much consolation as he has given trouble hitherto.' This assurance was not long in being realised. Shortly after this, the boy, who, for several years had, by his bad conduct, given so much annoyance to the Brothers, changed completely. He became mild, docile, wise, and as pious as an angel. After making his First Communion in the most edifying dispositions, he asked to be admitted into the Society, and his request was granted. He greatly esteemed his holy vocation, was a pious, regular, obedient Brother, and, at twenty-one years of age, he died the death of the just, in the arms of Father Champagnat, whom he repeatedly thanked for all he had done for him.

This example reminds us of the advice which Father Champagnat gave the Brothers regarding the children. 'The expulsion of a child,' he said, 'is something extremely serious; it is the last and most dishonourable chastisement that can be inflicted on him. The faults that render such a course necessary are rare among children when there is good discipline in the school, and the master knows how to maintain his authority. If you ask me what are the causes that necessitate this punishment, I answer that I know of none, which of their nature deserve such a punishment, if the delinquent is susceptible of correction and has a sincere desire to amend. Expulsion, in a word, is only for the incorrigible and for those whose vices might contaminate the other pupils. Before expelling a child it is necessary:—

'1. To be perfectly sure of his guilt, and of the gravity of his fault.

'2. To be equally sure that he is truly a *black sheep* and contagious to the rest of the scholars.

'3. To have exhausted every remedy likely to correct him, and prevent contagion.

'4. To pray, to reflect, to take counsel; for so important a matter ought to be treated of, first of all, with God; and prudence demands that one should employ every means that charity can suggest, to ascertain the justice and expediency of such a measure.

'It is not without reason therefore that I have said, that

expulsion is an extremely severe chastisement, and that it ought to be a very rare one indeed. To visit a child with such a punishment because he has disregarded an imprudent threat, because his character displeases, because he is giddy and unruly, because he readily plays truant, and sometimes neglects going to Mass, because he has not performed a penance imposed on him, or for any other similar fault, is to fail in one's duty, it is to sin against justice, and to asperse a child's character before the whole parish; for expulsion supposes serious faults and scandalous conduct. When the expulsion is not justified by the gravity of the fault, it provokes the murmurs and complaints of the people, the anger and hatred of the friends and relatives of the expelled children; it alienates the minds of these children themselves, and causes them to be for ever irritated against the Brothers. Whoever weighs these sad consequences, will not act hastily in such an important matter, nor expel a child in a moment of passion, or for a fault which though apparently grave in itself, is not likely to injure the other pupils, to give scandal, or to interfere seriously with the discipline of the school.

The Brother Director alone has the right to expel a child from the school, no matter what class he belongs to, and any other Brother who would of his own accord, inflict this chastisement would fail essentially in his duty. When a child deserves to be expelled, he should be requested to leave the school himself, or his parents should be sent for; and after informing them of his bad conduct, they should be asked to withdraw him from the school, so as to avoid the unpleasantness of seeing him dismissed from it.

Father Champagnat's mind was constantly occupied with the wants of the poor; he was ever speaking of them. If he saw anyone wasting things, he would say: 'You never think that many poor people want the necessaries of life, and would be very glad to have what you are destroying.' He often said: 'We should be very guilty, if we incurred useless expense, and if we sought for superfluity, whilst so many poor people are without food and clothing. It would be a want of Charity, to be insensible to the privations and miseries of the suffering members of Jesus Christ, and not to utilise the means we have of assisting them, by taking care of things. The saints, who were actuated by divine charity, loved the poor as their brothers. They

deprived themselves of what was necessary, and stripped themselves to relieve the poor.'

In the beginning of each winter, the pious Founder had all the left-off clothing in the house mended and made up into parcels, which he sent to the Brothers in the mountains, with a request to have them distributed among the poor. As someone remarked, that it cost much to mend these clothes, that it would simplify matters, to give them as they were and let the poor repair them themselves, the Father answered: 'That this would simplify matters, I can easily believe; but will the poor people be more pleased? and will our charity be the greater? I doubt it very much. If you give these clothes as they are, many of the poor people will not take the trouble to mend them, and after having worn them for a short time, they will be past use; others will have no thread, or pieces wherewith to mend them. It is better by far, although a little more expensive to us, to have the thing properly done.'

Another act of charity, which Father Champagnat performed in the latter years of his life, was to take care of some old men who, having no means of support, were exposed to the greatest privations. He appointed a Brother to serve them, provided them with everything they stood in need of, and required nothing more of them, than that they should live as good Christians. Several of these men were afflicted with loathsome complaints; to these bodily ailments, several added moral infirmities, which rendered it extremely painful to serve them. But charity which is patient, and kind and beareth all things, rendered our venerated Founder compassionate towards all these evils. It is not necessary to say, that he did not rest satisfied with providing for their physical wants and soothing their bodily sufferings; his zeal led him, above all, to attend to the wants of their souls, to instruct them, to prepare them for a worthy reception of the Sacraments, to teach them to pray and to sanctify their sufferings by resignation to the will of God and union with the sufferings of Jesus Christ. By his advice, these old men followed a regular rule of life, and divided their time between prayer and some occupation in keeping with their health and strength. Assistance at Holy Mass, spiritual reading, the Rosary, and visits to the Blessed Sacrament, filled up their time. A Brother was appointed to watch over, and to

admonish, them when necessary. He performed the religious exercises with them and helped them to discharge this duty in a becoming and pious manner. All these old people closed their days in the most christian-like dispositions, and afforded the good Father the consolation of having been useful to their souls still more than to their bodies.

The spirit of Faith which animated the pious Founder and made him see in the poor, the image of Jesus Christ made poor for us, inspired him with great respect for them, and, if it was not always given him to assist them, at least he never failed to console them. Happening, one day, to visit one of the establishments, he noticed a Brother who seemed to speak in a harsh and offensive manner to a poor person who applied for help. As he was very busy at the time and did not clearly understand what the Brother said, he did not think the matter of much importance at first, but the following night, the incident came back to his mind, and he felt remorse at not having reproved the Brother; the next day, therefore, he sent for him to have an explanation of the matter. The Brother frankly confessed that he had spoken with apparent harshness; but he told the Father, at the same time, that it was necessary to act in this manner, in order to get rid of one who always imposed on the goodness of those who treated him kindly. But, although the virtue and character of the Brother were above suspicion, and the Father appeared satisfied with his explanation, still he returned to the house, which was at about nine miles' distance from the Hermitage, to consult an ecclesiastic who belonged to the place, and who could explain the matter, as he had seen what had happened; nor did he rest satisfied until this ecclesiastic had told him that the Brother was not to be blamed, as the character and want of sense of the poor man rendered such treatment necessary in his case.

As his state and limited resources did not permit him to procure for the poor all the temporal relief he desired, he made ample compensation for it, by training teachers to give primary instruction and Christian education to poor children. It was especially for them that he founded his Institute, and he wished the Brothers to consider themselves as specially charged with their instruction. In the first engagement that the Brothers contracted, this point is expressly mentioned, and the pious Founder considered it so important that he assigned to it the

first place. The words are: '*We bind ourselves above all, to teach all the poor children who shall be sent to us by the Parish Priest.*' He would not have their instruction limited to the Catechism, but he wanted them to be taught all the subjects they might require in after life, and that no distinction whatever should be made between them and the children of the rich. Equality ought to be the grand law of the Brothers' schools. In them there should be no preference, no distinction of persons. Each pupil, rich or poor, ought to be treated according to his capacity, his virtue, and his personal merits. This equality ought to extend to every part of the child's education. Consequently, there should be for all, the same class, the same studies, the same rewards, the same penances, and the same care. The poor child should be placed, not according to his worldly condition, but according to his capacity. If his aptitude for learning permits him, he may, like the rich boy, pass through all the classes and exhaust the whole programme of elementary instruction. He may compete with any boy in the school, no matter how wealthy, be placed beside him, and even pass above him. In fine, in the school, the Brothers ought to ignore the social position of the children, and see in them only what faith reveals, consider only their individual worth, love them and treat them all as their own children.

'Nevertheless, this does not mean to say,' wisely remarked Father Champagnat, 'that one may not have some regard for certain children, when the good of these children and the general interest of the school require it. Thus, for example, one should not place a clean respectable child beside one covered with vermin. The parents of the former might very justly feel offended at this treatment; the poor child should be placed so as to prevent his communicating to anyone what renders him offensive to all. In such a case, the attention paid to the respectable child turns to the advantage of the poor one; the precautions adopted to retain the former at school, are intended only to provide the latter with the means of instruction; for, in many cases, if no wealthy parents sent their children to the school, the Brothers' salary would not suffice to support them, and the school could not be maintained. But, if prudence and wisdom sometimes render such precautions necessary, the spirit of faith which reveals to us, in the person of the poor, the image

of Jesus made poor for us, ought to inspire a Brother with great respect and great love for the children of the poor. This love and respect ought to be evinced on all occasions by manifestations of kindness and esteem, by the most assiduous attention to insure the progress of these children by being careful to treat them always like the others. Such is the line of conduct that the pious Founder wished the Brothers to observe towards the children of the poor.





CHAPTER XXII.

WHAT FATHER CHAMPAGNAT DID FOR THE PRIMARY INSTRUCTION
OF THE CHILDREN AND FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT
OF GOOD DISCIPLINE IN THE SCHOOLS.

THE spirit of God, which guided Father Champagnat in his great work, taught him also, that the education given by the Brothers, to produce all its fruits, ought, as much as possible, to be in keeping with the requirements of the times. The first thing to be aimed at, is to keep the children at school as long as possible, so as to remove them from the bad examples they constantly meet with, even in their own families. Now-a-days, it is expected that the children will be taught a great number of subjects, to which the public attach much importance; although in reality they are of little use to the child, and are often prejudicial to him by the bad use he makes of them. Such being the case, the pious Founder understood that, while giving Religion the place it deserves in education, it was necessary that the Brothers' schools should leave nothing to be desired, as regards the efficiency and good direction of the studies; and that the parents should be induced to prefer the Brothers' schools, as much on account of the solid instruction given in them, as from the certainty that their children would receive a thoroughly Christian education. Consequently, he did not hesitate to include in the programme of studies for the Brothers' schools all those subjects usually taught in well-conducted primary schools.

He even went so far as to order, in every important establishment, the formation of a class in which all these subjects should be taught, engaging to supply a Brother for that class, whenever the locality should furnish a sufficient number of scholars to follow the course. He did not ignore the dangers to which such a developed course of instruction might expose children, destined for the most part, to industrial or agricultural pursuits; but considering that we live in an age in which men thirst after knowledge, and seeing that the wicked, urged on by the enemy of all good, make use of this craving for knowledge to obtain possession of the children, and under pretext of giving them primary instruction, inculcate their pernicious doctrines and rob them of their faith and morals, he did not scruple to disregard the inconveniences arising from the teaching of the sciences; inconveniences, which a good religious training would greatly diminish or completely destroy; and which, besides, are far more serious, and without any remedy, in schools taught by mercenary teachers who have no religious principles.

He wanted at all costs, to get the children; but to decide them to leave those godless schools, it was necessary to hold out to them as many inducements as possible, and to promise them as complete an instruction as they could get in secular schools. And besides, he also understood that, if the teaching of secular sciences has some inconveniences, it has this in its favour, that it occupies the child, retains him longer at school, and thus preserves him from idleness, keeps him from bad company and from all the dangerous occasions to which he would be exposed, if, instead of being at school, he were left to himself and allowed to pass his youth in idleness. In fact, any serious occupation whatever, or diligent application to study, while preventing the child from contracting bad habits, preserves his faith, his piety, and his virtue. The knowledge which he acquires, serves to develop his intellectual faculties and qualifies him still more to receive religious principles and to put them in practice.

That a school may prosper and the teaching be effective, it is necessary that the pupils co-operate with the master; because, what the master himself does by his lessons and devotedness, is but little; what he makes the pupils do by study, by industry, and application is everything. The important point, therefore,

is to obtain the free and hearty co-operation of the pupils. To succeed in this, Father Champagnat pointed out emulation as the surest and most efficacious means; and he desired the Brothers to make every possible effort to establish it, and maintain it in their schools. He did not confine this emulation to children of the same class, or the same establishment; he wished it to exist amongst all the schools under the Brothers; and it was for this purpose, that he organised a general competition in writing. Each writing-master was bound to bring with him to the Retreat, the first competition he had given his pupils at the re-opening of the schools, as also the last before the vacations. A committee composed of the ablest Brothers was appointed to compare these two pages of writing, to report on the progress of the scholars of each class, and to classify the schools in the order of merit. That this competition might excite the emulation of both masters and pupils, the Father established a prize for the Brother whose class stood first on the competition list, and a prize for the children who had made the most progress during the year, and who had produced the best writing. It is needless to add that every precaution was taken to prevent deception.

Another means employed by Father Champagnat, to place the schools on a good footing, to promote the progress of the scholars, and to make sure that religious instruction was attended to, was to make an annual visit to each school. If any school was found wanting, he would visit it every three or four months. Besides, in each district, he appointed a Brother Inspector, whose duty it was to visit, every two months, the classes of his district, to draw up a report on the exact state of the school and send the report to the Superior.

Whatever might be the good results obtained by these visits, and by all the other means he adopted to stimulate the zeal of the Brothers and excite emulation among the scholars, he saw very clearly that all would be insufficient to insure the prosperity of the schools, if the masters were not thoroughly efficient: words cannot describe all the trouble he took to render them such. He gave them lessons in reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, and music. He often spent even his recreation in teaching them some of these subjects. He not only initiated the Brothers into these subjects, but he taught them how to teach them to

the children, and thus trained the Brothers in the method of teaching. The simultaneous method, of which the Venerable De la Salle was the originator, having appeared to him the best, he adopted it for his Brothers; and that they might master it thoroughly, he engaged the services of a teacher who knew it perfectly.

In his childhood, Father Champagnat experienced great difficulty in learning to read. Later on, having examined into the cause of this difficulty, he believed that it arose from the incapacity of the masters and the bad method of teaching then in use. After studying and examining this question for several years, and after many trials of different methods of teaching to read, he was convinced that the old names given to the consonants and the spelling resulting therefrom, increased the difficulty and retarded the progress of the pupils. Strong in this conviction, it would appear that he might have at once abandoned a method acknowledged to be defective; but distrusting his own lights, he first consulted several able and competent persons on the matter. After mature reflection, these persons were all of the same opinion, and heartily approved his project. From that time forward his resolution was fixed. Despite the objections of certain Brothers, he did not hesitate to discard the old method, and adopt for the schools of the Society, a method much shorter and more intelligible, the theory and practice of which he gave in a little manual entitled *Principles of Reading*, which he composed with the aid of his principal Brothers.

Although the good Father tenderly loved all the children, he had a special predilection for the very little ones whom, on account of their innocence, he called little angels. He never tired of speaking of the infant school, which he asserted was the most important of all; he entered into the most minute details when treating of the care that should be bestowed on the little children, of the means that should be taken to teach them the first truths of Religion, to inspire them with piety and love of virtue, and to smooth the difficulties of learning to read. A Brother having asked him in what the little class was to be considered the most important, he said: 'I consider it the most important:—

'1. Because, on the first lessons given to the child, the whole success of his education generally depends. In explanation of

this truth, St. Jerome makes use of two very apposite comparisons which I will give you :—"Wool," says he, "that has been dyed never loses entirely the first colour given it. An earthen vessel retains for a long time the scent and taste of the first liquor it contained. In the same way," adds the holy doctor, "the first impressions made on the child are very hard to be removed, and the habits contracted in childhood are rarely changed." If, therefore, the children of the little class acquire good habits and good principles, they will retain them all their lives.

'2. Because, in many localities, most of the children complete their education there and go to work before being admitted to the senior classes, or if they do enter these classes, they usually remain in them but a very short time.

'3. Because, on the little class depends the success of all the others. If the children receive good principles there, if they imbibe sentiments of piety, if they learn to read well, they will have less difficulty in learning the memory work later on ; they will succeed much better in all the other branches of study and will become good pupils. On the contrary, if they leave the little class without knowing how to read, without knowing their prayers, without knowing the principal truths of Religion, they will give a vast amount of trouble to the masters of the other classes and, all along, they will be the most backward. Moreover, it will happen that, after attending the school during eight or ten years, and having reached the highest class, they will still be weak in all the essential subjects of primary instruction, weak in writing, in orthography, in arithmetic, weak even in reading, because, in the beginning, they were not properly taught. Whence it follows, that if the Brother in charge of the little class does not do his duty, he impedes the prosperity of the establishment and mars the whole education of the children who attend the school.

'4. Because, the children of the little class, on account of their innocence, are most pleasing to God and draw down His blessing on the establishment.

'5. Because, the Brother in charge of this class requires a great deal of charity, zeal, patience, and devotedness to repeat continually the same lessons, and bring himself within reach of the smallest children, to keep them under restraint, and make them work without ill-using them or treating them with too much

severity. It may be added that the Brother who cannot stoop to make himself little, to repeat the same things, who desires always to advance and looks out for promotion, is not fit for the little class. The surest means to secure the progress of beginners is to adapt one's language to their limited intelligence, to repeat frequently what has already been learned, and to teach them perfectly the elementary subjects, rather than aim at extending their range of knowledge.

'Conformably to this principle, which is of the utmost importance, the Brother of the little class ought to repeat frequently the lessons he has already taught, and which the children have already recited or learned; and that these continual repetitions may not occupy too much time, he should get some of the most advanced pupils to help him. Thus, after giving a lesson himself to the children who are reading cards, he may appoint a monitor to make them repeat the same lesson, while he hears the children who are learning the primer. He will act in like manner with these, and so on with the other children, as also for the repetition of the prayers and Catechism.'

It was thus that the pious Founder almost unconsciously combined the simultaneous and mutual methods; taking from the latter what was wanting to perfect the former, and so preparing his Brothers for the final adoption of the simultaneous-mutual method.

It was the importance which he attached to the little classes that caused him to recommend them so earnestly to the Brothers Directors, requesting them to visit them at least every fortnight, to keep themselves constantly informed of the progress of the children, and personally to classify them and promote them to higher divisions when necessary; and above all, to train the Brothers who have charge of infant classes, and neglect nothing to inspire them with the Christian virtues and paternal sentiments which alone can make them good Teachers of youth.

Father Champagnat, whose mind was continually occupied with the interests of Religion, remarked that owing to a want of singers, the divine service was often badly performed in country churches, so he considered that it would be contributing largely to the glory of God, to public edification, and to the solemnity of the services, to teach the plain chant to the children, and by this means, prepare singers for the parishes. He was not mistaken.

The Parish Priests looked with the greatest pleasure on the introduction of church music into the schools, and expressed to Father Champagnat their very great satisfaction at it. 'Thanks be to God,' one of them wrote, 'for giving you to understand one of the greatest wants of our day, and suggesting to you the means of supplying it. By teaching the plain chant, your Brothers will render the greatest service to the Parish Priests; they will awaken and renew the piety of the faithful, will draw large numbers of people to the church, and will inspire the children with a love and taste for its ceremonies.'

By introducing the teaching of hymns and music, Father Champagnat proposed, moreover, to attract the children to the school, and attach them to it by the pure and innocent pleasure which singing affords them, to keep them happy and cheerful, to make them relish the charms of virtue, to teach them in a pleasant and attractive manner the truths of Religion, to inspire them with sentiments of piety and banish profane songs. In fact, singing does produce all these effects, when the children are well trained to it. At the time when the Society commenced, singing did not form part of the programme of primary instruction; since then, it has been included among the subjects taught, but to Father Champagnat belongs the credit of being the first to introduce it, at least into country schools.

Another matter which seriously occupied Father Champagnat's attention, was school discipline. Not to dwell long on this subject, we will simply relate a few of his sayings on the two most important points bearing on this matter: viz., the necessity of discipline, and the essential qualities of good discipline. 'Good discipline,' said he, 'is half the education of the child; and if this half is wanting, the other, in most cases, becomes useless. In fact, of what use is it to a child to know how to read and write, or even to have learned his Catechism, if he does not know how to obey, and how to behave himself, if he has not learned to repress his evil inclinations, to give up his own will and to follow the dictates of his conscience? How comes it that, nowadays, men are so inconstant, so sensual? that they can deny themselves nothing, that they cannot bear the least things opposed to their natural inclinations? It is because they were not subjected to the yoke from their childhood; because they were allowed too much liberty and to have their own way in everything; because they

were not taught to subdue their own will, to do violence to themselves and to combat their evil inclinations.

‘Discipline is the body of education, Religion is its soul. And, as in man, one ordinarily judges of the interior by the exterior, so an educational establishment may be judged by its exterior discipline. Strict discipline strikes the beholder at once; it pleases everybody; it gains the esteem and confidence of the public, and very often, it suffices to establish the reputation of a school and draw pupils to it. A Brother who knows how to discipline a class, even, if he knows little else, is preferable to one who has more extensive knowledge, but who does not know the importance of discipline, and cannot establish it in his school. The former, by means of a good and wise discipline, at least teaches the children to obey, which is no small matter. Indeed, the great pest of our age, as everyone admits, is the spirit of independence. Everyone wants to do his own will, and thinks himself fitter to command than to obey. Children refuse to obey their parents, subjects revolt against their sovereigns, the greater number of Christians despise the laws of God and of the Church; in a word, insubordination raises its head everywhere. It is, therefore, rendering great service to Religion, to the Church, to society, to the family, and, above all, to the child himself, to bend his will and teach him to obey.

‘Another advantage resulting from good discipline, one which is not inferior to any other, is that it encourages application, keeps the child occupied and makes him avoid idleness, the mother of all vices. When order reigns in a class each pupil is busy with his lessons, with his exercises; he loves study, he becomes attached to the school, he is wholly devoted to the work of his education, and has not time even to think of evil. The peace, the order and recollectedness in which he lives, render him docile; respectful towards his masters, polite and obliging towards his companions, upright affable and good towards everyone. I need not add that Catechism is properly taught and piety reigns only in well disciplined classes.

‘As to the other Brother, with all his attainments, what service does he render the children? I cannot say; for I am convinced it can be but very little. I doubt very much even if there be any use at all in sending children to his school, and whether it would not be preferable to keep them at home.’

One day, after visiting a school, the Father sent for the Brother Director and said to him: 'Why do you allow the children to fight in your class?' 'I am not aware that children fight in my class.' 'They do fight,' said the Father, 'but you do not see them. Moreover, it is not to be wondered at, if many things happen in your class without your seeing them. There being no discipline in your school, you are lost in the noise and you hardly perceive the disorder, or what your boys are doing. Do you know that your children may commit much evil without your perceiving them?' 'God forbid that such a thing should happen,' said the Brother; 'but at any rate, my conscience tells me that I would not be to blame.' 'You would be more in fault than you imagine.' 'How is that, Father?' 'Because you do more than is needed to encourage disorder in your class, while you do nothing to establish order and discipline. All this disorder arises from your not remaining at your desk, which prevents you from seeing your pupils, you check them by word of mouth, instead of using the signal. You shout and speak without necessity. You punish far too much and render yourself too familiar. You do nothing to establish discipline, for you attach no importance to punctuality, to regularity, and allow your children to come to school when they like. You do not exact lessons and home exercises from the children; you do not oblige them to keep their places, neither do you insist on silence being maintained, and consequently there is a continual hubbub in your class. In the midst of this noise and distraction of your pupils, it is impossible to make them listen to you when you give Catechism; it is impossible for your children to pray with devotion, or even to work. And if they do not listen to the Catechism, if they do not pray, if they do not work, what are they doing? They communicate their vices to one another, they teach one another evil; what I have seen to-day is an evident proof of it.' 'In that case,' said the Brother, 'the best thing for me to do is to shut up my school.' 'An undisciplined school,' continued the Father, 'is a pest in the parish, and it would be better to have no school at all, than such a one; still, there is something better to be done than to close this school, and that is to establish order and discipline, and you cannot begin too soon.'

'Discipline,' said Father Champagnat, on another occasion,

'is never established without effort, for it is perhaps what the child fears most. The lessons and exercises cost him less than discipline. He generally accepts them with pleasure, and will often like them; but order and control are always irksome, and the first thing he does when you leave him to himself, is to free himself from them. The reason of this is, that discipline continually thwarts nature, and keeps in subjection all the faculties and the senses of the child. But this very fact proves its importance and necessity.

To establish and maintain discipline in a class, two things are absolutely necessary on the part of the master: firmness and constancy; whence it follows that persons who are wanting in these two qualifications, are little suited to bring up children. Want of firmness is not a thing to be corrected, for the nature of man is not easily changed; but one may diminish its inconveniences and its bad effects by great docility to the counsels and direction of the Superior, by adhering strictly to the method of teaching and to the time-table of the school, by constant vigilance over the children so as to see everything they do, and thus prevent faults. The same means may be employed to correct inconstancy.'

As may be seen, Father Champagnat wanted strict discipline in the schools, because it is an essential part of education and, without it, it is impossible to educate the child; but what he desired, was a kind and paternal discipline. 'The object of discipline' said he, 'is not to restrain the children by force, or by fear of chastisement, but to preserve them from evil, to correct their defects, to mould and incline their wills gently to what is right, to induce them to contract habits of virtue and regularity from motives of Religion and the love of duty.'

It was in view of this, that he so strongly opposed the abuse of corporal punishment so common at that time, and earnestly recommended the Brothers not to employ it. 'Is it by blows,' he asked, 'that one trains up children and inspires them with a love of virtue? No; it is reason, it is Religion, and not chastisements, which convince the mind and change the heart. It is strange that in the education of children, one should make use of means that are not employed even towards the lower animals. If there is question of taming animals, they are treated with care and gentleness, the curb and the whip are used but sparingly

and with great caution. It is by caresses, trials, by long patience and continued exercises, that they are broken in and made useful for the purposes for which they are intended. But the child! created to the image of God, endowed with reason and liberty, usually full of good-will, animated by virtuous dispositions, and desirous of doing well, is to be treated only by brute force! Such means of education outrage the dignity of man, degrade the child, make the authors of them be despised and detested, introduce disorder into the school; ruin the mutual feelings of love, esteem, respect and confidence, which ought to animate both masters and pupils, and paralyse all the care bestowed upon the child.

‘But it may be objected that the Holy Ghost recommends the child to be chastised, to be corrected with care; and also that corporal punishments are necessary, in order to establish the strict discipline which we recommend. It is true that the Holy Ghost wants the child to be corrected, and even imposes it as a duty on fathers and mothers, and those who take their place, or share in the task of educating their children; but to chastise is not always to beat; and in Holy Writ, the word chastisement does not mean corporal punishment only, but corrections of any sort. Undoubtedly, to maintain discipline, it is necessary to correct those who break the regulations of the school or fail in their duty; but it should be borne in mind, that it is not by corporal punishment that children are subdued, but by assuming moral authority over them, which can be done only by an upright and constantly edifying conduct, by unlimited devotedness in the cause of their education, by a uniformly grave, modest and dignified demeanour. Be fathers to them rather than masters, and they will respect and obey you with cheerfulness. The family spirit is the spirit that ought to predominate in the Brothers’ schools. Now, in a good and well regulated family, the predominant spirit is that of respect, love and mutual confidence. It is not the fear of chastisements. Anger, harshness, violence, are inspired by the devil to destroy the fruits of the good principles implanted in the breast of the child; and as the cockle chokes the good grain, so does harsh treatment stifle all the good sentiments that instructions and good examples may enkindle in the heart of the child.’

The good Father considered corporal punishment so serious an

abuse, that he declared, that a harsh and violent Brother, one who would readily ill-treat the children, either by word or act, was not suitable for the office of teacher, and was fit only to break stones or dig in the fields. To prevent corporal punishment and all kinds of excess in correcting the children, he would not have them to be punished until some time after the commission of the fault, lest quick temper, want of reflection, or any hasty impression might cause the teacher to exaggerate the fault and expose him to inflict too severe a punishment. He was so much opposed to corporal punishment, that he took measures to prevent even such as might be inflicted by accident, or in an unguarded moment of irritation on the part of the teacher, and thus he prescribed that the pointers used with maps or reading-tablets, should be fastened with a string to render it impossible to strike the children with them.

‘In order to establish this strict, and at the same time, paternal discipline, the teacher,’ said Father Champagnat, ‘requires to use great vigilance. But the object of this virtue is not merely to maintain order in the school, and get the pupils to do their school duties, it is more especially to prevent the contagion of vice and preserve the innocence of the children. Viewed in this light, vigilance is the most necessary virtue in a master. The want of supervision will frustrate all the good he may otherwise do; and his school which ought to be for the children a school of virtue and a means of sanctification, becomes for them a cause of depravation, of ruin, and perdition. A Brother ought to be the guardian angel of his children. God will require of him an account of their conduct in school; their faults will be imputed to him as his own. Woe to him! if through his culpable negligence, he allows an infected sheep to spread contagion in the little flock intrusted to him; if, by his fault, he permits the enemy of Salvation, who goes about like a roaring lion, seeking to rob the children of their baptismal innocence, of the life of Grace, to sow poison in their hearts. The thought of such a misfortune should make a Brother tremble, and keep him continually on his guard. Let him not forget that, if to save the soul of another is to save his own, so to allow another’s soul to perish is to lose his own soul. In the other parts of education, if one quality is wanting it may be supplied by another; thus, devotedness and zeal may compensate for want

of great learning ; but neither piety, nor virtue, nor good example, and much less, great talents, can make up for the want of vigilance ; no matter were the master a saint, if he neglects supervision, his children will pervert one another, all his instructions and all his works of zeal will be frustrated. The first and most important of his duties, therefore, is to exercise continual supervision over the children, so as to shield them from everything that might endanger their virtue, everything that might become a snare for their innocence, and in a word, by his supervision he must render it impossible for them to commit evil. It is only on this condition that a Brothers' school can be useful to the children ; and if, through want of supervision it became the ruin of their innocence instead of being its guardian, it would be far better for them, if they had never set foot in that school.'

To discharge the duty of supervision, Father Champagnat desires the Brothers never to allow the children to be alone, and therefore, the Brothers must never, without great necessity, leave the school. If during school time, a Brother is asked for, he should send word to the person who wants him, that he cannot leave the children, and that he would feel obliged if the person would call to see him out of school hours. This Rule raised great difficulties, and called forth numerous protests. Many Brothers considered it hard to refuse to go out for a moment to see one of the parents, who perhaps came from a distance to speak about his child, or to pay the school fees ; but the good Father remained inflexible, and a hundred times he refuted the reasons, all more specious than solid, which were brought forward against this Rule.

Among other things, he said : 'The school time belongs neither to you, nor to the persons who come to speak to you ; it belongs to the children. To dispose of it, therefore, or to waste it, is to do them an injury, and to be guilty of injustice. And observe here, that the matter soon becomes serious. Suppose you leave the school for five minutes, these five minutes multiplied by the number of pupils in your school, will soon give four or five hours which you make them lose. Is this then so trivial a fault as you believed it to be ? But this short interval is more than sufficient for the enemy to throw into your class a spark which may produce a conflagration : viewed in this light, your fault is far more serious.'

As the great argument of the Brothers was, that one could

not, without giving offence, send away persons of position, or those who came from a distance, the Father replied: 'No one can find fault with you for keeping your Rule, and remaining at your post. On the contrary, the parents will be pleased to see your assiduity with regard to their children; they will be edified by your zeal and devotedness in teaching them. And moreover, should the accomplishment of this Rule provoke some complaints, which I do not admit, if you are careful to inform the parents, through the children, that you cannot receive them during school hours, this inconvenience is a hundred times less than that of leaving the children alone. I know a school in which, through the master's being absent for a few minutes, vice, which had already seized on the heart of one of the pupils, spread itself and contaminated all the others.

'During the recreations, the Brothers should be with the children, to make them play, to see what they do, and hear what they say. In the Church, and during the service, the Brothers should have the children in view, and not lose sight of them, nor leave them even to serve or sing at Mass; unless there is a sufficient number of Brothers to superintend them. In a word, as long as the children are in the House or in charge of the Brothers, they must be superintended. The Brothers ought to discharge this duty themselves, and they should confide it, even to a trustworthy monitor, only for serious reasons.'

In fine, the pious Founder considered the obligation of superintending the children so important, that he said he would not allow a Brother to receive Holy Communion, who, without urgent reasons and without being replaced, would have left to themselves the children under his charge, either in school, in recreation, or at any other time. 'In watching carefully over the children, and in keeping them constantly occupied, a Brother, added the Father, 'may be sure that he is doing a great good, and rendering himself useful to all the pupils of the school.

'1. He preserves the innocence of the little children and frequently enables them to make their First Communion without having committed a serious fault.

'2. He prevents a great number of sins. Indeed, when children are left to themselves, they cast aside all restraint; they follow without perceiving it, the perverse inclinations of nature, the bad example which they meet with, and commit numerous

faults, which they would avoid, and would not even think of, if they were under the care of a good Brother.

'3 He prevents the contagion of evil ; he smothers criminal thoughts in the hearts of vicious children, and compels them to restrain their evil inclinations, and to struggle, in spite of themselves, against their passions.

'4. He makes the children acquire habits of work and diligence ; he keeps them quiet, and recollected, and prepares them to profit by the religious instructions they receive.

'5. He maintains discipline in the school, assures the progress of the children and consequently, the prosperity of the establishment.

'But, it must not be concealed, superintendence is a duty, that costs much. To discharge it well, requires zeal and vigilance, assiduity, punctuality, and constancy, virtues which are to be found only in Brothers who have a great spirit of mortification, of devotedness, and who know how to sacrifice their own tastes and comforts to promote the glory of God and the sanctification of the children.'





CHAPTER XXIII

FATHER CHAMPAGNAT'S OPINIONS REGARDING THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN.

To educate a child, it is not enough to teach him reading, writing, and the other branches of primary instruction. This would be enough if he were made for this world only; but a higher destiny awaits him; he is created for heaven, for God; and it is for God and for heaven that he must be educated. To educate a child, therefore, is to make him know this high and sublime destiny, and furnish him with the means to attain it; in a word, to educate a child, is to make him a good Christian and a virtuous citizen. In consequence of his original degradation, man is born with the germs of all vices as well as of all virtues implanted in him. He may be compared to a lily, but a lily among thorns; to a vine, but a vine which requires pruning; to the field in which the husbandman has sown good seed, but which an enemy has oversown with cockle. The object of education is to pluck out the thorns, to prune the vine, to cultivate the field and pull up the cockle.

In founding this Institute, Father Champagnat did not purpose merely to give elementary instruction to the children, nor even to teach them only the truths of Religion, but to educate them in the sense we have just explained. 'If there was a question of teaching them only secular science,' he said, 'the Brothers would not be necessary; for secular masters could do

that. If we undertook to give them religious instruction only, we should confine ourselves to the teaching of Catechism, assembling the children for an hour every day, and teaching them the Christian doctrine. But we have a higher object in view, we wish to educate the children, that is, to instruct them in their duty, to teach them to practise it, give them the spirit and sentiments of Religion, the habits and virtues of good Christians and good citizens. To accomplish this, we must be Teachers; we must live in the midst of the children and keep them a long time under our care.'

It was with a view to give a more complete and more effective education, that the pious Founder allowed the Brothers to receive boarders, and that he desired that each school should have a play-ground attached to it, in order that the children might have a place in which to amuse themselves. 'If we sought only our own interests,' he wrote to the principal manager of a school, 'I should not ask for a play-ground, for the garden suffices for the Brothers to take the fresh air in, and the play-ground affords them no other advantage than that of rendering themselves useful to the children, by keeping them off the streets and watching over them during play-time. It is solely because we aim at giving our pupils good principles, and keeping them from bad company, that we ask for a play-ground for their recreations.'

As in the course of this narrative, we have given in their own place, the teachings of Father Champagnat concerning each part of a child's education, we will add here only a few of the maxims and counsels which we have not already had occasion to place before the reader.

'Education,' said he, 'is to the child what cultivation is to the land; however good the soil may be, if it remains uncultivated, it will produce only weeds and brambles. In the same way, no matter how good the dispositions of the child, if he is left uneducated, he will be wanting in virtue, and his life will be devoid of good.'

'To cultivate a field, is to remove from it the weeds and brambles. To cultivate the heart of a child, is to correct him of his vices and defects. It is the work of time, the task of every day, and the Brother should continually reprove and correct, that is, show the children their faults, and inspire them with a

horror for them, engage them to combat their evil inclinations, and give them the means of doing so.

‘To mould the heart, is to develop its good dispositions, to embellish it with virtue; and this is done by giving the child good principles, inspiring him with a horror of sin, showing him the loveliness, the charms, and delights of virtue, and making him practise it on all occasions, for virtue is acquired by acts only.

‘As every perfect gift comes from above, piety is the shortest and most effectual means for correcting children of their defects, and leading them to virtue. But to render the children truly pious, three things are indispensable:—

‘1. To make them understand the necessity and advantages of prayer, and give them a high opinion of religious exercises.

‘2. To see that in school, they say their prayers with modesty, attention, and devotion. This point is of the utmost importance.

‘3. To exercise them in religious practices in keeping with their age and requirements.

‘A good gardener weeds, cultivates, plants, and waters; a Brother should do the same. He should weed or eradicate the vices of the children by friendly admonition, by wise and prudent corrections; he should cultivate their good dispositions, and, by his instructions, sow in their hearts the seeds of virtue; in fine, he should water his labours by fervent prayer.

‘Obedience is the foundation of all good education; it is the main-spring of the whole future of the man and the Christian. Obedience is the virtue of all times and all conditions. He who knows not how to obey, is not only a bad Christian, he is a pest to society which can be maintained only by obedience and submission to the laws and to authority. To obtain obedience and to train children in this virtue, a Brother ought to be careful:—

‘1. Never to command or forbid anything but what is just and reasonable.

‘2. To avoid giving too many orders and prohibitions at a time, as they are likely to be forgotten and children are irritated by unnecessary restraint.

‘3. Never to command anything impossible or too difficult; for nothing is more calculated to exasperate the children, to render them stubborn and rebellious, than unreasonable exactions.

‘4. To require the full and entire performance of what has been commanded. To give commands, appoint tasks, or impose

punishments, and not to exact their performance, is to render the child disobedient, to vitiate his will and to accustom him to disregard the commands and prohibitions given him.

‘To educate a child, one must have a claim to his respect and submission. Now, the claims which the child acknowledges and understands best, are virtue, good example, ability and the paternal sentiments evinced towards him. Education, therefore, is pre-eminently a work of good example, because virtue strengthens authority; because it is the nature of children to imitate what they see others do, and acts have more power than words and instructions to convince and persuade. A child learns much more by the eyes than by the ears; it is by seeing others work that he learns to work, or that he acquires the knowledge of his trade; in like manner, it is more particularly by seeing others doing good and witnessing edifying examples, that he learns to practise virtue and to lead a good Christian life. A Brother who is pious, regular, charitable, patient, affable, and devoted to his duties, is perpetually catechising. By his good examples, and without thinking of it, he instils into the children, piety, charity, obedience, love of work and all the Christian virtues.

‘To educate children, one must love them, and love them all alike. Now, when a Brother loves the children, he devotes himself entirely to their instruction, and employs every means that zeal can suggest to train them to virtue and piety. He should remember that children are weak beings, who must be treated with charity, kindness, indulgence, and who must be guided and instructed in all patience. He should bear, without complaint, their defects, their indocility and ingratitude. He should devote himself to their interests from supernatural motives, that is, the glory of God, the good of Religion, and the salvation of their souls.

‘Nothing is more opposed to the true and sincere love we owe those children, than unbecoming familiarity, partiality, and particular friendships.’

In his instructions, on this delicate point, the pious Founder strongly denounced these particular friendships, and he assured the Brothers that they are a frequent cause of ruin to both teacher and pupils. In fact, these familiarities give rise to three great evils:—

(1.) They vitiate the character and all the moral faculties of

the children who have the misfortune to be the objects of them. Experience teaches but too often, that children who are admired, caressed, flattered, and praised unreasonably, become proud, selfish, insincere, headstrong, idle, insolent, ungrateful, and in the end, irreligious and profoundly perverse.

(2.) They are for the teacher one of the most dangerous snares of the devil, and a fruitful source of the worst temptations. This caused Father Champagnat to say: 'He who allows these affections to take possession of his heart, and does not combat them, exposes himself to the greatest danger. His state soon becomes so critical, that he soon finds himself in the immediate occasion of sin, and he walks on the brink of the abyss.' These words account for the extreme severity of the good Father, regarding these kinds of faults, for he would not allow any Brother who had failed in this point, to receive Holy Communion without first going to confession. Moreover, he considered those unfit for the Society, who manifested a marked inclination for these natural friendships, and he was known to refuse for the vows and adjourn from year to year, subjects, who though otherwise virtuous and talented, had shown some weakness in this respect.

(3.) They cause a bad spirit among the other pupils; for jealousy, so natural to man, opens their eyes to these preferences, and makes them believe that they themselves are slighted or treated unjustly. All this irritates them, rouses their indignation, leads them to despise the teacher, to refuse him obedience and sometimes even to suspect and calumniate him.

Father Champagnat frequently said that one of the best means to attract children to the school and to train them to virtue, is to prepare the Catechism lessons with great care, and make the instructions attractive. He pointed out the following means as being excellent:—

(1.) To learn by heart, or at least, to read attentively and reflect on the lesson one has to explain.

(2.) To note the most important points, those to which it is necessary to draw, in a special manner, the attention of the children.

(3.) To foresee the secondary questions to be asked on each of these points, link them on to one another, so as to develop the subject and place it within the comprehension of the weakest intelligence amongst them.

(4.) Frequently to make use of comparisons, parables and examples from history, to render the truth plainer, to confirm it and captivate the attention of the children.

(5.) To arrange that the secondary questions may always be short, clear, simple, and to the point.

(6.) To require the children to learn perfectly the letter of the Catechism; for that helps them very much to understand the explanations and to remember them.

(7.) In teaching Catechism, to aim constantly at these four points. 1st. To make Jesus Christ known and loved. 2nd. To show the loveliness, the charms, and advantages of virtue, and the happiness of those who practise it. 3rd. To show likewise the deformity and baseness of vice, the evils and chastisements it draws on those addicted to it, and to strive to inspire the children with a great horror and fear of sin. 4th. To gain the hearts of the children and to give them a high esteem of Religion, and to induce them to perform their duties from motives of love.

(8.) When preparing the Catechism lesson, to ask oneself these questions: Do I know sufficiently what I am going to teach or explain? Do I thoroughly understand this lesson, this truth? Am I perfectly convinced of it? How shall I place it before the minds of the children to make them love it, and make them resolve to perform the good it commands or to avoid the evil it forbids?

(9.) To adopt and maintain a modest demeanour, a kind, affable, and cheerful countenance which indicates the pleasure one feels in speaking of God.

Someone reported to Father Champagnat that a certain Brother did not teach Catechism. He sent for the Brother and asked him the reason. 'There is no other reason,' said the Brother, 'than my incapacity, and the difficulty of doing it properly.'

'To teach Catechism,' said the Father, 'is not a difficult task, when you are pious and zealous, and when you prepare your lesson, as the Rule prescribes. The duty of a Brother Catechist is not to give long explanations, to enter into sublime considerations, to ask difficult questions, and still less, to give sermons; all these things must be left to the clergy; but the Brother must confine himself to short, easy questions, to simple, clear and familiar explanations. For instance, suppose you have to give a

catechism on the mystery of the Redemption, do you require much learning to ask the children :—

‘ Which were the principal sufferings of our Saviour in His Passion ?

‘ What was the cause of His sufferings and death ?

‘ Why did He suffer ?

‘ How did He suffer ?

‘ What feelings should the sufferings and death of our Lord inspire us with ?

‘ Now, these few questions developed by secondary questions, and accompanied by a few words of exhortation to love our Lord and to hate sin, which was the cause of His sufferings, suffice to give a good instruction.

‘ Again, suppose you have to explain one of the Commandments of God ; is it such a difficult matter to ask what is prescribed and what is forbidden by it, to show the advantage we derive from its observance, and the evils that result from its transgression ; to explain and confirm all this by suitable comparisons and some examples taken from Sacred History or from the lives of the Saints ?

‘ There are many pious mothers who daily teach Catechism to their children in this manner. It would be very strange if the Brothers, who by their profession are bound to study Religion, were not able to do the same. It is not by long discourses and showing great learning, that you will instruct the children and train them to virtue, but by teaching them perfectly the letter of the Catechism, by engraving deeply on their minds the principal truths of Religion, by reminding them frequently of the essential duties of a Christian, and by familiarising them with the practice of those duties. Now all this is to be done in few words ; but in a tone and manner which show that you are strongly convinced of what you say.’

The lessons of the good Father on the method of teaching Catechism, produced great fruits. All the first Brothers were distinguished by their zeal for the Christian education of the children, and their success in guiding them in the paths of virtue.

In a certain locality, a woman who had refused to send her children to the Brothers’ school, because she considered the Brothers were too young, went one day to the Parish Priest and said to him :—

‘Although your Brothers are only children themselves, I must admit they teach Catechism wonderfully well. My neighbour’s child who goes to their school, already knows his Religion better than any of us, he gives us a lesson every evening and tells us most delightful things. I have made up my mind to send my three boys to the Brothers to-morrow.’ In another parish, a curate, astonished at seeing the children so anxious to attend the Brothers’ School on Sundays, solely to assist at the Catechism, said to his Parish Priest: ‘I do not know what these Brothers tell their children; but they keep them for hours and never weary them.’—‘The Brothers,’ answered the Parish Priest, ‘teach Catechism well; I am convinced you would lose nothing by listening to them.’ The same Parish Priest speaking to a Vicar-General of the success of the school and of the good the Brothers were doing, said: ‘The public admire the improvement of our children, but what is visible to them, is but the least part of the change, and one must be Parish Priest and Confessor, to know all the good the Brothers have done, since they came here.’

Another thing that Father Champagnat considered as indispensable to attract the children to school and to train them to virtue, is discipline. ‘Some imagine,’ said he, ‘that discipline tends to keep children away from the school, but it is just the contrary. All men love order, and disorder displeases everyone, even the children themselves. Although, at first, they seem to dread discipline, and find it irksome, they soon become used to it and they feel happy and content only in a well disciplined school; whereas they weary and take a dislike for study, in a disorderly class.

‘Want of discipline is to a class what the predominant passion is to a man, the source of every evil, the direct or indirect cause of all the faults committed in the school. The defects which most seriously ruin a master’s authority and destroy discipline are: (1.) A propensity to talk. (2.) Distractions. (3.) Familiarity. (4.) Discouragement. (5.) Inconstancy.

‘Authority is too weak, when it is not respected in the monitors and those whom the master appoints in his own place, and when it is not maintained in the master’s absence. When therefore, you see order and discipline disturbed as soon as the master leaves his class, it is a mark that he has no moral authority over his pupils, and that he controls them by physical

force only. In such a school there is no education possible, and the master there only acts the part of a gendarme.

Rewards and punishments contribute to maintain discipline only when employed with moderation and great wisdom. It is necessary to diversify punishments, to begin always with the least, and only to have recourse to the severest on rare occasions and for serious faults. It is the same with rewards; they must be desired by the pupils, they must be merited, and be distributed with intelligence and impartiality. One should never impose as a penance anything which, considered in itself, should be cherished and venerated by the child, such as to pray, serve Mass, render service to anyone, etc.; as also prayers or lessons in Catechism to be copied or learned by heart by way of penance, this might inspire the child with an aversion for these things which ought to be dear and sacred to him.

‘Emulation, rewards and punishments are only accessory means to make the scholars active, diligent, and submissive; to obtain all this, the child must be preserved from evil and kept innocent. But to preserve the innocence of the child he should be deeply impressed with these two maxims:—

‘God sees me at all times and in all places.

‘I should never do, when alone, what I would not dare to do in public, or what I should blush to have to acknowledge to my parents or to my Superiors.

‘In fine, to educate a child properly,’ said the Father, ‘we must have an ardent love for Jesus Christ. This is what the divine Saviour wished to teach us, in asking St. Peter three times, if he loved Him, before giving him charge of His Church.

‘Our Lord, who comprises all the Commandments in the love of God, and the love of the neighbour, reduces likewise all the virtues of the Pastors of souls, of Superiors, and all those charged with the conduct of others, to Charity, because everything they require to discharge their functions worthily, depends on this virtue as its source and principle. In fact, my dear Brothers, love Jesus, and you will have all the virtues and the qualities of a perfect teacher.

‘If humility is the characteristic of a true Little Brother of Mary, and ought to be his favourite virtue, Charity is humble, *is not puffed up with pride.*

‘If meekness ought to be your element, and ought to

accompany all your virtues, in order to gain the hearts of your children, *Charity is patient, is kind, and beareth all things.*

‘If you have need of patience, to bear with the defects of your children, and all the trouble attached to your holy State; *Charity is patient, endureth all things, and is not provoked to anger.*

‘If prudence and wisdom are indispensable to those who have charge of others, and have to educate children; Charity is not rash; *it never acts inconsiderately.*

‘If it is necessary that you should be always good, kind, affable, in your intercourse with the children and with others; Charity is not contemptuous; *it beareth all things and maketh itself all to all.*

‘If you require a great spirit of disinterestedness, zeal, generosity, and self-denial, to spend your life in the midst of the children, and to sacrifice yourself for their education; *Charity never falleth away, seeketh not her own, but only the glory of God and the salvation of souls.*

‘The Brother who has a true love for Jesus Christ, is therefore, humble, mild, zealous, forbearing, patient, prudent, firm, generous, obliging; in a word, he has all the virtues and the charity which unites him to God and assures him the graces, the helps and protection of heaven, which render him all-powerful and fit for everything.

‘One thing more which deserves all your attention, is what Jesus Christ said to St. Peter: *Feed my sheep.* Why *my* sheep and not *yours*?

‘1. To teach us that we ought to seek the glory of God and not our own, the interests of Jesus Christ and of Religion, and not our own advantages.

‘2. To induce us to respect the children and to treat them always with kindness, justice and charity. If these children were the children of princes, of kings, how carefully you would teach them and educate them! How vigilant you would be over your whole conduct, to prove yourself worthy of such a mission, to gain the esteem and affection of such pupils, to please them, to avoid everything that might offend them or cause them pain! Your children are more than the children of kings, they are the children of God, brothers and members of Jesus Christ; and remember, that our divine Lord, who is truth

itself, assures us that He considers as done to Himself all the good or all the evil you do to them.'

We may conclude this chapter with a few reflections of the pious Founder, on the excellence of zeal for the sanctification of the children.

'Zeal,' said he, 'is a virtue which is fruitful in graces and blessings. It is a treasure and is inexhaustible for all kinds of good. For a Brother, zeal is the philosopher's stone which turns into gold whatever it touches. You teach grammar, arithmetic, geography, drawing, to your children, in order to keep them occupied, to withdraw them from the occasions of offending God; you make use of all these sciences to attract them to the school, to gain their esteem and train them more easily to virtue! Well! all your studies, all your lessons in reading, writing, grammar, arithmetic, and other subjects that you teach, will be counted for eternity; they are so many acts of virtue which you practise. The zeal which you have for leading children to God, will have changed into gold, that is, into acts of virtue, the most ordinary actions of the day, and all that you do in your class. Oh! what a difference between a Brother who teaches school as an Apostle in a spirit of zeal, and another who teaches as a mercenary, as one following a trade! All the words and all the actions of the former being vivified by charity, are works of zeal; whilst those of the latter are dead works.

'The education of youth is not a trade, it is a religious ministry, a true apostolate. Those who say that teaching school is a painful occupation, err grievously, and fulfil in a worldly spirit, an employment which is highly meritorious and most pleasing to God. If these Brothers had the spirit of their state, if they understood the excellence of their vocation, they would say: To educate children is a work of zeal, of devotedness, and of sacrifice. To acquit oneself worthily of this employment, which is a participation of the Mission of Jesus Christ, it is necessary to have the spirit of the divine Saviour, and, like Him, to be ready to give one's blood and one's life for the children.

'A zealous Brother is extremely dear to our Lord. This divine Redeemer loves him as the apple of His own eye; He considers him as His partner and co-operator in the sanctification of the children.

'Zeal draws down abundant graces on a Brother, and the

special protection of Heaven in dangers and temptations. You promote the interests of Jesus by catechising the children, and guiding them in the paths of virtue; He will defend your interests. You contend for Jesus by superintending your children, by correcting their defects, and making them avoid sin; He will combat for you; for it is befitting His own glory to uphold you in your temptations, and to grant you a complete victory over your enemies. I know several Brothers who have obtained a complete victory over the most terrible temptations by teaching the Catechism well, and promising our Lord to teach the children their prayers and prepare them carefully for First Communion.

‘Zeal will be a great subject of consolation to a Brother at the hour of his death. Three sorts of persons have no need to fear death; those who ardently love Jesus, those who labour for the glory of Jesus, and those who suffer for Jesus. Now, a zealous Brother does all this. He loves Jesus; he has left all to serve Him, and to gain the children to Him, and what has he not to suffer in his office as Catechist, which, though, so honourable and sublime, is very difficult. Oh! how well such a Brother will be received by Jesus Christ, at the hour of his death! What joy, what happiness will he experience, when the divine Saviour shows him all the acts of virtue which he practised in his class, all the lessons in Catechism he has explained, all the prayers he has taught, all the instructions and counsels he has given, all the children he has instructed, formed and prepared for First Communion; when He will show him all the sins he has prevented, and will say to him: *Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.* (St. Matt. xxv, 21.) You have spent your life in gathering in the fruits of my Passion, in making Me known and glorified; *come, ye blessed of My Father, possess ye the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world!* (St. Matt. xxv, 34.)

‘Zeal is a source of prosperity to a house. It is related in Holy Writ, that God blessed the midwives of Egypt, and that He showered down prosperity on their houses, because they had saved the Hebrew children from death. If God bestowed such favours on these pagan women, for having saved the bodily lives of the children of His people, what blessings will he not bestow on a Brother who labours to deliver the souls of the children from

eternal death! The house which is directed by a zealous Brother, is a house founded on a rock. God will watch over it, He will bless it, defend it, and will bestow upon it an ever-increasing prosperity. Zeal is a loadstone which attracts the children and attaches them to the school. If you teach the prayers and Catechism well, if you train your pupils in virtue, if you preserve them from bad company, and make them avoid sin, the Angels will bring children to you, God Himself will bring them. He will so dispose the hearts of these children, that they will feel drawn to you by a secret power, and they will come to your school in spite of their parents, in spite of all that the wicked can do to keep them away.'





CHAPTER XXIV.

HIS CONSTANCY IN DOING GOOD AND IN ALL HIS ENTERPRISES.

ST. THOMAS teaches that one of the greatest marks of predestination which we can have, is constancy in our good resolutions, in the practice of the good works which we have undertaken for the glory of God, and above all, in the vocation we have embraced. This sentiment of the Angel of the schools, is founded on these words of Christ : *He that shall persevere unto the end, he shall be saved.* (St. Matt. x, 22.) And these others : *No man putting his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.* (Luke ix, 62.) One of the most striking characteristics of the life of Father Champagnat, is his constancy and generosity in the practice of virtue. He was constant always and everywhere, in small things as well as in great ones. Constant in prayer, devoting himself to this holy exercise, with an assiduity and fervour that were truly admirable, and that, notwithstanding the troubles and occupations of his whole life. Constant in the correction of his defects, in mortifying nature, in subjecting it to the spirit, and in combating in himself, whatever might oppose the operations of grace, or weaken the purity of his soul. Constant in supporting with perfect resignation, the contradictions and persecutions of men, the afflictions, the infirmities, the adversities and all the anxiety incident to the direction of a numerous Community ; constant in devotion to our Blessed Lady, in his tender love for our Lord, which went on

increasing till his death. Constant in his vocation, labouring incessantly to be faithful to it, and to comply with everything that it demanded of him. Constant in carrying out the works he had undertaken for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, although frequently deprived of all human aid, and hindered by all sorts of difficulties. 'Were the whole world against me,' he said sometimes, 'I would not give up, provided I knew that God wishes the thing, and my Superiors approve it; after that, I care little for difficulties, and the contradictions of man; I pay no heed to them. Were we obliged to stop whenever human aid is wanting, or any other difficulty comes to bar the way, we would never do anything. The devil is essentially the enemy of all good; he is sure to oppose every good work we undertake, to strive by every means to prevent its success and raise up all the passions of men against it. To be frightened in such a case and yield to discouragement is an injury to God; it is to ignore the distinctive characteristic of His works, which is that of being stamped with the cross; it is to betray the interests of Religion by dastardly yielding the victory to the devil.'

This constancy and firmness of Father Champagnat preserved several establishments whose destruction the wicked had sworn to accomplish. With the view of forcing the Brothers to leave certain localities, these wicked people blamed them, calumniated them, and persecuted them. They even went so far as to withdraw the Brothers' salaries, and to employ every possible means to keep the children from their schools. But these diabolical attempts did not succeed; the patience and perseverance of the pious Founder enabled him to overcome all these trials. Never would he yield an inch of ground to the enemy, and he preferred to maintain the persecuted Brothers at the expense of the Community, rather than give up a school. This disinterested conduct gained for him the approbation and confidence of the public, and brought him a great number of applications for Brothers. People liked to place their schools in the hands of a man who could make such sacrifices to maintain the works which charity entrusted to him.

At the same time, it may be remarked that this tenacity of purpose in pursuing his projects and maintaining the schools which he had founded, was neither rashness nor stubbornness; and if he was not dismayed at the sight of obstacles, he was

careful to avoid difficulties. He did good as best he could, and with the means at his disposal; trusting to Providence for the future, he aimed, in the first place, at providing for immediate wants. This will explain why the house at the Hermitage, having been built in portions as necessity required, is wanting in compactness and symmetry.

‘In order to secure the triumph of Religion during persecutions and to paralyse the opposition of the wicked, against the works of God, two means are supremely efficacious,’ says Father Champagnat. ‘The first is to gain time. A Proverb says, *He who gains one day, gains a hundred.* Now, during that time, a thousand incidents may change the aspect of things. A death, a change of administration, any event may deliver you from your most formidable adversaries or change their sentiments in your regard, so as to make them your friends and protectors. The second is a passive resistance and patience; supporting the persecutions and ill-treatment of the wicked without murmuring, without complaining, without replying to their attacks and false accusations. For it often happens, that, while trying to defend oneself, one inflames the passions, irritates and embitters the minds of one’s adversaries; and thus the fire of persecution is not only kept up, but even augmented, whereas it is extinguished by depriving it of its aliment. When you are persecuted, follow the advice of our Lord: *Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you.* (St. Matt. v, 44.) Imitate the first Christians: conceal yourselves in the interior of your houses, having with externs no intercourse but what is absolutely necessary; keep united with God, redouble your zeal for the instruction of your children; but be humble and modest in the discharge of your duties, and avoid everything calculated to excite public attention. By these precautions and this humble and Christian conduct, you will always conquer your enemies, and the storm, however loud it may roar, will, in the end, pass away, without destroying you or even injuring a hair of your head.’

He would have the Brothers observe the same conduct when they compete with other teachers. ‘In these cases,’ said he, ‘beware of imitating your opponent. Let him make as much fuss as he pleases, let him promise anything he likes, to attract children to his school. But on your part, be more than ever faithful to your Rule, to your method of teaching; change

nothing in your manner of acting ; be satisfied with increased zeal and devotedness to train your children to piety and to make them advance in the essential parts of primary instruction. By this means, you will retain your pupils, and you will have the advantage over your competitor ; but, what is far more precious, you will keep within the spirit of your state, you will edify the people, and you will draw down the blessings of God on yourselves. On the contrary, the means to keep up the opposition, would be to strive openly against your opponent, by giving certain lessons only because he gives them, by modifying your programme to place it on a level with his, etc., for then, self is brought into play and neither will yield. It is above all on such occasions, that it is necessary to remember that we are doing the works of God, that success in the works of God is obtained chiefly by the means which Religion supplies, such as piety, fidelity to the duties of our state, good example, the practice of Christian virtues, and zeal for our own perfection and for the sanctification of the children. To combat with this sort of weapon which the world ignores, is to make sure of victory ; to neglect them and give the preference to human means, is to perpetuate the strife and prepare the triumph of your adversary.'

If it required such constancy and generosity on the part of Father Champagnat, to carry out the work of the Brothers, it took him no less labour and determination to maintain that of the Fathers in the diocese of Lyons. How he exerted himself with his ecclesiastical Superiors and with his *confrères* for the advancement of that work ! How many letters he wrote and how many long and fatiguing journeys he made with the same purpose ! We see in his correspondence with the Rev. Father Colin, that no sacrifice was too much for him, and the latter was often obliged to moderate the ardour of the good Father's zeal. From the moment that the plan of the Society of Marists was fixed on, at the *Grand Séminaire*, Father Champagnat devoted himself unreservedly to this great work, and he promised to God to labour all his life for the full development of the project in all its parts. One of his greatest regrets, he often said, would have been to die before the Society was definitely constituted and without having made his vows, so that, on the very day on which he received the news of the approval of the Society of the Marists, by the Holy See, he wrote to the Rev. Father Colin, asking to be

admitted to Profession. Generosity, devotedness, and constancy were the virtues of his whole life, and one of his favourite maxims was, that when we give ourselves to God, it must be for good, without reserve or after-thought. 'Woe,' he added, 'to those who regret the onions of Egypt; they are not fit for the land of Religion. To bargain with God, to make interminable examinations before fixing oneself in His service; to make only a partial or conditional offering of oneself, is to prove that one does not know the greatness of God, the excellence of the religious vocation, the beauty of virtue, the value of salvation, and the happiness of Heaven; it is a mark of distrust and an insult to Almighty God; it is to set a snare for oneself and expose oneself to fall, sooner or later, into the toils of the devil. If you want a proof of this, ask those who have lost their vocation, what was the cause of the temptation that made them return to the world; they will answer for the most part, that they proved unfaithful, because in coming to Religion and giving themselves to God, they had made some reserve and put certain conditions in their promises; they had some after-thought and left a door open to themselves by which to return to the world, and that the devil entered by this door into their heart, and took possession of it.

According to Father Champagnat, inconstancy was a proof, that one was not made for the religious life. When examining postulants, if he discovered any who had tried several callings, it was a sufficient reason for him to refuse them. 'What trade did you follow?' he inquired of a young man who earnestly entreated to be received into the novitiate. 'I have been at several,' answered the postulant, and immediately he named three or four. 'Go, and try a fifth,' said the Father, 'for you are too inconstant for us. To be a Religious one must know how to settle down, and you do not appear to have sufficient firmness of character for that.'

Another postulant, after spending some months in the novitiate, was requested to withdraw. One of the senior Brothers, seeing him weep, had compassion on him and went to Father Champagnat to intercede for him. 'Brother,' said the Father, 'this young man does not deserve such a favour, and besides, he would not profit by it, for he is one of those spoken of by the Holy Ghost in Ecclesiasticus, xxvii. 12, where He says :

a fool is changed as the moon. Persons of this class are little fitted for virtue, which requires a firm character and a strong will. They are still less suited to our mode of life, in which patience and constancy are so necessary, to enable us to be faithful to Rule and to educate the children.'

A young man, having applied for admission to the Novitiate, Father Champagnat, judging from his appearance, thought he had been too delicately brought up to be able to support the Community life. He explained to him all the difficulties he would have to contend with, then he added: 'Consider well your strength, examine, and see if you can do all these things. My opinion is, that you cannot, and that this sort of life is too hard for you.' After reflecting for an instant, the young man answered: 'I admit that this mode of life is severe to nature; nevertheless, two things lead me to believe that I can accustom myself to it, and determine me to remain in your Society, if you will consent to receive me. The first is, that I can do, with the help of God's grace, what so many others are doing. You have here several postulants younger than I; if they can follow your Rule, I should be able to follow it also. The second is, that it is now more than three years since I took the resolution to become a Religious, that, during all this time, I have asked this grace from the Blessed Virgin, and that I have persevered in my resolution, although my friends have done all in their power to make me abandon it.' Highly pleased with this answer, the Father said to him with tenderness: 'Yes! yes! my friend, you *are* made for the religious life. Your prayers and your resolute will are a certain proof of it. Constancy is an excellent quality, preserve it well, it will secure your vocation and will make you a holy Religious.'

One day the pious Founder took up a Brother's office book, and opening it, he found these words written on the first page. 'To obtain by the intercession of our Lady, the grace of perseverance, I vow to say every day of my life, an *Ave Maria* for that intention.' 'To ask the grace of perseverance through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin,' said he to the Brother to whom the book belonged, 'is an excellent thing, you ought to do it every day; but you should not have bound yourself by vow to recite the *Ave Maria*, because in Religion it is not allowed to make a vow without permission. Perseverance in the practice of a virtue,

insures us the possession of that virtue ; perseverance in praying for some grace, is a sure pledge that we shall obtain that grace. I approve, therefore, your perseverance in praying to the Mother of God for the grace of salvation, and I promise you that this divine Mother will obtain it for you if you persevere in asking it of her ; but I blame your indiscreet vow, and I advise you never to do the like again without permission.'

We will conclude the Life of our venerated Father with the summary of an impressive instruction which he gave to the Brothers upon constancy, while explaining the Gospel for the second Sunday of Advent. 'Constancy,' said he, 'is a virtue absolutely necessary for a Christian in order that he may save his soul, and still more for a Religious that he may persevere in his vocation and acquire the perfection of his state. The conduct of our Lord, as related in to-day's Gospel, is a convincing proof of the truth of this. The divine Master pronounces a magnificent eulogium on St. John the Baptist, and He declares before all the people, that St. John is the greatest of the children of men. Now, what does our Lord particularly praise in the holy Precursor? Is it his innocence, which was such that probably he did not, in his whole life, commit a single deliberate venial sin? No. Is it his humility, which was so profound that he considers himself unworthy to loose the latchet of our Saviour's shoes? No: our Lord does not mention humility in the eulogium He pronounces on St. John. Is it his love for Chastity, which impels him to reprove Herod fearlessly for his criminal conduct? No: in this case, Jesus does not extol the virtue of chastity, however grand and sublime this virtue may be ; all His praise is concentrated on the constancy of the holy Precursor. To draw attention to the invincible firmness of St. John, our Lord questions those who surround him, and asks: *What went you out into the desert to see? a reed shaken with the wind?* No: such a fickle and frivolous character would not have excited your curiosity and admiration to such an extent. But what went you out to see? You went to see a man who is constant in the practice of the rarest and most heroic virtues ; a man who is constant in fulfilling the mission that God confided to him, in persevering in the vocation and austere mode of life he had embraced ; a man who is constant in serving God, in edifying his neighbour, in reproofing and correcting sinners, in

suffering with unalterable patience, and perfect resignation, the persecutions of the wicked ; such is the man you went to see.

‘But why does our Lord bestow such praise on constancy ? Because this virtue comprises, in a way, all the others and, without it, all the others are of no use. The essential, says St. Augustin, is not to begin well, but to end well, for Jesus Christ Himself tells us that *he that shall persevere to the end, he shall be saved.* (St. Matt. x, 22.) Because this virtue must be of every day, and of every moment of the day. Indeed, the life of a Christian, and still more that of a Religious, is a continual warfare. To correct our defects, to practise virtue, to save our souls, we require to do continual violence to ourselves, and to struggle against all that surrounds us. Thus we must struggle :—

‘1. Against ourselves, against our passions and our evil inclinations, against all our senses, in order to keep them in restraint and subjection.

‘2. Against the devil, that *roaring lion* who never sleeps, *but goeth about, seeking whom he may devour* ; that seducer of the children of God, that angel of darkness who transforms himself into an angel of light, the better to hide his snares, and to make us fall the more easily into his toils.

‘3. Against the world, its vanities, its maxims, and its scandals. Against the bad examples of our brethren, not by doing what they do, but what they ought to do, and what our Rule prescribes ; against our friends and relations, not letting ourselves be guided by the suggestions of flesh and blood, and loving them only in God and for God ; against those who make themselves our enemies, by returning them good for evil, and thus, as the Apostle says, *heaping coals of fire upon their heads.*

‘4. Against all creatures, and all that surrounds us, so as not to fix our hearts thereon, but merely to use them as means by which to advance in God’s service and work out our salvation.

‘5. In fine, we ought to strive against God Himself, doing Him holy violence by fervent prayers, bearing with patience and resignation all the interior troubles, mortifications, aridities, temptations, and other trials which Providence may please to send us.

‘Now, it is only by inflexible firmness and unflagging energy that we can support so violent and continuous a struggle. The inconstant, the pusillanimous, the faint-hearted, are unfit for

such a trial ; this is why they are in great danger of being lost ; it is to them that our Lord addressed this dreadful saying : *No man putting his hand to the plough, and looking back, that is, who is inconstant, is fit for the kingdom of God.* (St. Luke ix, 62.)





APPENDIX.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE INSTITUTE OF THE LITTLE BROTHERS
OF MARY SINCE THE DEATH OF ITS FOUNDER
ITS PRESENT STATE.

At the death of Father Champagnat, the Society comprised 280 Brothers and thirty Postulants. There were forty-eight establishments, founded in the departments of the Loire, the Rhône, the Saône-et-Loire, the Haute-Loire, the Isère, and the Ardèche.

The Congregation continued to prosper under the Government of the Rev. Brother François, elected Superior-General by the Professed Brothers, before the death of the venerated Founder.

In 1842, the Brothers of the Christian Instruction of St.-Paul-Trois-Châteaux were united to the Little Brothers of Mary; this union had been long desired by the Superiors and Brothers of the two Congregations. It was followed in 1844, by that of the Brothers of Viviers, who had been directed by the Abbé Vernet, Vicar-General of the diocese. Mgr. Guibert, then Bishop of Viviers, late Cardinal Archbishop of Paris, himself negotiated this union.

In 1846, a Novitiate was founded at Beaucamps (Nord), by the munificent generosity of Monsieur le Comte and Madame la Comtesse de La Grandville; this Novitiate now supplies the extensive Province of the North, including a number of foundations in Belgium.

During the latter years of his life, Father Champagnat made

several journeys to Paris, for the purpose of obtaining the legal authorization of the Institute; but it was not given him to succeed in this important affair. Divine Providence reserved it for his successor.

It was on the 20th of June, 1851, after many prayers and persevering efforts, that the long wished for decree of approbation was obtained. This decree which assures a legal existence to the Institute, with the faculty of acquiring property, and accepting gifts and legacies, gives the Superior-General the right of presenting subjects for appointment to public schools; it also dispenses the Brothers from military service.

The years 1852, 1853, and 1854 were marked by the meeting of the General Chapter, for the revisal and final adoption of the Rules, the Constitutions, and the School-Guide.

At this time, the Society considerably increased. Numerous subjects were admitted to the Novitiates, and many new schools were opened, both in France and abroad.

It was in December, 1852, that, at the request of the Marist Fathers, the first three Brothers were sent to England, to take charge of St. Anne's Boys' School, Spitalfields, London. This modest foundation was the beginning of the present Province of the Isles, which comprises the British Isles and the Colonies, and which has been so generously blessed by Almighty God, that, at the present moment, 1886, it numbers more than 300 subjects, engaged in fourteen different dioceses. The English speaking postulants, however, continued to be received and trained at Beaucamps (Nord), until November, 1874, when the English Novitiate was transferred to Dumfries, in the south of Scotland. A Novitiate had been likewise opened in Sydney, in 1872, and another was founded at Port-Elizabeth, South Africa, in 1881.

This rapid increase led to the division of the Society into three Provinces, which were known respectively as the Centre, the North, and the South.

Later on, it was found necessary to subdivide these again into seven Provinces; viz: three in the centre, St. Genis-Laval, (Rhône), the Bourbonnais, and N. D. de l'Hermitage-sur-Saint-Chamond (Loire); two in the South having their Novitiates at St.-Paul-Trois-Châteaux (Drôme) and at Aubenas (Ardèche). The Province of the North having two Novitiates: one at Beaucamps (Nord) and the other at Cublac (Corrèze). The

Province of the Isles, comprising three districts, having each its Novitiate, viz. : Dumfries (Scotland) for the British Isles, Sydney (Australia) for Oceanica, and Uitenhage (South Africa) for Cape Colony. Another Novitiate has just been opened at Iberville, Canada, P. Q.

In 1860, the Rev. Brother François, who had been Superior-General for twenty years, was obliged, through ill-health, to resign his charge. The General Chapter then elected Brother Louis-Marie to succeed him ; he had been first Assistant since 1839.

Under his government, the Holy See, rejoicing at the rapid increase of the Institute of the Little Brothers of Mary, deigned to definitely recognise and approve it by a decree of the 9th of January, 1863, as a Congregation with simple vows, under the title of *Marist Brothers of the Schools*.

Among the blessings and encouragements received from the Sovereign Pontiff, we may mention the paternal exhortation to the children of our schools, given by His Holiness, Pius IX, in the audience granted to the Superior-General, on the 9th of July, 1869. On this occasion, just before retiring, the Rev. Brother Louis-Marie besought the Pope to affix his signature at the foot of a portrait of His Holiness : *We will do better than that*, answered the Holy Father, *we will send our Apostolate to all your young people*. And immediately, taking the portrait, he wrote at the foot of it, in Latin, what follows : *A young man according to his way, even when he is old he will not depart from it*. (Prov. xxii, 6.) *Young men, be wise now, therefore, that you may persevere till death in the wisdom of Jesus Christ*. Then, handing the portrait to the Rev. Brother Superior : *Behold our Apostolate*, said the Pope, *take it to your young people and let them profit well by it*.

And as the crowning of all these favours His Holiness deigned, on the following day to address to the Little Brothers of Mary of the Schools, an admirable Brief in which the following words occur : *It is with happiness and with gratitude that we accept your good services and your offerings, both because they come to us from devoted sons and because it is pleasing to us to receive them from your Institute, and lastly, because we see in them an assured pledge of the Divine favour upon your work*.

In another visit of the Superiors to Rome, in the month of

July, 1875, the Holy Father, in the course of an audience, gave them this paternal exhortation: *My Brothers, do all the good you possibly can to your numerous children: teach them all, with great zeal, the Catholic Truth.*

What the Holy Father wants us to teach our children, is the Catholic Truth, that which Jesus Christ has revealed, and which the Holy, Roman, Catholic, and Apostolic Church proposes to us by her supreme authority.

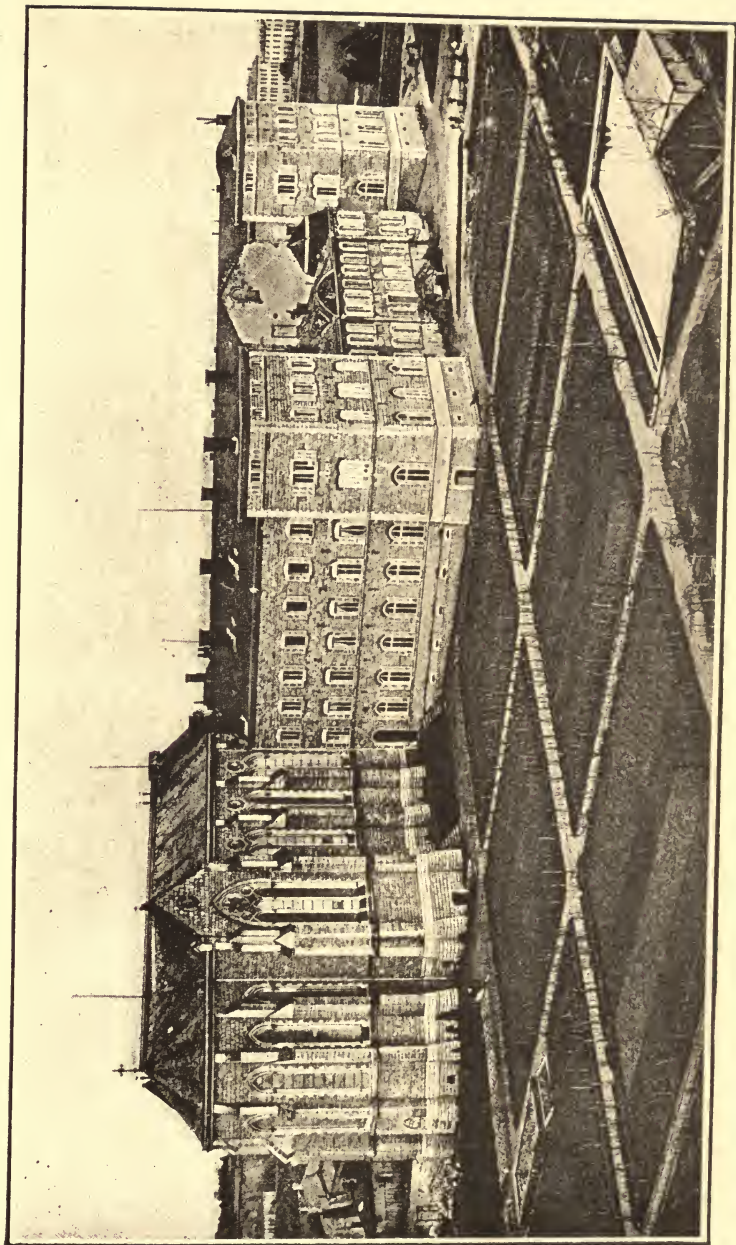
From the approbation of the Institute by the Holy See, from the various Indults and other favours which the Sovereign Pontiffs, Pius IX and Leo XIII have benignantly granted to the Brothers, have been derived the innumerable blessings which Providence has heaped upon them, such as the preservation of the zeal and primitive spirit of the Order, the ever increasing number of its members, the creation of new novitiates and the extension of the Society to the extremities of the earth.

Thus, not to speak of the thirty-four Brothers who, from 1836 till 1856, were sent out to Oceanica as coadjutors to the Marist Fathers, the Little Brothers of Mary were established in England, in 1852, in Scotland, in 1858, in Ireland, in 1862, in the Cape Colony, in 1867, in Sydney (Australia) in 1871, in New Caledonia, in 1873, in New Zealand, in 1876, in the Seychelles in 1883, and in Canada in 1885.

The centre of the Congregation, or Mother-House, is at Saint-Genis-Laval (Rhône). It is the residence of the Superior-General and the seat of the administration of the Institute.

During these latter years, the recruiting of the Novitiates having become more difficult, the Brothers have established Juniorates or preparatory Novitiates, destined to receive boys from twelve to fifteen years of age, who show a disposition for the religious life, to prepare them by study and religious training to enter the Novitiate. As the Society was not in a position to support these children, a work has been established in France to supply the means for their maintenance and education.

By a Brief of the 4th of December, 1880, His Holiness, Leo XIII, has deigned to bless and recommend the Juniorates, and the annual collections intended for their support. Moreover, by a second Brief of the 13th May, 1886, the Holy Father has been pleased to grant to all Benefactors of the Institute of the Little Brothers of Mary, a plenary indulgence *in articulo mortis*; also



MOTHER HOUSE, AT ST. GENIS-LAVAL (Rhône). Built in 1858.

an indulgence of 300 days to anyone of the faithful, each time they shall assist the said Institute, either by their prayers or by some other good work.

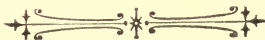
Thanks to these favours of the Sovereign Pontiff, to the approbation of the Episcopate, and the generosity of the persons interested in the Christian Education of youth, the annual subscriptions enable the Brothers to support 500 Juniors in these Institutions.

The Juniorates are situated at St. Genis-Laval (Rhône), St. Paul-Trois-Châteaux (Drôme), Serres (Hautes Alpes), Digoïn (Saône-et-Loire), Beaucamps (Nord) and Cublac (Corrèze).

This work which was founded in 1878, has already supplied 785 good subjects to the Novitiates. Similar Institutions, or Homes for Pupil Teachers, have been founded in London, Glasgow, Dundee, and Sydney, for the Province of the Isles.

From the Life of the pious Founder and the above sketch, it is easy to see the action of God in the great and Apostolic work which he has established.

Father Champagnat, without any human means, but as a docile instrument in the hands of Providence, began his work, under the inspiration of God, the protection of Mary, and with the advice of his Superiors; but, in his humility, he never expected the extraordinary development it was destined to have after his death. A small mustard seed at first, the Institute has grown to be a large tree, spreading its branches over the different parts of the world. Such, is the fruit of the faith, and zeal for the House of God, which animated the venerated Founder of the Institute of the Little Brothers of Mary.



SUMMARY OF THE PERSONNEL OF THE INSTITUTE IN 1886.

BROTHERS.	GENERAL ADMINISTRATION.	PROVINCES.								TOTALS.	
		St. Genis-Laval.	N. D. de l'Hermitage.	Bourbonnais.	Aubenas.	St. Paul-Trois- Châteaux.	North.	West.	British Isles and South Africa.		Oceania.
Stable	12	22	16	11	16	24	13	5	6	7	132
Professed	4	340	279	168	225	342	228	45	69	58	1758
Obedient	2	173	150	99	105	125	120	20	19	17	830
Novices	—	60	84	45	79	60	60	20	22	20	450
Postulants	—	38	27	15	35	12	32	20	15	15	209
Juniors	—	87	95	85	—	160	92	30	61	18	628
Totals	18	720	651	423	460	723	545	140	192	135	4007

SUMMARY OF ESTABLISHMENTS IN 1886.

DIOCESSES.	Schools.	Departments.	Teaching Brothers.	Pupils.
Lyons	116	348	582	18874
Viviers	67	173	264	7545
Grenoble	36	92	143	3875
Nimes	35	106	144	4993
Cambray	32	119	163	7100
Autun	22	91	115	4468
Valence	19	54	86	2110
Marseille	17	47	70	2180
Avignon	16	36	52	1700
Moulins	12	34	54	1538
Fréjus	11	30	60	1160
Aix	11	27	41	1000
Arras	10	35	46	1990
Belley	10	29	50	1205
Clermont	9	28	47	1444
Périgueux	7	17	28	780
Montpellier	6	16	25	530
Bordeaux	4	11	19	585
Nevers	4	19	29	865
Paris	4	25	53	870
Bourges	4	15	24	595
Le Puy	3	9	13	540
La Rochelle	3	8	15	280
Amiens	2	5	6	160
Beauvais	2	14	30	400
Carcassonne	2	6	8	265
Limoges	2	7	11	359
Soissons	2	6	10	200
Tulle	2	5	8	150
Versailles	2	4	8	130
Agen	1	3	4	120
Evreux	1	2	5	60
Gap	1	4	8	104
Rodez	1	2	3	80
Tournay (Belgium)	5	15	20	900
Namur do.	1	2	3	140
Bruges do.	1	2	3	100
Mahé (Seychelles)	2	4	5	220
St. Hyacinth (Canada)	1	4	9	300
Montreal do.	1	4	6	200
Portland (Maine, U.S.)	1	3	4	180
Westminster (England)	7	17	21	980
Southwark do.	1	3	4	228
Hexham and Newcastle (England)	1	3	5	700
Glasgow (Scotland)	6	19	22	2652
Dunkeld do.	3	9	10	1450
Galloway do.	2	6	9	182
Edinburgh do.	1	3	4	280
Ardagh (Ireland)	1	3	4	84
Eastern District (Cape Colony)	3	6	12	290
Western District do.	2	6	8	450
Sydney (Australia)	9	30	50	2070
Wellington (New Zealand)	2	5	8	392
Auckland do.	1	3	4	250
New Caledonia	8	14	32	905
Totals	535	1500	2467	81208

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Life and spirit of J. B.

M. Champagnat : priest

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See: Marist School
Brother.



