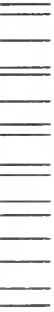


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MODERN SAINTS

AND

*Servants of God.*



The Saints and Servants of God.

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THE LIFE  
OF  
SAINT FRANCIS DE SALES,  
BISHOP AND PRINCE OF GENEVA.

FROM THE ITALIAN OF PETER HYACINTH GALLITIA.

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“ Gaude Maria Virgo, cunctas hæreses sola interemisti in  
universo mundo.”—*Antiph. Ecclesiæ.*

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We hereby approve and sanction the Series of Lives of the Canonized and Beatified Saints, the Servants of God declared Venerable, and others commonly reputed to have died in the odour of sanctity, now in course of publication by the Congregation of the Oratory of St. Philip Neri, and we cordially recommend it to the Faithful, as calculated to promote the glory of God and of His Saints, the increase of devotion, and the spread of our holy Religion.

Given at Westminster, the Feast of the Nativity of our B. Lady, A. D. 1851.

N. CARD. WISEMAN.

---

We very gladly approve and sanction the continuation of the Series of the Lives of the Saints, begun by the Reverend Fathers of the Oratory, with the approbation and sanction of our lamented Predecessor, being deeply convinced that, in the last twenty years, the Lives hitherto published have promoted a deep and solid piety among the Faithful in England.

✠ HENRY EDWARD,  
ARCHBISHOP OF WESTMINSTER.

June 12, 1872.



TO  
THE SECULAR CLERGY  
OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN ENGLAND,  
THE SUCCESSORS AND SPIRITUAL CHILDREN  
OF GENERATIONS OF MARTYRS,  
WHO,  
BY THEIR CHEERFULNESS IN HOLY POVERTY,  
THEIR DILIGENCE  
IN OBSCURITY AND UNDER OPPRESSION,  
THEIR UNEXAMPLED CONFIDENCE  
IN THE TRUTHS THEY TAUGHT,  
THEIR FORGIVING CHARITY  
TOWARDS UNGENEROUS OPPONENTS,  
AND THEIR SELFDENYING KINDNESS TOWARDS THOSE  
WHOM THEIR PRAYERS, THEIR SACRIFICES,  
AND THEIR SUFFERINGS  
RESCUED FROM THE DARKNESS OF ERROR,  
HAVE PRESERVED TO THEIR COUNTRY,  
TOGETHER WITH THE PRECIOUS EXAMPLE  
OF THEIR OWN VIRTUES,  
THE UNFAILING LIGHT  
OF THE CATHOLIC FAITH,  
AND THE HEREDITARY DEVOTION TO THE HOLY SEE  
WHICH DISTINGUISHED  
THE PILGRIMS AND SAINTS OF SAXON TIMES,  
AND THE PRINCELY BUILDERS  
OF OUR NORMAN CHURCHES.

ST. WILFRID'S,

TRANSLATION OF ST. THOMAS OF CANTERBURY,

M.D.CCC.XLVII.



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THE LIFE  
OF  
SAINT FRANCIS DE SALES,

BISHOP AND PRINCE OF GENEVA.

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BOOK III.

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CHAPTER I.

CONSECRATION OF S. FRANCIS OF SALES. BEGINNING  
OF HIS GOVERNMENT.

As the day of consecration approached, the castle of Sales received many distinguished guests, who were eager to assist at the solemnity ; and our Saint deemed it fitting to interrupt his retreat to greet the arrival of Monseignor Gribaldi, the Archbishop of Vienna, his Metropolitan, of Thomas Pobel, Bishop of S. Paul, and of James Maistret, Bishop of Damascus, who were to perform the ceremony. Many of the Canons belonging to the Cathedral, and all the musicians of Annecy attended, the Countess of Sales sparing nothing that could give honour to the new Bishop ; but he, after complimenting his guests, returned again to his solitude. All the necessary arrangements being completed in the parish Church of Thorens, the only one large enough

to contain the vast concourse of spectators, the consecration was celebrated on the feast of the Immaculate Conception of our Blessed Lady, 1602.

During the whole of the function, the Bishops experienced such feelings of consolation, that they declared they had never before in their whole lives felt anything equal to it: nor was the delight of the spectators less, as they gazed on the beaming countenance of the Saint, from which rays of light seemed to issue. But Francis, more than all the rest, was penetrated with such tender devotion, as to appear ravished out of himself. The impressions of grace on his heart were so visible, that the Bishops imagined him to be taken ill, and proposed shortening the ceremonies; but he entreated that this should not be done, saying that nothing appointed by the Church was superfluous, and did not bring some special blessing to the soul. This species of extasy lasted for half an hour, at the end of which he fainted; but being raised up, he reassured the bystanders. This much is certain—that the Most Blessed Trinity wrought inwardly that which the Bishops outwardly effected by the holy ceremonies. By means of an intellectual vision, the Saint understood in what manner the Three Divine Persons assisted at his consecration; and he received an assurance from our Blessed Lady, and the Apostles SS. Peter and Paul, of their protection and assistance: he understood that the book of the gospels, placed on his head and shoulders, was to be meditated and preached by him: that the gifts of the Holy Ghost were imparted to him by the imposition of hands: that Divine Providence fortified him by the unction as his hands were

anointed; he knew that the power of ordaining Priests was conveyed to him, and that he was to use the keys of the Church for the salvation of the people: the mitre reminded him that his exterior senses were all to be regulated by the dictates of right reason, and that he was to apply himself assiduously to the study of both the Testaments of Holy Scripture, by means of which he would become formidable to his enemies: he understood when he received the gloves that he was to hide his good works in order to avoid vain-glory, and to put on the new man that he might obtain the blessings of the heavenly Isaac. The ring reminded him of the fidelity which he owed to God and to His Church: the pastoral staff taught him that he was to support the weak, to correct sinners, to drive the wolves away from his flock, and to bring back the stray sheep. Finally the pectoral cross warned him that he was to carry Jesus Crucified in his heart, and to glory in nothing, save in the cross. These divine operations made such an impression on his heart, penetrated as it was by the presence of the Almighty, that for six weeks he appeared like a man carried out of himself, so entirely was he lost to all sensible things. Even to the end of his life, his mind retained a high esteem for the pastoral dignity; insomuch that he never wore any pontifical ornament, or used any symbol of his apostolate, except with the greatest respect and reverence.

Judging from after effects, we may certainly infer that the Three Divine Persons imparted to him on this solemn occasion some participation of Their perfection; that the Eternal Father bestowed on him of His own fruitfulness, that he might give numberless

children to the Church: that the Divine Word communicated to him a part of the love He bears the Church, for whose service he was to undergo so much toil and suffering: that the Holy Ghost impressed him with part of His sanctity and light, in order that he might sanctify many souls, and rule his diocese with success. God would not allow the graces received on this occasion to remain hidden; in the first sermon that he preached, he seemed as it were in an extasy, and without being himself conscious of it, narrated all these particulars; the Lord so willing it for His own glory and that of His servant. He was not a little ashamed, when he was afterwards told what he had said; he had no notion of it whatever; in fact it was directly contrary to his intention, for it had been his object to bury in oblivion this signal favour. Thenceforward, Francis looked on himself as a man dead to the world, who was to live to God alone: and he wrote in confidence to a friend as follows: "After being ordained Bishop, having completed my general confession, and quitting the company of the angels and saints, in the midst of whom I had made my new resolutions, I only spoke of the world like one who was a stranger to it; God having withdrawn me out of myself, to make me His own; though He afterwards restored me to the people; changing me from what I was in myself, in order that I might belong wholly to Him; that is to say, dedicating myself to Him, I made such strong resolutions of serving the souls He loves, that from that time the impression has never been absent from my mind." In fact, from the day of his consecration, he addicted himself solely to the functions of

his ministry and the duties of his charge. If civility or any other cause diverted him from them for a short time, he only resumed them with renewed zeal and fervour.

On the departure of the Bishops and the other distinguished guests who had been present at the solemnity, he returned to his solitude for a few days, to arrange the plan of his first proceedings at Annecy. In the meantime, he sent Lewis of Sales to take possession of the Bishopric in his name, to inform the Chapter of the Cathedral of his consecration, and to make the necessary arrangements for his solemn entrance into the city, which was fixed for the fourteenth of December. On that day he made his entry, accompanied by the secular and regular clergy, the magistracy, the nobility, and a vast concourse of people; receiving as usual the compliments of the various bodies of which it was composed. The extraordinary display of honour on the occasion shewed the universal delight of the people, who blessed God for giving them a Pastor according to His own heart.

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## CHAPTER II.

### BEGINNING OF THE EPISCOPATE OF S. FRANCIS DE SALES.

THE following day was the third Sunday of Advent, when the Saint preached to his people on the coming of their Divine Redeemer, and gave them advice how to receive Him becomingly. It was observed that he was completely ravished in God,

and then it was, that unconsciously to himself, he related all that had happened to him on the day of his consecration.

He immediately applied himself to the affairs of his diocese, assembling the Chapter and the chief part of his clergy; and with their advice nominated the officials necessary for its government. George Favre, the President's brother, was named Vicar-General, and John Deage, his former tutor but now a Canon, was named Pro-Vicar, besides some other appointments: to these proportionate stipends were assigned, to enable them to expedite affairs without requiring fees or perquisites from applicants: he would have wished all business to be despatched gratuitously; but the poverty of the bishopric would not admit of this; however, he reformed the tariffs, and so reduced the prices that they were no longer burdensome to the people: such business as really required remuneration was charged lightly, so as to be quite in accordance with the moderation required by the Council of Trent. When speaking on this subject, he used to say that we ought to give freely that which we have received freely; ecclesiastics, and especially bishops, ought carefully to avoid everything like avarice and self-interest; and that the derivation of temporal advantage from privileges and dispensations, is the ruin of ecclesiastical discipline, because it tends to increase the facility with which they are granted; whereas on the contrary, when little or nothing is to be gained by granting them, more caution is used.

But to turn to more spiritual matters. The holy prelate well knew how much the instruction of youth contributes to form good morals; he therefore

ordained that the catechism should be taught every Sunday, not only in Annecy, but throughout the diocese; recommending those published by order of the Council of Trent and by Cardinal Bellarmine; insisting much on the advantage of uniformity in teaching. To shew the importance he attached to this function, he began it himself, and continued it ever after, unless prevented by more essential duties. It was indeed a beautiful sight to see a prelate, whose learning had been the theme of admiration at Rome and Paris, and whose eloquence had charmed the court of France, surrounded by a group of children, adapting himself to their capacities, instructing them with incomparable patience, and thus recalling the image of Jesus Christ Himself. He began this work in the collegiate Church of our Blessed Lady, but for the convenience of the people, transferred it to the Church of the Dominican Fathers: as the number of his auditors increased, he divided them in three classes, according to age and sex. To give a better idea of his task, we will describe the method he established for this important function.

At noon, an acolyth dressed in a purple cassock on which was depicted the holy name of Jesus, went through the town ringing a bell, and calling out from time to time, "Come and listen to Christian doctrine, which will teach you the way to heaven:" then the people repaired to the chapels or other places appointed; the catechist intoned the hymn of the Holy Ghost, with two children, who acted as cantors: after the prayer, the boys and girls, in separate classes, were placed on benches, and the catechist questioned them from the pulpit,

or made them question each other; giving ample explanations of the mystery selected for that day. Those who answered readily were rewarded with little pious presents; and at the end of the hour, a psalm or hymn was sung in the vernacular. Although the Saint had never before turned his attention to versification, he now, by way of recreation, composed some little spiritual songs, which were sung on these occasions. Twice a year he led these little children in procession, with a dignity and recollection that struck and affected all who witnessed it.

His example induced all the parochial clergy to do the same, nor could any of them consider beneath his notice a function which the chief pastor discharged so carefully, that when hindered himself, he always commissioned one of the chief amongst his clergy to supply his place. At first, none but children attended, but afterwards the most distinguished personages of the city made a point of being present; he therefore changed his method a little, and after instructing the children during part of the time, proceeded in a familiar but useful style to give explanations of the principal points of Christian morality.

The holy prelate had learned from the teaching of S. Paul, that he who knows not how to rule his family, will not be fit to rule a diocese; he therefore took special care of his own. All dangerous amusements were prohibited: simplicity, modesty, and true Christian piety, were observable in his servants, who were so civil, well-behaved, and devout, as to give general edification: union and charity reigned amongst them, no dispute or discord was ever heard,



so that his establishment resembled a well-regulated community. We have already seen the rules prescribed for his family, which he required to be strictly observed: no women were admitted into the rooms, but were received either in the hall or gallery; nor would he consent, though advised to do so, to have one in the house to take charge of the linen, &c., saying that he was determined not even to have his own mother in his palace. In fact, when the Countess of Sales visited Annecy, she was lodged in a neighbouring house; the Saint saying, like S. Austin, that though his mother might raise no suspicion, the ladies who accompanied or visited her would. On this point he was inflexible.

His next endeavour was to eradicate from the city a profane custom which prevailed during the carnival, of distributing tickets on which were written the names of young boys and girls, called Valentines: each youth was expected to escort to the ball the girl who fell to his lot, and to attend upon her, with what injury to souls may easily be imagined. To remedy this, the Saint was not satisfied with declaiming against it in the pulpit: he prohibited under severe penalties the distribution of the tickets, calling the secular power to his aid: and to counteract the custom, he desired that at the catechetical instruction, tickets bearing the names of saints should be distributed, to whom the recipients were taught to pay particular devotion during the year. In this respect, he followed the example of S. Francis Borgia, who first introduced the custom into his own family, and then into the Society of Jesus. If the vicious practice was not entirely abolished at Annecy, at least it was very much

diminished; for only those of very loose conscience continued it.

We may here mention that the Saint had a great abhorrence of all those amusements borrowed from paganism, which were still in use during the Carnival: he called the Carnival days his sorrowful days, on account of the excesses committed, and because devotion then grows cold. In one of his letters written about this time, he laments that for the last two Sundays, the communions had fallen off to about half the usual number. In the course of time, he thought of a remedy for both evils: he deferred his own retreat, and introduced various devotions during those days, to attract the attendance of the people. Before the lapse of many years, he was able to write as follows to the Baroness de Chantal: "How delighted I am to have clipped the wings of the Carnival so much that it can hardly be recognized in our city. How cordially last Sunday did I congratulate my dear people, who came in extraordinary crowds to hear the sermon which I delivered in the evening, leaving all their parties to assist at it. This was an immense consolation to me, especially as the ladies had communicated in the morning, and could not have gone without asking leave: I am not austere with them; nor is it fitting that I should be, since they are so good and pious." Not only did the Saint preach during those days, but he also introduced the devotion of the *Quarant' Ore*, in the Church of the Barnabite Fathers.

To animate his flock to the practice of virtue, he recommended all, both in his instructions and in his Lenten Pastoral Letter, to be mindful of the Passion

of our Lord Jesus Christ, as an effectual means of preserving themselves from sin, and of going on to virtue. To this effect, he advised the custom of making the sign of the cross when the clock struck, and of reciting some short ejaculation in satisfaction for the faults committed during the preceding hour; at the same time making an act of the presence of God; for thus the enemy, who goeth about seeking whom he may devour, will always find us on our guard.

With these salutary instructions, the holy Prelate endeavoured to lead his people onwards; but his own example was the most powerful of all persuasions. He was exact, even to scrupulosity, in the employment of time; and knowing that idleness is a fruitful source of iniquity, he strongly exhorted the ecclesiastics of his diocese to be continually occupied. On this account, he used to say, he wished the ancient discipline of the Church could be restored, which obliged the clergy to attend to some decent profession or trade; adding, that the rule should be so general, as not even to exempt the most learned: none of the ecclesiastics of modern days could bear comparison with S. Paul, who, although so well versed in learning, and so fully occupied in the functions of the apostolate, did not dispense himself from manual labour. The Canons of the Council of Carthage enjoined the clergy to earn their bread by the labour of their hands, even though they might be competent to preach the word of God: hence he concluded that idleness was most pernicious in persons consecrated to the divine office; and that it was far better to

see them tilling the land, than loitering about in the public streets and high-ways.

As for himself, he was most exact on this point ; he followed no trade it is true, but he was always found occupied, either in giving audience to those who sought it, or preaching, or praying, or studying, or in some other work suited to his state. Whenever he had a few leisure moments, he visited the hospitals and the sick, to whom he administered the Sacraments, and whom he served with his own hands. God blessed his charity, often granting him miraculous cures ; it is, therefore, not surprising that the people should have loved and respected him as they did. He always went about the town on foot, and people ran to their doors to ask his blessing : mothers eagerly carried their obstinate and passionate children to him, that he might bless them, and it was observed that those whom he blessed by making the sign of the cross on their foreheads, and those whom he caressed or patted, left off crying, and became gentle and tractable. Nor was the holy Prelate's charity limited to this ; he entered the dwellings of artizans and poor, enquired into their necessities, listened to their complaints, and either by advice or assistance, carried peace everywhere. He could not endure family discord, and did all he could to prevent and banish it. As no obduracy could resist his incomparable sweetness, so nothing could cool his charity, which was so efficacious and so generally recognized, that his mere presence often sufficed to eradicate an inveterate enmity.

## CHAPTER III.

## REGULATIONS FOR HIS CLERGY.—OF THE MANNER IN WHICH HE GAVE ORDERS AND BENEFICES.

As Saint Francis de Sales looked upon the clergy of his diocese as the most immediate objects of his pastoral solicitude, he felt bound to give them his first care. At the beginning of Lent, all things were put in readiness for the administration of Holy Orders. There can be no function more deserving the attention of a Bishop than that of giving holy ministers to the Church; for this reason he redoubled his prayers and fasts: being deeply impressed with a sense of the dreadful account which he must give to God, who admits unworthy subjects amongst his clergy, and distrusting his habitual leniency, which impelled him, as we may say, to condescend to the weakness of his neighbour, he perpetually besought Almighty God to make known those whom He had elected, that he might not reject those who were approved by God, nor accept those whom He rejected. He was exceedingly particular in his choice of ministers for the altar, examining them himself, and only admitting those whom he had every reason to hope would answer well: he paid no regard to nobility, recommendations, nor even to natural talent, unless accompanied by an irreproachable life. He maturely examined the vocation of each, being indignant at the notion that any one should take to the Church for

sacrilegious or profane ends, or from motives of sordid interest.

He shewed this in his examination of a noble youth, who had been nominated to a rich benefice. Suspecting from his appearance, that the revenues formed the chief motive for his becoming a priest, the Saint questioned him so closely, as to make him own that he had no other vocation but the avarice of his parents, who intended to increase the family income by the revenue derived from the Church: this was quite enough; no entreaties could induce him to give so much as minor orders to the candidate.

Not satisfied with examining the vocation and acquirements of those who applied for ordination, he made strict enquiries about their life and conduct, saying that vicious ecclesiastics destroy more by their example, than all their learning can build up. He was generally more indulgent with regard to their habits, than to their learning: ignorance excluded them for ever, whereas vice only delayed the ordination; because, as he said, a bad habit might be corrected, whereas, generally speaking, ignorance was never remedied. Although he refused ordination to any one who had lived licentiously, yet if he reformed, and gave evident signs of being what the priesthood required, he would ultimately admit him; whereas the ignorant were dismissed irrevocably.

In consequence of his strictness in this particular, his ordinations were not very numerous, although on account of the recently converted districts he needed many extra labourers. He was fully aware of this; but nevertheless he stood firm to his pur-

pose, saying that the diocese did not so much stand in need of ecclesiastics, as of *good* ecclesiastics; and that multiplying the clergy was not always a sure means of benefiting the Church; that time would provide all; and, that for the mere sake of having many, it was not advisable to admit the undeserving; but that we ought rather to beseech the Lord of the harvest to send good workmen. He celebrated his first ordinations with great solemnity in the Church of S. Francis, on Ember Saturday in Lent: his example deserves imitation by many of our modern bishops, who for the sake of brevity and other human feelings, go through the ceremony as it were by stealth. On this occasion the Saint raised to the priesthood a certain man whom our Lord so far favoured as to permit him to see his Guardian Angel: as he was leaving the Church after his ordination, he was observed to remain at the door, apparently endeavouring to make some one take precedence of him: Francis happened to come up at the moment, and seeing this strange gesticulation, suspected the cause; so taking the new priest aside, he questioned him; when he candidly owned that he was disputing with his Guardian Angel; "for before I was made priest," said he, "he used to walk before me; but now he insists on giving me precedence." The Saint was much struck by this circumstance; and remarked that the seraphic S. Francis made no mistake when he said that it was his custom when he met a priest, to salute the priest first, and then his good angel.

The holy prelate never forgot this incident, and often related it when he was conferring orders, to give the candidates a high idea of the dignity and

excellence of the sacrament, and to encourage them not to vilify it by base or secular conduct. He could not bear to see them engage themselves in the service of the great ones of the world; a deplorable custom indeed, too prevalent in the present day; and which the canons of councils, and the prohibitions of the Popes have not been able to eradicate. In his exhortations to the clergy, the Saint frequently told them that it was disgraceful to see the Ministers of God making themselves dependent upon seculars, who could not then feel due respect and esteem, either for themselves or their state, and who treated them no better than other domestics of their household.

In the families of the rich, the priests are expected not only to submit to their caprices, but are often obliged to do things incompatible with their calling; to engage in pursuits which bring them in contact with all sorts of people, to the manifest danger of their own souls: and he added that it would not be so difficult to convince ecclesiastics of these truths, if avarice and ambition could but be rooted out of their hearts.

It was his wish to erect a seminary at Annecy, to form youth to learning and piety, and from whence ministers would come forth, who were capable of teaching and edifying the people. But the poverty of the See and of the clergy prevented the realization of this good wish. However, what he was unable to effect whilst on earth, he has accomplished in heaven, for after his death an excellent seminary was established at Annecy, under the care of the Priests of the Congregation of the Missions. He used to express his surprise, that, whereas Religious



Orders had their noviciates for training those who aspired to religion, in which they were taught little else than to attend to the affair of salvation; the same precautions were not used on behalf of priests, who were to be entrusted with the government of souls, the most noble, the most important, but withal the most difficult of arts. He used to say that in the world no one was accepted as a master who had not given proofs of his ability, nor to the exercise of a profession, unless he had first served an apprenticeship to it. He added that God had given him a tolerable share of indifference to the things of this world; nevertheless he owned that these were not quite useless to the Church, for although they had too much who made a bad use of them, it likewise happened that they had not enough who were disposed to use them well: that he had often failed in providing many things, because he was unable to meet the expenses; but was consoled on such occasions, because God would only call him to account for that which had been given him.

If the Saint was so particular in conferring orders, and in training his ecclesiastics, he was no less so in conferring benefices, especially the cure of souls, bestowing them only on virtuous and learned men; he could not endure the thought of giving benefices by way of recompense, or for any human consideration, still less for anything connected with intrigue; he called such commerce "the abomination of desolation in the holy place," the universal and fruitful source of the disorders which reign in the Church; and that he might once for all shut out the applications and recommendations of the rich, he positively declared that he never would give the

cure of souls otherwise than according to the decrees of the Council of Trent. He required that aspirants to benefices should in public disputation before himself give proofs of their learning, and then, without any regard to human considerations, the most meritorious competitor obtained the curacy. In one of these competitions Francis discovered the superior attainments of a gentleman named Fenevillet, to whom he assigned a parish, and later a canonry of the cathedral; as if he foresaw his future fame, he applied to some of his friends, through whose interest he was called to preach the Lent at Paris, when he so charmed the whole city and the court that the king first named him his preacher, and then Bishop of Montpellier; he became one of the most famous prelates of France, after having gained the reputation of being one of the most eloquent preachers of his age. Pope Clement VIII. wrote to congratulate our Saint when Fenevillet was promoted to the episcopacy; and in fact it was owned that those subjects whom Francis appointed to be parish priests were fit to be bishops. The Archbishop of Lyons was once present at the examination of the candidates for a benefice, and was extremely edified, not only with the strict impartiality of the examination, but also with the Saint's firm rejection of one candidate, who in place of capacity brought with him letters of recommendation from princes, and who even threatened him with the displeasure of the sovereign, if he persisted in refusing him the benefice.

A lady of great worth recommended a priest to a certain curacy and to some other charge, and the Saint answered that nothing would prevent him

from complying with her wishes excepting the obligation he was under of looking to the greater service of God and of the Church; and had these all concurred on the present occasion, it would have been highly gratifying to him to give her this satisfaction, as he would always do when he possibly could. "But in the distribution of cures," he adds, "I follow one method from which I cannot swerve: if according to it I can do what is required of me, I willingly do so; since I cannot on the present occasion, the individual should not lose courage, but if he advances in piety and learning as I presume him to have begun, occasions will not be wanting when your recommendation will be useful to him."

The holy man seldom gave orders without previously delivering a fervent exhortation, teaching the peculiar duties and offices pertaining to each order: he could not endure ignorance in his clergy, and in his private conversations with them he exhorted them to study as well as to live well. "Those amongst you," he said, "who engage in occupations which prevent you from studying, are like those who indulge in diet which disagrees with them; by degrees the system becomes thoroughly deranged. There is no great difference between ignorance and malice; the former is perhaps the most to be dreaded, because it is not only injurious to the individual himself, but turns likewise to the prejudice of the ecclesiastical state, on which it draws contempt: on this account then, my beloved brothers, I conjure you to apply to study. Learning is the eighth sacrament of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, which suffers most when the ark falls

into other hands than those of the Levites; our miserable Geneva seduced the people, when she saw them in idleness, not watching like sentinels, but contenting themselves with the Breviary, and not applying themselves to study. Then it was that the heresiarchs imposed on the simplicity of our forefathers, and made them believe that the Church did not understand the Sacred Scriptures; whilst they slumbered, the enemy sowed his tares in the field of the Church, covertly introducing the errors which at present divide us, and which have raised a flame throughout these countries, which would have consumed us, if the goodness of God had not raised up the Fathers of the Society of Jesus, who vigorously opposing the heretics, enable us now triumphantly to exclaim: 'through the mercies of the Lord we are not consumed.' By the power of that Lord Whose name they bear, they labour with indefatigable zeal, and triumph over error by their charity, learning, and example. They bear unharmed the blackest calumnies; by perpetual study they may be said to devour books; whilst their patient endurance of insult and injury, joined to their learning, enables them to establish the mysteries of our religion, and fills the world with men competent to check heresy. Now since divine Providence has, without any regard to my incapacity, appointed me to be your Bishop, I earnestly exhort you to study, that by your learning and good conduct you may be irreproachable, and ever ready to give an account 'of the faith that is in you,' for it would indeed be discreditable in a priest to be ignorant of that which S. Peter would have all Christians to know."

He moreover strongly recommended them to be charitable towards the poor, who but too often are treated contumeliously: with equal zeal he cautioned them against law-suits, which often make us lose in a day the virtue we have been striving to acquire for years. He reminded them of the shortness of life, and of their obligation of despising worldly goods, having chosen God for their inheritance. He warned them against endeavouring to enrich themselves out of the revenues of the Church; which being consecrated to God and to the benefit of the poor, always bring a species of malediction upon families: hence he exhorted priests to make good use of them, saying that it would be shameful to apply them to vanity or to profane purposes. He advised them to keep aloof from banquets, where seculars are apt to converse on subjects not fit for priests to listen to; and also to shun those diversions frequented by the votaries of folly, where freedom of speech and action lead to serious inconveniences; and he said that familiarity with seculars was very prejudicial to the virtue of ecclesiastics, because the latter, excited by the company they are in, speak and do as the rest; whereas their condition ought to render them quite dissimilar to others.

## CHAPTER IV.

ATTACK ON GENEVA.—THE SAINT'S JOURNEY TO TURIN  
AND SALUZZO.—RETURN TO ANNECY.

SOON after Francis was consecrated Bishop, he was informed that the Duke of Savoy had crossed the mountains, and was in his diocese *incognito*, though he could not ascertain whereabouts he was. He felt convinced that his Highness had not undertaken such a journey without some special design, and he soon learned that the Prince hoping to surprise Geneva, had actually scaled it on the twenty-second of December: a bold enterprise no doubt, concerted with maturity of judgment, conducted with admirable secrecy, executed with incomparable bravery, and with every prospect of success at first; and yet every one knows how fatally it terminated. The Duke, at the head of some chosen troops, entered Savoy to give energy to the undertaking, which failed through the avarice of the soldiers, who instead of occupying the posts and one of the gates, no sooner entered the city than they began to pillage, and, the blow having failed, his Highness was obliged to return to Turin, as hastily as he had quitted it, without being able to afford our Saint an interview. The unfortunate result of this affair became the theme of conversation throughout Europe: once, when it was discussed in presence of the holy man, some one remarked, that had it succeeded, his Lordship would no longer be the poor

Bishop of Geneva ; because being so much beloved by the Duke, his Highness would in all probability have restored to him the revenues which had belonged to the see prior to the rebellion : the Saint here interposed with, " say rather that he would have restored the Catholic religion in that famous city ; a matter of far more importance than the restitution of the Bishop's revenues." He afterwards added, that as violence and usurpation are no just title to the possessions of others, even if the thing had been at his own disposal, he would readily surrender what he actually enjoyed, provided he could but have the satisfaction of gaining souls.

During the Lent, he assisted most assiduously at the sermons of Father Fourier, whom he had requested to preach for that season. The presence of the Prelate stimulated the people to go and hear the word of God ; and many were induced to profit thereby.

After celebrating the festival of Easter, and having rendered to God that which is due to God, he would with equal punctuality " render to Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's," and accordingly repaired to Turin, to return thanks to his Highness for his appointment to the bishopric ; such being the custom of the ultramontane bishops. The Court of Savoy received him with fresh demonstrations of esteem and benevolence : and as gratitude often draws new favours on us, so did the Duke grant many of his requests, none of which, however, had any other object than the promotion of the glory of God in his diocese. There were not wanting those who advised him to take advantage of the friendship of the Duke, who frequently consulted him, and

who was aware of the poverty of the bishopric ; but Francis, ever equal to himself, replied that he had not gone thither for any such purpose. And as virtue is but rare at courts, so was the holy Prelate's disengagement from the things of this world highly admired and applauded. The Sovereign was heard to say that he had always remarked those persons to care the least for riches, who make the best use of them. Having satisfied his obligations as a subject, he would next satisfy those of friendship, by going to visit the Bishop of Saluzzo, Mgr. Juvenal Ancina, of the Oratory, his particular friend, as we have already stated. He met with him in Carmagnuola, where he was making his visitation. No sooner was his arrival made known, than he was carried off from the hotel, and lodged in the house of a certain nobleman, who declared that he would gladly, if possible, give a lodging in his very heart, to a Bishop who at great inconvenience to himself, honoured their beloved Pastor with a visit. He arrived on the Vigil of the Invention of the holy Cross ; the day following was the feast of S. Juvenal, the Bishop's Patron, and a *gala* day to the whole city. The arrival of Francis seemed to redouble the devotion of Ancina, who celebrated a pontifical Mass in the Collegiate Church, and entreated our Saint to preach to the people, reminding him that Bishops in former days used to invite the Bishops who visited them, to preach to their flock. The Saint willingly agreed, and entering the pulpit, began his discourse in Italian, with an eloquence which quite enchanted his hearers. Supposing that he would preach in French with greater facility to himself, Ancina sent some one to tell him, that the people understood



French as well as Italian, having been so long under the dominion of his most Christian Majesty: Francis therefore continued his discourse (which was in honour of the holy Cross) in French, and gave universal satisfaction, his audience scarcely knowing whether they ought most to admire the learning or the sanctity, the humility or the condescension of the holy Bishop. On quitting the Church, Ancina praised the sermon, and turning to Francis, thus complimented him, "*Verè tu Sal es,*" making a graceful allusion to his family name; to which the Saint modestly rejoined, "*imo tu sal, et lux,*" alluding to Saluzzo, of which Ancina was Bishop. These words were afterwards used in their correspondence, for we find in several letters, "*Verè tu sal, et lux, ego verò neque sal nec lux.*" They spent several days together, and separated with mutual regret, so closely were they united by the sanctity which they discovered in each other. From Carmagnuola Francis proceeded to Mondovì, where he wished to make a little pilgrimage to an image of our Blessed Lady, celebrated for many miracles; he then returned to Annecy for Pentecost.

## CHAPTER V.

HE GOES TO RESTORE CATHOLICITY IN GEX.—IS POISONED, BUT RECOVERS.—RETURNS THANKS TO OUR LADY OF THONON.

THE Saint was intensely anxious for the restoration of the Catholic faith in that part of his diocese which had been ceded to the crown of France by the treaty of Lyons ; an object which, as the reader will recollect, had occasioned his journey to Paris. Having regulated the affairs, which had claimed his immediate attention at the beginning of his government, he now only awaited some favourable opportunity to enter upon a task so dear to his heart. Hearing that the Duke de Bellegarde and the Baron de Luz were actually at Belley, he resolved to avail himself of the circumstance, and accordingly set out in company with some ecclesiastics, to obtain an interview with the Duke, who was Governor of Burgundy. He was received with every demonstration of respect, and requested to preach on the festival of S. Lawrence, which he did with his accustomed zeal.

A few days later, he and these noblemen entered the territory of Gex, where he demanded the fulfilment of the orders issued by the Parliament of Dijon, in compliance with the king's desire : in spite of all the opposition of the Calvinist ministers, who resisted him to the utmost of their power, he succeeded not only in restoring Catholicity, but like-

wise in obtaining an exemption from paying towards the maintenance of these preachers, in favour of those who recovered ecclesiastical revenues, though this point cost him much.

The presence of the Duke and Baron held the most virulent of the sectarians in check, especially when they had the mortification of seeing that their disputations with Francis led to numerous conversions, amongst others of two gentlemen attached to the governor's suite, who publicly abjured heresy. Convinced that nothing but his death could arrest these conversions, as well as other things prejudicial to their cause, envy prompted them to contrive the admixture of poison with a beverage, which he unsuspectingly swallowed; but what can poison effect against those who seek nothing but the glory of that Lord who has promised that no deadly thing shall injure them who believe solely in Him? The well-known hatred of the ministers, and the symptoms accompanying his sudden illness, revealed its cause to the doctors, whose prompt remedies, under the blessing of God, cured him in a few days; though his constitution was materially weakened by the effects of the poison, and in all probability this dastardly attack contributed to shorten his life. In the height of his malady he incessantly prayed for his enemies, and to prevent their punishment seemed to be his chief object. The beautiful example of patience and forbearance which he thus displayed, served to confirm the new converts in the faith, and to win over more heretics; as the latter contrasted his conduct with that of their own teachers, they concluded that the purest faith must

be on that side where they perceived so much virtue.

Although these circumstances did but increase the animosity of the Calvinists, and although this very animosity kept him in perpetual danger, nothing could induce Francis either to moderate his zeal, or to adopt any precautionary measures, nor did he quit the territory until he had gained many souls to God, opened churches, and made all necessary arrangements for the progress of the ancient faith. The conversions would no doubt have been still more numerous, if the people had been suffered to attend his sermons, but, as he says in a letter written at this time to one of his friends, "it is astonishing how these serpents prevent them from hearkening to the voice of the charmer, who only seeks to charm them holily."

Leaving a sufficient number of good pastors in the country, besides the Capuchin Fathers, who were consoled by the conviction that they would be looked upon by God, if they were not listened to by men, to whom later at least they hoped to be of use, he returned to Annecy, from whence he immediately proceeded to Thonon, to return thanks there to our Lady of Compassion, for the restoration of his health, and for the progress of religion in those countries. It was then the month of September, when the heat in the valleys was intense, notwithstanding which, he made the journey, upwards of thirty miles, on foot.

The inhabitants of Thonon knew how much they were indebted to the labours of the Saint for their conversion to the faith, as well as for many favours obtained by him from the prince, and the

syndics determined to receive him with all the honour due to his rank and merit, more especially as this was his first visit since his consecration as bishop. But Francis, whose humility but ill accorded with worldly honours, and who knew how to sustain his dignity by other means, preferred to make his entrance into the town on foot, accompanied by one servant only, his own virtues shedding a brighter lustre on him than the most pompous preparations could have done. When the people saw their apostle wearied out and almost sinking from fatigue, they wept with tender affection, whilst he, on his side, testified a more than paternal regard for them. He was met by the magistrates and chief personages of the place, who accompanied him to the church, whither he repaired at once, though bathed in perspiration, and scarcely able to stand. But as he knelt in prayer before the image of our Lady he found himself quite invigorated, and was ready for work immediately. People hastened to visit him from all corners of the province; Thonon was no longer what it once had been, and now showed him as much honour as in bye-gone days it had shown him hatred.

On this occasion he put the finishing stroke to the conversion of some who still wavered, subdued the acrimony of others, and won many more completely over to the faith. One of these was Claudius Fourestier, Lord of Ivoire; the Saint convinced him in the course of conversation, and being closely pressed, he at last said that it belonged to his clergy to defend the cause of religion rather than to himself, whose profession was the sword, and not the solution of theological difficulties, whereupon Fran-

cis agreed to accompany him to Geneva, and discuss the subject with the ministers there; he even urged him to invite them to come over and hold a disputation with him; or else to give him a safe conduct to go thither. Forrestier executed the commission, but the ministers shrunk from the proposal, telling him that it was useless to dispute upon religion, and that it was his duty to believe them in such matters, for that the papists could adduce nothing but sophisms. This answer seemed so frivolous to him that he concluded that sect to be false, which was unable to defend its own tenets; and the consequence was that a few days later he made his public abjuration in the hands of our Saint.

During his residence at Thonon he conferred the sacrament of confirmation on some hundreds, preached several times, and blessed cemeteries. Whilst engaged in the latter function in one of the suburbs, a violent storm of thunder and lightning came on, when some heretics who were there out of curiosity, said that God was visibly punishing the superstition of the papists. "No, no," rejoined the holy man, "these are the last struggles of the enraged devil, now that we are expelling him from his unjust possessions." After using a few exorcisms, the storm subsided, and the weather returned to a state of serenity.

No one, however, derived more consolation from his visit than the Priests of the Holy House, from whom he had been so long absent: they informed him of their progress, whilst he encouraged them to persevere in the good work, and confirmed the Institute with renewed authority. Previous to his departure, he consigned to them a document which

clearly shewed his affection for this congregation. "Clement VIII., Sovereign Pontiff of the Catholic Church, elected Francis of Sales, Provost of the Church of Geneva, to be the Prefect of the Holy House of Our Lady of Compassion at Thonon: but he, being appointed Prince Bishop of Geneva, is consequently relieved from the above-named Prefectship; nevertheless, he gives and dedicates himself, with all that he is and has, to the said congregation, most ardently praying that the holy names of Jesus and Mary may distil from the Church of Thonon like oil and sweet cinnamon, shedding a delicious fragrance like to precious myrrh through all other places and churches of the diocese, more especially the city of Geneva. Amen." Such are the terms in which the Saint made a voluntary offering of himself to the Holy House of Thonon.

From Thonon he repaired to Viù, a territory belonging to the see, the only one left to it by the heretics, of the many which formerly belonged to it. Fourestier met him here, and completed the affair of his conversion; after which the Saint proceeded to the Abbey of Sixt, of which details will be given in the following chapter.

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## CHAPTER VI.

HE VISITS THE ABBEY OF SIXT, AND SOME VILLAGES OF FAUCIGNY.—INTRODUCES A REFORM IN THE ABBEY.

IN the deep recesses of Faucigny is situated the Abbey of Sixt, a very ancient monastery of Canons-Regular. It is surrounded by steep mountains,

covered with perpetual snow, and so intensely cold that the brightest summer's sun never melts the ice, though it sometimes breaks up with terrific explosions. Eternal winter reigns, and renders the spot almost inaccessible: for this reason it was chosen as a dwelling-place by the Blessed Ponzio, of the illustrious family of Faucigny, who was so famous for his piety, and for the miracles with which our Lord has been pleased to honour his tomb.

Here he founded an abbey of Regular Canons of S. Augustin, whose sanctity edified the faithful for many ages; but human frailty will not perpetually persevere in exact regularity, unless there be some compulsory power. In process of time the Canons degenerated from the virtue of their forefathers; and affairs were in the worst condition when James di Moxi, having succeeded the Regular Abbots, received the Abbey *in commendam*: he claimed the spiritual jurisdiction also, but the Capitular Canons resisted, and appealed against his orders; whereupon the Senate of Savoy prohibited the Abbot from correcting the religious, who thenceforth lived without restraint, abandoning themselves to every disorder. Each one lived as he pleased: the office in choir was entirely neglected, and not one of the Constitutions was observed, to the no small scandal of the neighbourhood. The Abbot himself, though forbidden to correct his subjects, did not even attempt to improve them by the force of his own example: but, led away by the customs of the monastery, he spared the vices of his associates, and lived in unrestrained license. When it became known that our Saint was at Viù, Francis Biord and Nicholas Des-Fayes, two Regular Canons, visited him, gave



him an account of the scandals existing in the monastery, and entreated him to remedy them; observing that, as there was no titular Abbot, it belonged to him to visit the Abbey, to expel crime from the house of God, and to restore regular observance; hoping, as they said, that in his zeal he would willingly undertake so important a task.

Moved at the sad recital, the Saint said that truly the sins of those in high places were the worst of all, and that when religious abandon themselves to vice, they are more indecorous even than seculars, adding sin to sin, and drawing on themselves a malediction which hardens them in iniquity. Being resolved not to tolerate such disorders in his diocese, he immediately proceeded to the Abbey, where he found matters even worse than had been represented. He knew that maladies of the mind and heart, like those of the body, required remedies proportioned to the strength of the patients, and he felt that to impose too heavy a yoke on the Canons, would induce them to shake it off at the first opportunity. For this reason, he decided on making but few regulations at first, and on trying to gain the good will of the Abbot and Canons by gentleness and courtesy.

The Canons were taken completely by surprise, and had no time to concoct schemes amongst themselves: moreover, being charmed by the tender and engaging demeanour of the Saint, they received his visit, and submitted to his decrees. After the first compliments, he assembled them in chapter, at which, besides the Abbot and the Prior, seven Canons assisted. He began by telling them in kind language that he believed he had a right to visit the monastery, as his predecessors had done; that he was accordingly

come to make the visitation, and should enter upon a strict enquiry as to their mode of life, their revenues, and the disposal of them; giving them full liberty to adduce reasons to the contrary, if any such existed. They replied that they knew the Bishop of Geneva had a right to visit them; and that, so far from opposing this, they would receive his orders with due respect. Then the Saint asked the Abbot whether he was Titular or Commendatory? He candidly owned that he did not know; for having once in a suit brought against him by the Canons, produced his Bulls, he never could recover them; but, having been prohibited from correcting or punishing the Religious, he supposed that he was not the Titular Abbot: for this reason he did not wear the religious habit, confining himself chiefly to the administration of the temporalities.

Francis next addressed himself to the Canons, enquiring whether they were professed? They replied that they professed the Rule of S. Augustine, although they had only implicitly, and not expressly, made the vows. He then informed himself of their titles, rights, observances, and customs, and spoke both in public and in private with so much zeal, pourtraying the horrors of vice, and the obligations imposed on them by their vows, that they promised to amend their lives, he on his side prescribing certain things, preparatory to a more thorough reform. He required that the Canons should number at least twelve, according to the ancient statutes; that they should recite the Divine Office in choir, using the Roman breviary: that four masses, at the least, should be daily celebrated in the monastery; that none of the religious should quit the house without

leave of the Prior, nor he, without informing the senior Canon; that the walls of the monastery should be restored, inside which no women were to be admitted; those who resided there had already been expelled by the two Canons who had applied to the holy Prelate. He ordered the removal of some pictures and images, which were old and defaced, but which nevertheless remained on the altar, having them conveyed to a suitable spot, and burnt. For the present, he did not deem it expedient to insist on their having community life, or on their making the vows expressly: being more anxious to induce them to accept some Constitutions which he purposed composing for them at a more opportune season. Although the regulations which he now made seem to be of little moment, those who knew how completely religious observance had been lost in the monastery, were convinced that he had accomplished a great deal in the way of reform.

The Canons submitted themselves to these orders, but, a little later, at the suggestion of some of them, the Abbot appealed to the Senate, pretending that the Bishop had no right to correct the religious: not satisfied with this, he uttered invectives and insults against the holy man, employing both money and friends to uphold him in his independence. But persecution is a crown of glory to the good: the Saint well knew how to unite the firmness of the Bishop with the meekness of Francis: the latter won the hearts of the Canons, and the former gained his cause; for he was most unbending whenever the rights of his Church or his station were in question. He produced before the Senate such incontestible proofs of his rights and titles, that the Abbot was

condemned to perpetual silence, whilst the Saint was authorized to prosecute the reform of the Abbey. This was certainly long deferred, in consequence of other numerous and important engagements; but he completed the task in 1608, when he spent four days at the Abbey, and gave its inmates some very suitable Constitutions. We find from the preface that his conciliatory letters had quite gained him the good will of the Abbot, as well as that of the Canons, who, at his repeated solicitations to obey the Prior, and to adopt community life, did at length after much opposition agree to do so: when he received the solemn act of their promise to this effect, he ratified it, and said that if he had long wished to see all the religious of his diocese resume the full fervour of their Institute, much more did he desire it in behalf of those who were under his own immediate jurisdiction; that having so sedulously promoted this object, he not only approved and ratified their solemn pledge, but commended them for it, and protested that he loved them all in the bowels of Jesus Christ. In the fulness of his power and ordinary authority, he insisted on the observance of their promise; and then bestowed his pastoral benediction on all those who should be induced to lead a community life, according to the laws of religious poverty, as ordained by S. Augustine. This act is dated Jan. 3, 1608.

On his second visit to this monastery, his first care was to remove those Canons who shewed themselves to be incorrigible, distributing them in different monasteries, and filling their places with others who were disposed to live in an edifying manner. In addition to what he had prescribed during his former visita-

tion, he now ordained that after a year of probation, all the Canons should make their formal profession; that they should elect a Prior and a Sub-prior, according to the intention of the Council of Trent, and that their office should be perpetual; that the Prior should do nothing of importance without the concurrence of the Chapter, and that in difficult cases he should seek advice from the Bishop. He appointed the hours for the Divine Office in choir, the manner of reciting it, and the habit to be worn: he gave orders for the purchase of spiritual and theological works for the common use of the religious, and forbade any useless books being kept in the monastery, or any being received until they had first been inspected by the Prior; that a Chapter should be held every Saturday, when all were to acknowledge their faults, and to receive suitable admonitions. He regulated the meals, during which some spiritual book was to be read; and ordered all manuscripts to be deposited in the Archivium under pain of excommunication. Under the same penalty, he prohibited women from entering the monastery, and the religious from admitting them. He decreed that the Abbot should maintain twelve Canons, and should repair the buildings in monastic style. By means of these and similar decrees, he restored religious discipline in the Abbey, from which he departed highly consoled, and with the hope that from having been a seminary of iniquity, it would now become the abode of sanctity, for which its situation, so remote from worldly commerce, well qualified it.

God was pleased to authenticate the sanctity and zeal of the holy prelate by an evident miracle: never

before had such fish (either in quantity or quality) been found in the neighbouring river ; nor did the store of provisions diminish during the time he remained there. Although the Canons fed upwards of two hundred and forty persons, of one sort or other, whilst the Saint was with them, their supply of bread and wine did not exceed the allowance usually consumed by the religious themselves : the Prior and the seven Canons bore witness to the truth of this, and attributed it to the prayers of Francis, and his unwillingness to increase the expenses of the monastery : although he himself took but two meals in it, he repeatedly said that he would beseech the Lord to bless them with "the dew of heaven and the fat of the land:" evidently his prayer was heard, since no diminution of provisions was perceptible even after such profuse liberality.

Nor must we pass over in silence an instance of the holy Bishop's charity at the period of his first visit to the monastery. The report of his arrival spread far and wide, and people flocked in crowds to pay him their respects ; amongst others, two deputies sent by the inhabitants of a valley situated about three leagues off. They informed him that the whole province was full of mountains, and that the summits of two of them, separating from the lower parts, had fallen and buried several hamlets, with their inhabitants and cattle, in which all the riches of the people consisted : in consequence of this, they were reduced to great distress, and had appealed to the clemency of the Duke and to the chamber of peers of Savoy, in hopes of being relieved from the payment of taxes, for which they really had not the means. They entreated him to send some one to be

eye-witness of their misfortune, who could then inform his Highness of their hapless state, and obtain the favour they requested. The tender-hearted Saint pitied their misery, and immediately offered to go himself and console them: the deputation objected to this, telling him that the roads were impassable excepting on foot. But the Saint said, "Well, but you have contrived to come hither?" "True, my Lord," they replied, "but we are poor people accustomed to fatigue and toil; therefore it will be enough if you will send one of your servants to satisfy you that we speak the truth." "And am I not your father," interposed Francis, "and therefore obliged to attend to your welfare and happiness?" Accordingly, he set out with them, heedless of all the remonstrances urged against the excursion. Any one else would have regretted making the attempt, for so rugged and difficult was the path, that one whole day was spent in walking the three leagues. On reaching the valley, he found the case even more deplorable than it had been described: the inhabitants were without houses, clothing, or food, and so emaciated as scarcely to retain the semblance of human beings. Francis consoled them, wept with them over their miseries, gave them all his money, and promised to use his best endeavours to ensure them the favour of the Sovereign. In fact he wrote both to the Duke and to the Governor of Savoy, and obtained all that the poor sufferers requested.

Whilst he compassionated their misfortune, they were delighted by his charity, and by the condescension with which he accommodated himself to their rustic manners, language, food, and huts. None of them had ever seen a bishop there before; and pro-

bably many ages had elapsed since one had visited the spot. The Saint's charity was rewarded by indescribable consolation, for he found the Catholic faith preserved unalloyed in those parts, where innocence and simplicity reigned. There was nothing to remedy, save some long-standing superstition in the cure of contagious distempers, and other trivial matters, which he succeeded in eradicating. From thence he returned to Thonon, where he conferred holy orders, and on the following day returned home in order to celebrate the Synod.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### CELEBRATION OF THE SYNOD.—REGULATIONS FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF HIS DIOCESE.—INSTRUCTION TO CONFESSORS.

ALTHOUGH Saint Francis of Sales had already given many instructions to his clergy, he convoked a Synod, that he might more fully and formally explain his intentions and wishes to them. In the month of August he issued a pastoral letter filled with admirable advice, tending to shew the beneficial results of this function, so much recommended by the holy canons. In the first place, he ordered the Vicars-Foran to visit the parishes and places under their charge, to ascertain their wants: he charged the parochial clergy to administer the sacraments to the sick, and to choose for deputy some ecclesiastic who was not obliged to assist at the Synod; that



their own absence might not prove detrimental to their flocks.

On the first of October the Canons of the Cathedral and of the Collegiate Church, and all the parish-priests belonging to town and country made their appearance. The officials proclaimed the Synod, and due measures were taken for its formal opening. On the following day, Francis celebrated a solemn mass of the Holy Ghost, in presence of the clergy; a general procession took place, and one of the Canons of the Cathedral delivered a Latin oration on the dignity and obligations of the priesthood: the Saint closed the functions of the morning with a short but fervid discourse, and concluded by entreating them all to unite with him in praying that the Father of light would bestow on him and them His Holy Spirit, Whose office it is to animate zeal, illumine the mind, and enkindle the heart. He besought them to implore for him the grace to judge rightly of all things, to remedy evils, to extirpate vice and promote virtue; that this holy function might produce solid joy and everlasting consolation. After dinner, having arranged beforehand all the pious ceremonies, of which he was a most exact observer, and having weighed matters in the balance of the sanctuary, he nominated the officials of his diocese, viz., ten examiners, twelve proctors for the clergy, twenty rural Deans or Vicars-Foran, to whom he prescribed an annual visit to all the parishes dependant on their jurisdiction; giving them faculties for various dispensations, and to absolve in certain cases. He ordered that none should present themselves for ordination, without an attestation from the Dean, to the effect that they were well versed in the cere-

monies of the Church. He regulated the dress and tonsure of the clergy ; and forbade them to maintain women in their houses, when this would give rise to suspicions. He provided against the dissensions which might occur between parish-priests on the question of burials. He ordered the curates to teach the Catechism of Cardinal Bellarmine on all festivals ; and to remove from the churches the profane furniture and ornaments, which had been introduced during the wars : and he insisted on residence, under pain of deprivation. He forbade them to take their meals at the inns of their respective places of abode, recommending temperance and sobriety when obliged on journeys to enter houses of public resort ; prohibited playing with cards and dice, or any other sort of gambling in public ; the same with regard to hunting, forbidding them to carry guns or other fire-arms. He issued several other orders with regard to the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament, the Holy Oils, the parish books, &c. : forbade the receipt of any money for the administration of Holy Communion, and the publication of secular business in the churches ; ordered the removal from the sanctuary of the seats placed there for ladies, no matter what their rank might be : ordained that no one should exorcise without permission, requiring that the exorcists should observe certain regulations prescribed by him ; and especially that they should not seek to learn hidden secrets from the devil. He forbade the clergy to frequent fairs or markets ; enjoined them to keep the chapels neat and decent ; and desired the parochial clergy to see that the patrons and chaplains fulfilled their obligations. He appointed public prayers in the manner enjoined by

his predecessor, and the Ritual composed by him to be observed. In the preface (which I have seen in the Saint's own hand-writing,) he says that he has imitated the bees, and selected from numerous rituals whatever could tend to the devout celebration of festivals and of the Church services; and this for the instruction of ecclesiastics, and to ensure uniformity in religious ceremonies; so that, according to the precept of the apostle, all things should be done decently and in order. He ordained that on all Thursdays throughout the year, except in Advent and Lent, when not hindered by an office of nine lectures, the Office of the Blessed Sacrament should be recited; because as he said, since the heretics of the diocese deride and outrage it, it is but just that we should do our best to honour it. He published a method for teaching the catechism, and for propounding some point of Catholic doctrine to the people on all Sundays. This had already been printed by order of his predecessor, but many mistakes had occurred in the printing. He likewise published a calendar, appointing the office of several saints not included in the Roman Calendar.

And in order that in after years the Synod should be faithfully held, he added other regulations, the most important of which were directed against the dissensions which occasionally arose on the subject of burials: he prohibited the alienation of all moveable and immoveable property attached to benefices, and ordered that the chapels should be duly provided for; also that the office of the dedication of the Cathedral should be celebrated on the 8th of October.

That his decrees might not pass into oblivion, he

desired that a copy of them should be kept in the sacristy of every parish church, that they might be easily accessible. He himself followed them so exactly, that his clergy had only to observe his conduct to become perfect themselves. He thus succeeded in raising a body of clergy distinguished for learning, piety, and every virtue, that might well serve as an example to other dioceses.

The holy prelate well knew that the sacrament of penance, though styled by the Fathers the second plank of safety after shipwreck, often becomes a rock whereon penitents perish, owing to the negligence of confessors, and deeply deploring such a disorder, he applied himself to remedy it. Besides his conferences, which were by no means few in number, he commanded the parish priests of each vicariate to meet together once a month in some determinate place chosen by the dean, and there discuss the means of rendering the administration of this sacrament as useful as possible; to promote the use of it, he published some directions, which were speedily printed in several towns of France, as being an excellent compendium of the principal points to be attended to in the administration of this necessary sacrament. The reader will not be displeased at finding them inserted here, as they are equally useful to penitent and confessor, although, not to be tedious, we will only select those which are most essentially instructive.

*“To the Reverend Curates and Confessors of the  
Diocese of Geneva,  
Peace and joy in the Lord.*

“My beloved Brethren, The office entrusted to you is excellent, for you have been invested by God with such a degree of authority that the sentences which you pronounce on earth are ratified in heaven; your mouths are the channels which convey peace to men of good will; your voices are the trumpets which shake the walls of iniquity, the mystic Jericho. Great is your honour, for it was said, not to the angels, but to the Apostles and their successors, ‘Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose sins ye shall remit, they are remitted,’ &c. Being entrusted then with so admirable an office, you should apply your utmost solicitude, and I a great share of my attention, in order that it may be effectively discharged.

“Therefore, make it your aim to have great purity of conscience, that you be not reproved with the words, ‘Physician, heal thyself;’ and that you may not condemn yourselves, whilst judging others. Nourish great zeal for the salvation of souls, especially of those who have recourse to you: beseech Almighty God to concur with you in converting and sanctifying them.

“As your penitents call you father, you ought to bear them a truly paternal affection, receiving them kindly, tolerating their roughness, ignorance, and imperfections, and never failing to assist them so long as there is any hope of their amendment. Remember that pastors are intended for weak more

than for strong souls, and forget not the welcome which awaited the prodigal son.

“Act with the prudence of a physician, treating your penitents according to their dispositions; encourage those who seem ashamed of accusing themselves, by telling them that you are no angel yourself, that it is no wonder that man should sin, that penance renders the soul more honourable than sin had made it blameable, that God and confessors do not look on men according to their past state, but according to the present, that sins are buried in confession and never come to light again.

“If you find them impudent in confession, warn them that it is in God’s presence that they are performing that salutary act, and that at the hour of death there is nothing they will have to give a stricter account of than of their confessions; that in absolution the price and merits of our Saviour’s death are dispensed.

“If they betray fear or diffidence of obtaining pardon, animate them by reminding them that God finds pleasure in the repentance of the greatest sinners; that the greater their misery the more glorious is it in Him to show them divine mercy; that, even if they had crucified our Lord with their own hands, He would nevertheless pardon them; that God so much values true repentance, that for the sake of it He forgets every sin, and would even pardon the damned if it were possible for them to repent; that we do a great injury to divine goodness, and insult the Blood of Jesus Christ, when we despair of obtaining pardon; finally, that faith bids them believe in the remission of sins, which is to be obtained chiefly by means of this sacrament.

“If you find them perplexed in their examination, promise to assist them, and then be charitable and discreet, especially when hearing of shameful sins from women. Be not over-sensitive if they use some awkward expression, but when the confession is ended teach them how to explain themselves. If they encumber the confession with excuses, pretexts, and explanations, listen to it all with patience, and then by your questions try to ascertain the real state of their soul; gently warning them against superfluity of words, and also of the imperfection there is in excusing one’s self. Begin by questioning them upon the lighter points; on what they have listened to, before what they have thought; on what they have thought, before what they have consented to, &c., mingling encouragement from time to time; for instance, ‘I am sure you wish to make a good confession; when once you have shaken off the weight of sin you will feel so happy; the Holy Ghost touches your heart; great will be your comfort at the moment of death.’ To persons guilty of flagrant and enormous crimes, and who are much tortured by remorse of conscience, speak encouragingly, representing the mercy of God as being greater than any sin, and promise them every assistance.

“When in the confessional, let your countenance and demeanour be grave and dignified, suited to such a sacrament; wear your cassock, surplice, stole, and beretta; control all variation of feature, lest any one who sees you should suspect that your penitent is acknowledging execrable or loathsome sins; do not face your penitent, but let him be sideways, so that you may hear but he not see you.

“ Question him on his state and condition, and on the inward disposition of his heart ; whether he is really disposed to make a good confession, and to do penance and whatever may be enjoined him, dismissing him when you find you cannot bring him to such dispositions.

“ You must not tolerate the abuse of those who will not accuse themselves unless they are questioned ; though of course they may be assisted with questioning, when they have accused themselves as far as they know ; neither will it suffice to accuse themselves of sins in general ; it being essential that the species of sins should be declared, and the number of them, as near as may be ; should their memory fail in this respect, they must say how long they remained addicted to such or such a vice, and also the inclination they had towards it. You must moreover examine the diversity and the degrees of sin, since there is a great difference between feeling angry, and insulting or striking another ; between impure looks and impure actions ; nevertheless it is not necessary for one who confesses an evil act to specify all the evil acts which must necessarily accompany it. You must investigate those sins which are multiplied in action ; for instance, stealing from one person or from two ; scandalizing three or a hundred individuals ; the same may be said with regard to desires, and even with regard to thoughts, not united to the desires, because they may be sins when voluntarily indulged, as sin consists more in the application of the heart than of the body : thoughts however may come against our wishes, or without our taking notice of them, when they either are not sins, or at least not mortal sins. In



like manner you must make those accuse themselves whose example leads others into sin, endeavouring as much as possible to prevent them from naming the accomplices of their guilt.

“A confessor is bound to know those sins which he cannot absolve, viz. excommunication and reserved cases.

“When thoroughly aware of the state of the penitent’s conscience, strive to prepare him to receive grace, suggesting the means of amendment, and enjoining such reparation as the case requires. With regard to restitutions, let them be managed as secretly as possible, whilst to repair false accusations or imposture, it will suffice that the penitent contradict what he had said before. In restitutions of usury, unjust law suits, and similar things, the utmost prudence is requisite, and in such occurrences ask time to consider, or leave to seek advice; and try to induce the penitent to ask you to do this out of confession, but take care that the penitent should not know to whom you have recourse in doubtful cases.

“When reserved cases occur, you should console though not dispense the penitents, directing them to such as have faculties to absolve them. Remember that, at the article of death, every priest may and ought to absolve from every sort of sin, even such as are reserved. Should a sick man, after having asked for a confessor, chance to lose his speech, the priest should absolve him, even though he be unable to give a sign of repentance, trusting to the simple desire he had expressed of making his confession; with still more reason should the priest do

this when the dying man makes a sign that he wishes for absolution.

“In imposing penances make use of gentle and consoling terms, moderating them according as you see the penitent to be contrite: you must not gloss over his sin, but nevertheless treat him kindly, trying to make him understand that the grievousness of his sins deserves a much heavier penalty; and thus you will induce him to accept the one enjoined. The penances should not consist of a number of prayers, because there is danger either of forgetting them, or of becoming over-scrupulous about them; or that the devotion of the penitent should flag under them, or his attention in remembering them all: it is better to impose the reading of some good book, so many confessions, admission to a certain confraternity, and other similar things, which are as well calculated to preserve from future, as to punish past sins.

“As for the counsels to be given, besides the above, you should recommend penitents to choose a confessor, to frequent sermons, to shun bad company, and to associate with good persons, also prayer, ejaculations, the remembrance of the last things, and to keep and to kiss frequently pious images and pictures.

“Before you give absolution, ask the penitent, whether he begs pardon of God, hopes for this grace through the merits of his Saviour, and resolves to live in the fear of God. Make him understand that the sentence pronounced by you will be ratified by our Lord; that the angels will rejoice at seeing him restored to the favour of God; that he must live in such a manner, that at the hour

of his death he may enjoy the fruit of this confession; and that he must beware of again staining his conscience, now washed clean in the Blood of the Immaculate Lamb.

“Then, having with head uncovered said the prayers which precede the absolution, after the words *Dominus noster Jesus Christus*, you shall put on your beretta, and extending the right hand towards the head of the penitent, you shall proceed with the absolution, according to the form prescribed in the Roman ritual. In the case of those who confess often, or when through the multitude of penitents time presses, you may omit the other prayers, as it will suffice to say, *Dominus noster Jesus Christus te absolvat, et ego auctoritate ipsius te absolvo ab omnibus peccatis tuis, in nomine, &c.* You may also advise those who confess often to say the Confiteor to themselves before presenting themselves to the priest, because time is thus saved and delay avoided.”

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### HIS SURPASSING CHARITY IN THE CONFSSIONAL.

It would be impossible to number the souls which Francis of Sales wrested from the grasp of the devil. He changed the bitter waters of penance into the ardent flames of divine charity, exercising the office of judge, father, physician, brother, or friend, according to the various dispositions of his penitents. He spent whole days in the confessional,

refusing none, yet giving the preference to the poor over the rich.

Generally, on his arrival at any house, all its inmates wished to go to confession to him; and he has been known to leave a princess waiting whilst he heard the confession of a serving-maid. This was never construed into an offence, but on the contrary was considered as a sign of the sanctity of the servant of God. He was so much resorted to in this way, that he told one of his friends confidentially, that he had no longer courage to pay visits; for when he went, intending not to stay more than two or three hours at most, he found himself detained for four or five days, hearing the confessions of the numbers who flocked to him. If unable to remain longer than one day, he was obliged to continue this function till towards one or two o'clock in the morning, instead of taking his night's rest.

As soon as he was ordained priest, he devoted the entire morning of festival days to hearing confessions, more especially those of the lower classes; and after he was made Bishop, he ordered all the parish priests and confessors of his diocese to send him all the most wretched, infected, and loathsome of their penitents, covering his charity with this specious cloak, "I who am strong and robust find no inconvenience, and run no danger amongst these people."

We must not pass over the following pleasing little incident. A servant named Anne Jacqueline, (who afterwards became the first *Tourière* in the first convent of the Visitation Order,) had, from a secret little feeling of envy, prevented a fellow servant from going to confession to the holy man;

moreover she wished to spare him the annoyance of the woman's very offensive breath. But when she came to make her own confession, she told him that indeed she had not profited by what he had once said to her, namely, that we should always look on ourselves as less than every one else; and then she related what she had done. The saint heard her with patience, and replied, "O my child, this is a great fault: do you not know that God has created and destined me to serve the sick? Bring this poor girl to me; persons like her suit me best." The good penitent obeyed; but by way of penance for her fault, he enjoined her to send to him all the most miserable and forlorn creatures with whom she was acquainted, and to inform him of their wants. Having afterwards heard from the woman who was thus brought to him that she had been rejected by several confessors, he bade her always come to him, as his direction might be useful to her. What wonders did he not effect by such conduct! In the process for his canonization, the oldest confessors in Annecy attested on oath that he commanded them all to send him not only the poor and miserable that he might comfort them, but likewise the most neglected and loathsome; because as he said, being most needy, they ought to be most sedulously instructed and relieved.

He never refused to see any one who wished to speak to him, no matter at what hour it might be. Once, when he had spent the whole morning in the confessional at Rumilly, finding no one else coming, he was about to leave the church, when he espied a poor old man, covered with wounds emitting such an intolerable odour, that the servants of the Count

of Tornon (who charitably maintained him) would not so much as suffer him to enter their kitchen; as he could scarcely drag himself along, the saintly prelate went to him, assisted and supported him till he led him into the confessional, and then kneeling down beside him, heard his confession. Having consoled the old man, he helped him to rise and go away, to the great admiration of a lady who was watching him.

A sign was enough to bring him down from his room to the confessional, as was often noticed; and one day a poor old man, happening to see him at his window, beckoned to him, whereupon he immediately went down to him. He has even deferred his Mass, after he had vested himself, to afford this consolation to his neighbour: he would quit his dinner, and has even risen from a sick bed, for the same purpose: in fact he left every thing else for this charitable office. If people asked for him at an unseasonable hour, and were desired by his servants to come at some other time, he was much distressed, especially if the persons rejected belonged to the lower orders. Hearing one day that a woman of bad life had been thus refused, he exclaimed: "Go and bring her to me: it is my daily bread to serve my neighbour in this way; for it is the will of God that all should be saved, and whichever of us draws a soul out of sin, and leads it to God, from being a man, shall be as it were transformed into a God."

In this respect he had a special gift and grace; hence no one but God knows the numbers he withdrew from sin. A young lady entirely given up to sin made her confession to him with great shame; he

encouraged her to disclose her sins, which were most heinous, in these terms: "Courage, my dearest daughter, this is a confession well made, very different from many a weekly confession, made with little or no sorrow, and consequently with a less firm resolution of amendment." These words so thoroughly comforted the poor penitent that she said afterwards, "Even if I had no sins, I should almost have accused myself of what I had not done."

To a lady of high rank, who with great sincerity was making a general confession of her whole life, he spoke so encouragingly that, supposing him to be doing so in order to give her confidence, she said to him: "How is it possible, my lord, that you can in your heart esteem a soul which has sinned so grievously?" After giving her absolution he thus addressed her: "Your soul appears to me whiter than snow; I look upon you as a being that I have begotten in Jesus Christ; or rather a being in whom by my ministry Jesus has been formed: certainly throughout the whole course of your life you have never received greater graces." This remark created so high an esteem for the sacrament of penance in the mind of this lady that thenceforward confession was her greatest delight.

Happening once to hear another lady declare that she could never make up her mind to confess one grievous sin, and that she would rather die than acknowledge it, the saint addressed her in such moving and striking terms as quite opened her heart, and made her, as it were in spite of herself, accuse herself of the sin faithfully and sincerely; to her great consolation; declaring as she rose from the holy Bishop's feet, (where she had pros-

trated herself for very sorrow) that he had been sent thither for her salvation; for certainly without such assistance she would have perished eternally.

Another time he happened to hear the general confession of a priest with whom he was acquainted. The following day, as the two were walking together discussing various topics of devotion, the priest said to him, "My lord, hitherto you have honoured me with your affection, but now that you are aware of all my excesses, I fear you will no longer love me." Francis made not a word of answer, but taking him straight to the chapel, threw himself at his feet, and confessed to him all the sins which he could recollect, intending by this exposure of his own conscience to convince him that his esteem was undiminished by the accusation he had heard.

Charitable as he was in supporting the pusillanimous, he could not bear the rash and presumptuous. Once as he was hearing the confession of a certain person, who recounted very grievous sins without any sign of contrition, he was so overpowered with grief at the sight of this insensibility that the penitent noticing it, enquired whether he felt ill. "No," replied Francis, "but you indeed are ill." The man, however, continued his confession in the same style of indifference, till the saint could no longer stifle his tears and sobs, and the penitent stopped again and asked him why he wept. "Ah," replied the man of God, "I weep because you do not weep." These words struck the man's heart as if an arrow had pierced it; he flung himself at the saint's feet in a vehement burst of repentance, and then Francis, who had wounded only to call him to a better life from the death of sin, raised him, con-



soled him, and confirmed him in a total change of life, daily praying for grace to persevere in the holy love of God, as the saint had recommended him.

His charity shone conspicuously in his mode of receiving apostates, whether of the secular or regular clergy, His Holiness having given him faculties to absolve them. Not satisfied with lodging them either in his own, or in some other convenient house, where they might make the Spiritual Exercises of S. Ignatius, and prepare for a general confession, he procured alms for them and the means of an honest maintenance; sometimes he even employed his authoritative persuasions to induce their superiors to readmit them to their respective orders. On behalf of one, he wrote as follows: "Brother N. came to me in the depth of his affliction, and I assure you he seems more dead than alive, so excessive is his sorrow. He shewed me his patents of dismissal and expulsion from the Order, and with tears most earnestly entreated my permission to remain a few weeks in my diocese. Whilst I was at Lyons, Father N. begged me to do what I could to give him comfort. This recommendation redoubled the interest which charity in the first instance had inspired in behalf of this poor soul; but, my dear Father, I only act for him on the express condition that he should, on every occasion, respect and honour your Order; and should conduct himself humbly towards all who belong to it. Should you deign to favour his good desires, by receiving him kindly, and by moderating the penances which your Constitutions probably enjoin, I believe that you would soon see him prostrate at your feet."

His amiable demeanour obtained for him an in-

finite number of penitents, and he seemed to possess the secret charm which could transform the worst apostates into so many apostles; for he re-united many severed limbs to the body of the Church, and many detached branches to Jesus the true Vine. On great festivals, and more especially on occasion of a Jubilee, he was detained in the confessional for the greater part of the night. "These days," said he, "are worth their weight in gold to me, so vast is the multitude of penitents who come to make general confessions and to purify their consciences." It is wonderful with what tact he gained access to all hearts. "I tell you in confidence," he would say, "there is no difference between your heart and mine: I am entirely devoted to you; and even if you had committed all the greatest sins in the world, I should not be surprised: your soul is dear to me, notwithstanding all you have been telling me; the angels rejoice at your amendment, and so do I." He would then use such moving persuasions as would suffice to soften the very stones: he exhorted penitents to present themselves at the sacred tribunal of penance with great attention and respect, imprinting in their minds by a few words a horror of vice, and a love of virtue. His discernment of spirits often enabled him to discover sins; hence he said to some, "You are not accusing yourself with sincerity—you are trying to conceal such a sin—I feel an interior and great repugnance to give you absolution—think seriously over your case, and tell all that you can remember, otherwise you will offend God grievously." Such words as these generally opened the door of every heart. So renowned was he for his skill in restoring peace to troubled souls, that people

came from the remotest provinces to unfold to him secret wounds of long standing, which they never would have found courage to declare to anyone else. One of these, who had suffered from a long infirmity, was instantaneously restored to health, and thus returned home with a two-fold cause of consolation. Elsewhere will be given an account of the General of a religious order, who travelled upwards of three hundred miles to consult him on the state of his conscience.

He imitated the conduct of Almighty God, who disposes all things powerfully and sweetly. Strong, generous, and resolute as he was in guiding souls to the goal he aimed at, namely, the perfection of each one in his own state; so was he in like manner gentle and kind in the choice of means whereby to effect this. He had a peculiar tact for cutting off self-indulgence, susceptibilities, vicious inclinations, and other things contrary to the spirit of mortification; and for establishing in souls Christian generosity, and the true liberty of the children of God. He used to say that this liberty of spirit consists in a certain disengagement of the heart from all affection to any created object whatsoever, in order to follow the known will of God: this banishes from the soul scrupulosity, hypocrisy, and deceit, and requires us to advance resolutely and perseveringly in the path of solid virtue, shunning all pernicious extremes. "We beg of God," he wrote to Madame de Chantal, "that His Name may be sanctified—that His Kingdom may come—that His Will may be done: all this is the spirit of liberty; because if this be obtained, the spirit cares for nothing else." Then speaking of the countersigns of

this liberty, he adds, "The heart which possesses this liberty is not attached to consolations, but receives afflictions with all the patience that the flesh will permit: I do not say that we may not love and desire consolations, but that we may not unduly attach ourselves to them. Nor ought we to fix our affections on spiritual exercises, in such a way that if illness or other accident prevent us from accomplishing them, we become dejected thereat: I do not say that we are not to like them, but that we are not to attach ourselves to them. Neither should we lose cheerfulness, because no privation can sadden those whose hearts are disengaged from all things: I do not say positively that we cannot lose this; but, should it so happen, it will be but for a short time." Afterwards, speaking of the effects of this spirit of liberty, he says, "These effects are a great suavity of mind, sweetness, and condescension for all that is not sin, or the occasion of sin." He says, for instance, that one soul, which is hindered from making its prayer, remains quiet, and free from impatience; whereas another, which has not this liberty, is disturbed and impatient; concluding, that the opportunities for practising this spirit are of constant recurrence, viz., whenever anything happens contrary to our inclinations, which rebel and murmur when we do not gratify them. He says that this liberty has two *opposites*, viz., instability and slavery. They fall into the former, who, on every trifling occasion, neglect or change the hour of their spiritual duties, or their state of life, without ascertaining the will of God; by these things the heart becomes dissipated. They fall into the latter, who suppose all to be lost, if they be hindered from per-

forming some spiritual duty, and are angry with whoever causes the impediment. He also wrote, "We should use our best endeavours to acquire this spirit of holy liberty and indifference, because it helps us in everything; even if six or seven weeks should elapse without so affectionate a father as myself, and so deserving a daughter as yourself, receiving any news of one another."

In like manner he was anxious that his penitents should not distress themselves if they could not recollect all their sins for confession; a very common defect with pious persons. He said, "As you often fall without perceiving it, so do you likewise rise without perceiving it: the Wise man does not tell us that the just man feels himself fall seven times a day, but that he does fall; thus he falls inadvertently, and in like manner rises again without reflection: do not then trouble yourself on this account, but go on, accusing yourself with humility and candour, of what you do remember; leaving the rest to the sweet mercy of Him, Who puts His Hand under those who fall without malice, in order that they may not feel their fall; and Who raises them so quickly and so gently, that they do not perceive themselves to have fallen; because He withdraws His Hand so quickly, that they have not time to think about it."

Finally, it would be impossible to describe his anxious study to restore peace to the heart, or the means he employed for this purpose. When he was preaching in the Chablais, he spoke one day so energetically against sin, that everyone conceived a horror of it; amongst others, a soldier belonging to the garrison of Les Allinges was almost driven to de-

spair, and in order to put him right, the Saint took him under his own special care, even lodging him in his own room, and heard his general confession at several different times ; so completely restoring him to peace and grace, that some time afterwards he obtained his discharge, and entered a Carthusian monastery. Still more worthy of record is the tact with which he united two hearts, by separating them. A married couple, though in other respects worthy people, cherished such a mutual antipathy, that they were both very unhappy. When the Saint was preaching at Grenoble, they agreed to go to confession to him, in hopes of obtaining some relief at his hands. After hearing them several times, and maturely examining their respective characters, he persuaded them to separate, seeing that the prayers, fastings, alms, and pilgrimages which they had had recourse to, with a view of obtaining from God the spirit of connubial charity so essential to their welfare, had all proved unavailing. The remedy proved an excellent one, as we learn from Bishop Camus in his work entitled, "*The holy and sacred divorce.*" The husband entered the Society of Jesus, where he lived in a most edifying manner for eighteen years ; and on the day on which he celebrated his first Mass, he had the consolation of receiving his wife's solemn profession, and of giving the religious habit to one of their daughters in the convent of Bellecour at Lyons. These two virtuous persons could never sufficiently express their satisfaction at having followed the Saint's advice, which at once put an end to the coolness which had so long existed between them.

When his advice could not obtain that which he

desired of his penitents, he seconded it with prayer. A certain Maria Amadea della Croce, one of the many who know not how to humble themselves, went to confession to him. God however found means to humble her, by permitting her to be married to a man of very low condition: the necessity of yielding the precedence to so many others on this account, was so intolerable to her, that she refrained from appearing in public. The Saint could not prevail on her to combat this silly vanity, and accordingly offered up a Mass to obtain for her the grace of humility; nor was this without effect, for the following night she beheld in a dream our Blessed Lord, Who asked her whether she was baptised, and on her answering affirmatively, she heard Him say, "They who are not humble shall not enter the kingdom of heaven;" and that Christians ought to put themselves in the lowest place. This however was not enough to convert, though it alarmed her. In one of the Saint's sermons on the forgiveness of enemies, hearing him narrate how a relative had deprived her husband of all his property, she exclaimed aloud, "Our good Prelate may say what he likes, I never will forgive." At that moment a thunder-storm arose, the electric fluid struck her in the mouth, and caused it to swell enormously. Every one supposed her to be killed, but in a short time she recovered, and rising up, she declared that she pardoned all from her heart: and thenceforward she took every opportunity of humbling herself. One day, however, she complained to the Saint that some one had called her the mother of thunder, when he replied with a smile, "They do you honour, daughter, by calling you by the same name which our Lord Himself

applied to SS. James and John, who were surnamed sons of thunder." At forty-nine years of age, this lady entered a convent at Rumilly, where she lived in a most exemplary manner for several years.

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## CHAPTER IX.

ST. FRANCIS PREACHES THE LENT AT DIJON.—THROUGH HIS MEANS THE MINIM FATHERS ARE ESTABLISHED AT SEMUR.

WHILST our Saint was labouring indefatigably, and laying plans for the general visitation of his diocese, letters arrived from the chief Magistrate of Dijon, who, charmed by the wonders he had heard of him, entreated him to go and preach the Word of God in that city during the next Advent and Lent. Francis, who had decided on never quitting his diocese, excepting on matters connected with the service of the Church in general, or of his own diocese in particular, was on the point of declining the invitation; but as it was destined in time to contribute so much to the advantage of both, God would not permit him to persist in this intention. He felt himself inwardly stimulated to consent, though he could not understand why it was so: in spite of the many reasons which seemed to oppose it, assent still would force itself upon him. He answered that as he should be obliged to quit his diocese as well as the dominions of his sovereign, it would first be necessary to obtain the permission of the Pope and of the Duke; that, in the meantime, he would write to both, and then give due



notice of their answer. The Pope immediately consented, hoping that the Saint would thus secure friends in the Burgundian parliament, a measure which would greatly facilitate his efforts for the conversion of the part of his diocese situated beyond the Rhone: but the Duke refused. Francis expected this refusal, because when he last visited Turin, he had observed symptoms of suspicion on the part of the Duke; his journey to France, the honour shown him, and the offers made him at that court, caused his Highness to suspect that France was scheming to draw the holy prelate over to its party, and to avail itself of his influence as Bishop of Geneva, in opposition to the interest of the Duke, who claimed sovereign rights over that city. These suspicions were increased when he heard that Francis had accompanied the Duke de Bellegarde and the Baron de Luz into the territory of Gex. Fearing lest religion should be used as a cloak to political purposes, (as is frequently the case with princes,) it was thought that the course of sermons at Dijon was a mere pretext; the prince therefore forbade him to quit his states, and the Saint gave up all thought of going there for Advent. He endeavoured to ascertain the cause of the coolness and constraint which he perceived in the Duke, but the latter had his motives for secrecy, so that Francis was unable to justify himself.

When the inhabitants of Dijon heard of the Duke's refusal, instead of giving up the point, they wrote to his Highness, pressing their request so earnestly that he could not possibly resist it. Francis had but little time to prepare himself for this important function; he withdrew however to the

castle of Sales, where, at the foot of the crucifix, in prayer rather than in study, he imbibed the graces and the eloquence which were calculated to delight, move, and instruct his auditors; and as his soul was all the better disposed to receive heavenly influences, because his heart was so disengaged from earthly things, he soon became filled with sublime favours. It was then in fact that our Lord gave him to understand that he would one day be the Founder of an order of nuns, who would edify the Church by their virtues, and perpetuate his spirit, his maxims, and his sentiments: this occurred in a chapel dedicated to S. Sebastian, (patron of the house of Sales,) where, absorbed in contemplation, he beheld, amongst other things, the principal persons who were to second him in this design. This impression was so vividly stamped on his mind, that when he afterwards saw the Baroness de Chantal at Dijon, he recognised her as being the chief foundation stone of the new order. The vision lasted for half an hour, and left him with such a beaming countenance, and so wholly absorbed in God, that it was easy to conjecture that something very extraordinary had happened.

Having settled the affairs of his diocese, he started for Burgundy, and was received at Dijon with marked honour, the Parliament and chief personages of the city going forth to meet him. His sermons attracted the nobility and people of the whole country: he was looked upon not only as a distinguished prelate, but as an apostolic man. No sooner did they hear him preach than they declared that his wisdom surpassed the reports which they had heard of him. In the memory of man no preacher

had given such satisfaction at Dijon : conversions of sinners, and abjurations of heresy were frequent, whilst numerous souls were roused to fervour by his sermons. The largest churches could scarcely contain the crowds, Calvinists as well as Catholics flocking to hear him : on this account he often mixed controversy with moral topics, with such force and eloquence that innumerable heretics entered the bosom of the Church, and many sinners returned to Christ.

Fatiguing as it was to preach every day for a whole Lent, he did not dispense himself from fasting. These labours did not satisfy his zeal, but he visited the two hospitals of the city, comforted the sick, administered the sacraments, and gave instruction when needed : he also heard confessions, and in this function completed what his sermons began. So continuous were his occupations and labours that people could not comprehend how one man could attend to so many different things. He usually celebrated Mass in one of the hospitals, though he occasionally went for this purpose to Fontaines, the home of S. Bernard, to whom he was especially devoted ; and here it was that he contracted his intimacy with Father John of S. Malachy, of the Congregation of the *Feuillans*.

The nobles of Burgundy vied with each other in shewing honour to the saintly prelate ; but none more so than the illustrious family of De Fremiot, of which the Baroness de Chantal was a member. His intimacy with this house was such that the Archbishop of Bourges (Madame de Chantal's brother) having to celebrate his first Mass on Holy Thursday, entreated Francis to assist him : not only

did he consent to this, but would even receive communion from his hand. He did so with so much modesty and recollection as to excite devotion in the assistants: at the moment when he received the Sacred Host, rays of light seemed to issue from his face, and were observed by several persons.

The Calvinist clergy were enraged at the honour shewn to the holy bishop, and at the conversions which took place: the only chance of arresting the latter would be a public disputation, to which he had repeatedly challenged them; but they thought it a much safer plan to declaim against him from the pulpit, than to come into contact with a man of so much learning. There was but one of them, a man named Cassegrain, who sent him a challenge after Easter, just when he was on the point of starting homewards. The minister flattered himself that Francis would be unwilling to defer his journey; but he found himself mistaken, for the Saint, suspecting the trick, willingly consented to remain for the purpose of disputing with him. Cassegrain then expressed a reluctance to put him to so much inconvenience, offering to meet him later at Geneva, where he could more readily have recourse to books, &c.; he expected that the holy man would decline this proposal, but here again he was mistaken, for Francis readily acceded, offering to go to Geneva and hold a discussion with any one who chose, requesting the Baron de Luz, who happened to be then present, to use his influence with the Genevese, and persuade them to consent to the proposed meeting; and he appealed to the whole company to bear witness to his promise. The Baron did in fact go to Geneva, and though he did his utmost, even making presents

in order to bribe the magistrates to consent, the ministers pertinaciously declined the conference, saying that their religion stood in no need of disputation.

Before his departure from Dijon, more especially during Holy Week and the Easter festivals, he heard innumerable confessions, every one being anxious to receive advice from one who was looked upon as an angel in wisdom, and an apostle in zeal. When preparing for his departure, he was visited by the chief personages of the city, who in testimony of their gratitude, presented him with a magnificent piece of plate; the saint examined it attentively, and praised its exquisite workmanship, but notwithstanding all their entreaties, persisted in refusing it, assuring them that he valued their regard much more, and beseeching them to remember him in their prayers, and to continue to favour him with their good will, of which they had already given him so many proofs.

The refusal of the holy prelate served only to exalt him still more in the opinion of the people of Dijon, who could not witness his departure without tears. Not only did he carry with him parliamentary patents favourable to religion in the territory of Gex, but the hearts of the people likewise. A lady, noticing the innumerable multitude waiting to receive his blessing as he passed along, exclaimed several times: "A great robber this day leaves our town," and when asked who it was she meant, replied, "I mean the Bishop of Geneva, who has stolen so many hearts." That of Madame de Chantal, more than all the rest, accompanied him; of which the Saint was so conscious, that he wrote to

her from his first halting place. There were some who seized his horse by the bridle, telling him with tears in their eyes that he ought not to forsake them so soon, or if he really must go, they would willingly carry him on their shoulders all the way to Annecy. On Low Monday he took his departure, accompanied by the clergy, and by all the chief citizens, leaving behind him the highest reputation, both for learning and sanctity, a reputation which time by no means lessened.

During his stay at Dijon he induced the Abbot of S. Maurice, Bishop-elect of Sion, to make over to the Minim Friars a Priory at Sémur, belonging to the Abbey. The Abbot consented all the more readily because the proposal was agreeable to the people of the town, and the Priory was given to the Fathers, to the great benefit of the souls of the inhabitants of the neighbourhood.

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## CHAPTER X.

THE *FEUILLANS* INTRODUCED INTO THE ABBEY OF ABONDANCE—FRANCIS AGAIN REFUSES THE OFFERS OF THE KING—PREACHES THE LENT AT LA ROCHE.

WHEN Francis, covered with honours, returned to Annecy, he encountered contradictions which would have depressed a less generous mind: amongst others we may mention the appeal against his orders, brought by the Canons of Sixt before the Supreme Senate of Savoy. He however insisted on pursuing the suit, as well as the reform, and succeeded, as we have already related. Not satisfied

with this, he next turned his thoughts towards the reform of the Abbey of Abondance. The occasion was favourable, for the Abbot Vespasian Ajassa was on most friendly terms with our Saint; he undertook nothing of importance without consulting Francis, and having some idea of introducing the Fathers of S. Bernard called *Feuillans*, he proposed his plan to the holy man, entreating him to second it with his authority, (which was necessary, as the abbey was subject to the bishop,) and to procure the requisite Bulls from the Pope. The Abbot was himself a man of great virtue, and was therefore all the more grieved at witnessing the irregular lives of his religious, so opposite to the sanctity of the Rule of S. Augustine, which they professed. There were not more than six of them, all advanced in years; hence he did not conceive that he could compel them to practice observances to which they had not hitherto been subjected, being convinced that if he attempted it he would not succeed, at least not without much contention. He concluded by requesting the Saint to aid him in the reformation of his monastery, and to suggest the means best calculated to attain this end.

Francis highly commended the abbot's moderation and mildness, so like that which he himself practised. He said that in governing, superiors should always take care to fail on the score of gentleness, rather than on that of severity; and advised him to leave his religious quiet, and to offer them a moderate pension, sufficient for their wants, on the express condition of their resigning the monastery to some reformed order; adding that he considered the reformed fathers of S. Bernard

well calculated to restore the ancient lustre of the abbey, and that he would write to His Holiness on the subject. He did so, describing at the same time the miserable condition of the monasteries belonging to his diocese, religious discipline not being observed in any one of them, whereas their proximity to Geneva rendered it all the more important that their inmates should lead irreproachable lives: he next requested permission to call in the Fathers Feuillans on the conditions before stated, which was immediately granted. The canons were dispersed in other monasteries, each one receiving an annual stipend of forty gold crowns: and the monastery was surrendered to the reformed Fathers of S. Bernard, who continue there to the present day, leading lives of great edification. This step occasioned a material improvement in other religious houses, where regularity was resumed, in order to avoid worse consequences.

In the meantime, the reputation which Francis had acquired at Dijon reached the court of France, and revived the king's wish to have him near his person, his esteem and friendship for him being undiminished. He spoke to Des Hayes upon the subject, telling him that he envied his cousin the Duke of Savoy the possession of such a prelate, and commissioning him to write and invite him to Paris, where Francis would be convinced that he had not forgotten him; for it was his intention to bestow one of his richest abbeys upon him, knowing that he would make a better use of it than any one else. Des Hayes fulfilled the commission with pleasure, but the holy prelate in his reply requested him to thank his majesty in terms commensurate with his



benevolence and goodness, and at the same time to entreat that he might be permitted to remain in the service of his own diocese; adding that he felt as great an aversion to riches and honours as others love and covet them; that the less he had of them the less account he should have to render; that his slender revenues sufficed for his decent maintenance, and that more would be burdensome to him rather than otherwise. The king's anxiety to benefit him was not at all lessened by this refusal: he desired Des Hayes to write again, and to say that though he had refused the abbey, his Majesty hoped he would not refuse the cardinal's hat which he intended to solicit for him from the Pope. The man of God answered that he besought our Lord to preserve him from a dignity of which he knew himself to be unworthy; that he was of course aware that he should be obliged to obey his Holiness, if it were imposed upon him; nevertheless, he could assure his Majesty that if the hat were only two paces distant from him, he would not so much as take a single step to secure it, though in truth he would willingly crimson his robes with his own blood for the conversion of Geneva, and then, God was his witness, would most cheerfully wear them.

When these sentiments were conveyed to the king, they redoubled his esteem for the saintly prelate, and he said that he had always considered himself as being above ecclesiastics, considering the petitions he daily received from them; but that now he must really own himself to be beneath the Bishop of Geneva, since he could not induce him to accept that which he offered of his own accord. It was thus that Francis ever spoke and acted; for

though several times pressed to accept a more elevated position, he always declared that he preferred holding the lowest post in the house of God, and that it was with extreme repugnance he had stepped higher, when commanded to do so on the part of God. "Oh, how willingly," said he, "would I consent to carry the holy water as a simple ecclesiastic, rather than the mitre which burthens me, and the pastoral staff which gets in my way."

Some time after, news arrived from Rome of the death of Clement VIII. and of the exaltation of Leo XI., who it was well known was resolved to invest Francis with the purple; for he had already put his name with those of others who were to be immediately nominated. When informed of this, the Saint's affliction was proportioned to the aversion which he felt for whatever savoured of grandeur; and he implored Almighty God not to permit him to be raised to a post in which he might become less agreeable to Him, and less humble: his prayer was heard, though not in the manner he had hoped for.

Leo XI. was the same Cardinal de' Medici, who had visited Thonon after the peace of Vervins, whilst the Saint was engaged on the mission there: he had also seen him at Rome, and was fully aware of his merit. As the Cardinal had been one of the most distinguished members of the Sacred College on the score of birth, talent, and piety, to which alone he owed his elevation, the Catholic world looked forward to all that might be expected from a most worthy Pontiff; for all his intentions were directed to the greater glory of God, and the reform of the Church; to carry these intentions into effect,

he purposed availing himself of the services of all those whom he knew to excel either in learning or sanctity, and of these Francis was one; he intended therefore to have him near his own person, but God, Whose judgments are as impenetrable as they are adorable, was satisfied with his good desires; he died twenty-seven days after his election, and was succeeded by Cardinal Borghese, under the title of Paul V., a man of great merit too, and the intimate friend of our Saint; but he had other designs, and, though he ever honoured the holy prelate, gave him nothing to fear on the score of the cardinalate. The death of Leo XI. put an end to this apprehension, but his exaltation to the Papacy had served to demonstrate how much Francis shunned those honours which most others so eagerly covet. Penetrated as he was by a sense of the grandeur and eternity of God, he could not comprehend how a heart created for God could attach itself to the vain and perishable things of this world. He could not conceal these sentiments of his heart, and when his elevation to the purple was generally spoken of, his mother sent a priest over to Annecy to inquire into the truth of the report, who received this answer from the holy man: "I beseech you to impress on my mother's mind how much she is obliged to entreat and conjure our Lord not to raise me to a higher dignity, since the one that I now hold is far too heavy for my strength." He wrote as follows to Madame de Chantal: "I am informed in two quarters that it is intended to raise me higher in the eyes of the world. My answer is before God. No, my dear daughter, do not for a moment think that I would do the least thing for

the sake of the world, which I despise with all my heart: unless the greater glory of God be concerned therein, I will have nothing to do with it." Those who best knew Francis were well aware that these were his real sentiments; and, when the Duke of Savoy was speaking of the Saint's detachment of heart, and of the anxiety with which he had shunned the dignity of cardinal, he added that he had long known the Bishop of Geneva to be so entirely oblivious of the world, that he did not so much as remember the court of his prince, excepting when celebrating at the altar, or praying for its sanctification.

In the course of this year, Francis accompanied his mother to the Monastery of S. Claudius, to meet the Baroness de Chantal, when matters were planned which will be spoken of elsewhere, and when that holy friendship was formed, which God rendered so serviceable to the Church. He went to preach the following Lent at La Roche, a small village of his diocese; and it was certainly admirable and edifying to see a distinguished prelate, who had enchanted Paris and Dijon, thus dealing with simple rustics; he preached there with the same zeal and ardour as when in presence of the most distinguished audience, and with much greater satisfaction to himself. He used to say that when he preached to labourers and mechanics, he was reminded of Jesus our Saviour, Who seldom addressed the higher classes, and Who but once made His appearance at court, dragged thither by the brutal malice of the Jews; adding, "after such an example, I am astonished that preachers can intrigue for famous pulpits and noble audiences; for after all, the soul of the

roughest clown cost our Redeemer the same price as the soul of the mightiest monarch." The usual sermons did not satisfy his zeal. Every Thursday afternoon he gave a conference on cases of conscience and moral subjects, at which were present, not only the Canons, the Parochial and other clergy of the village, but likewise many priests from the surrounding country. On these occasions he introduced points of mystical theology; and recommended great decorum in the holy ceremonies used by the Church, insisting on their being done in the manner prescribed in the ritual: he had some of them practised in his presence, as being acts which contribute much to devotion, when done with due method and order. He visited the poor and the sick, comforted widows, adjusted discords and dissensions; and when we add the time destined to prayer, which he never omitted, it will easily appear how brief an interval remained for repose.

As he found great docility in these people, he had no trouble in leading them to the practice of those virtues befitting their state. He recommended them above all things to keep alive the remembrance of the divine presence; telling them, however, that this presence of God does not consist in a continual effort of the mind to represent God as before their eyes; but in a lively faith, which teaches us to know the divine immensity, and in a solid resolution of doing all things perfectly, and for His glory. In a word, as these people were not the slaves of luxury and of those vices which reign in large towns, he found them admirably disposed to receive the divine seed, and make it fructify: he sedulously strove to inculcate the practice of humility, contempt of worldly

things, and the treasuring up of riches for eternity. The Saint was so gratified by this visit to La Roche, that in a letter written to Madame de Chantal soon after Easter, he says: "I am just returned from the place of my delights, where I have been instructing a simple, docile, humble, and pious population."

Whilst Francis was sojourning at that place, he gave an example of charity, of great merit before God, though perhaps of little importance in the eyes of the world. Amongst the numerous poor, who daily went to beg alms at his lodging, was a youth who had been deaf and dumb from his birth: he was innocent and intelligent, so that the servants of the house often employed him in such occupations as he was capable of. He was brought one day at dinner-time to the Saint, whose love for the poor and the afflicted was well known, and who was told that he was remarkably ready in understanding and in making himself understood by signs. The holy Prelate made many enquiries about him, and being told that he knew nothing about the mysteries of the faith, he ordered his people to receive him into the house, and to take care of him: this was objected to, as being useless and even burthensome, but the Saint absolutely insisted upon it, and would have the poor fellow with him; saying that at least it would give him the opportunity of exercising charity, and that there was no one, who in a similar state would not be glad to be kindly treated; he was accordingly taken into the house, Francis himself undertaking to be his teacher: he succeeded (though not without incredible trouble) in teaching him, not only the mysteries of faith, but the manner of confessing and

communicating. The Saint was his confessor; and whenever he wished to make his confession, he used to enter the Saint's room, close the windows and doors, in such a manner as not to be seen, and then kneeling down at his feet, contrive by signs to accuse himself even of his secret thoughts, weeping bitterly, and striking his breast, so as to excite great emotion in Francis, who not unfrequently mingled his tears with those of his penitent: he communicated with so much recollection and devotion, as clearly to show that he understood what was contained under the sacred species. That he was well instructed was shewn by the manner in which he expressed his contempt for the Calvinist ministers; signifying by signs the pains reserved for the haughty, the vindictive, and the jealous, as well as the glory prepared for the good. All this resulted from the attentive charity of the holy bishop. One day René Favre found Francis engaged in teaching this piteous object, and asked him whether he did not find it very tedious; adding that he thought it would be quite as easy to his Lordship to impart speech and hearing, as intellect to the youth: but Francis replied with a smile, that it was an advantage to him to be able to practise a daily act of charity towards this good man, and that he had never had an idea of asking our Lord to work such a miracle. Martin (the deaf mute) attached himself so strongly to the Saint, that he actually died of grief a few days after his benefactor.

On the return of the Saint to Annecy, he held his second synod; and ever after made it a rule to assemble his synod every year, unless imperatively hindered from so doing. He was also visited by

Madame de Chantal, who came over expressly to confer with him on the state of her soul: he went on preparing her by degrees for the great designs which Almighty God had from eternity formed in her regard. On her departure for Burgundy, the Countess of Sales confided her youngest daughter to her care, under a promise of sending one of her own in exchange.

In the following August the ministers circulated a report that they were ready to hold a disputation with Francis, whereupon he sent them a document duly signed and sealed, offering to meet them in any place they chose to select: but the challenge proved to be no more than a flourish of words; for never could they be induced to come into contact with one who they well knew would cover them with confusion. Resigning all hope for the present of attempting the conversion of Geneva, he began to prepare for the general visitation of his diocese, having terminated the suit which had been long pending between the canons of the cathedral and those of the collegiate church.

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## CHAPTER XI.

### HE ENTERS UPON THE GENERAL VISITATION OF HIS DIOCESE.

THE holy Bishop's flock was very dear to him, for he looked upon his sheep as destined to eternal glory, and purchased with the Blood of Jesus Christ. As the greater part of them were dispersed through the country amidst terrible mountains, it was long



since they had heard the voice of their Pastor. He knew that it was the indispensable duty of a good shepherd to go in search of them, even with inconvenience to himself, and at the risk of his life; no sooner, therefore, was he made Bishop, than he thought of undertaking the visitation. His only motive of delay arose from consideration for the persons who must have accompanied him, and who would have been exposed to serious suffering, the winter season being then at its height. Other occupations afterwards interfered with the project, which he was not able to enter upon until October, 1605. To carry out the plan of his predecessor, whose opinions he deeply venerated, he first required notice from his vicars and parish priests of whatever stood in need of remedy, making memoranda of the more important points; and on the fifteenth day of the month he quitted the city to begin the great work, as useful as it was laborious and difficult.

The situation and vast extent of the diocese, including four hundred and fifty parishes, greatly increased the difficulty: many parishes were amongst mountains difficult of access, and of immense height, where the winter is perpetual; whilst others were in plains and valleys, where the sun's rays are intensely hot; so that frequently the two extremes of temperature are encountered in one and the same day: to reach these parishes, he had to pass along narrow paths between frightful precipices, where all conveniences must necessarily be relinquished, in order to escape danger, and to accomplish the greater part of the journey on foot. Francis foresaw how much he should have to undergo, both through the perversity of the malevolent, the rough-

ness of the roads, and other sufferings incidental to an undertaking of this description ; hence, in writing to Madame de Chantal when on the point of starting, he says, "I am setting out on this blessed visitation, and I behold crosses of every sort around me : the flesh shrinks from them, but my heart reveres them. Yes, I love you, ye crosses, great and small, spiritual and temporal, interior and exterior,— I salute you and kiss your feet, deeming myself unworthy to sit beneath your shade." But his courage was superior to every suffering, being animated by the example of Jesus Christ, and by that grand maxim which regulated his every step ; viz., that it was not necessary that he should live, whereas it was of paramount importance that he should fulfil his duties.

No small courage was necessary for such a task, which was incompatible with luxury and expense. Not to be a charge to his people, he travelled with little or no equipage, and with the smallest possible suite ; saying that these exterior things are of no consequence ; the Spirit of God, Who gives strength, being most essential. So far from having a camp bed carried with him, he always surrendered the best beds to those who accompanied him, doing this with inimitable grace ; and often after travelling all day on foot, or working hard from morning till night, he took his brief repose stretched on a bundle of leaves, or a straw mattress ; and this was his delight. He was insensible to all suffering, excepting the regret of seeing others suffer, and if any one began to compassionate him, he used to say that as yet he had never found so uncomfortable a lodging as the stable at Bethlehem, where our Saviour lodged when He

came to visit us, nor any bed so hard as the holy cross on which He expired: adding, that the poor peasants were as ill accommodated throughout the year, as he was merely for a brief interval; that they would more willingly and patiently submit to their privations, when they saw him share them; and that example would convince them more forcibly than words, that the evils of poverty are not those which should be the most dreaded. "Certainly," he continued, "they are men like ourselves, they are Christians called to grace, as we are, and to glory likewise: they may call God their Father; they are our brethren, probably better than ourselves, more agreeable to God, more holy, and destined to higher seats in heaven: why then should there be such a difference between us? why should we fancy that we demean ourselves or deserve pity, when we spend a few days in the midst of those sufferings, in which all their life is passed?" By such remarks as these, no less than by his example, he encouraged his three companions; it being his custom to take advantage of every circumstance to make his observations useful and profitable to his hearers.

He began his visitation in that part of his diocese situated beyond the Rhone, which was subject to the crown of France, and personally visited every parish, and even every little chapel, spending at least a day in each. Not content with performing those functions which belonged to him as Bishop, such as confirming, consecrating churches, altars, bells, and cemeteries; besides celebrating Mass, administering the sacraments, especially penance and holy communion, and preaching the Word of God, he moreover catechized the children, in order to shew the

parish-priests how much importance he attached to this much neglected duty. Besides attending to the general wants of the people, he desired to be particularly informed of any family dissensions, endeavouring to appease them, to put a stop to law-suits, to restore peace in families, especially between married couples, parents and children, &c.: he effected many reconciliations, in cases where inveterate hatred had given much public scandal; and as his charity embraced every sort of necessity, so did his meekness and affability win all hearts. In fine, the poor, the infirm, sinners and prisoners, all experienced the effect of his pastoral solicitude; some being succoured with alms, and others with advice.

His chief care was to reform the manners of the parochial clergy; and the memoranda arranged previously to his departure from Annecy were of great use on this point, as he examined them before entering any village where he intended to make his visit. Such of the clergy as performed their duties properly, he treated with marked respect, animating the good to persevere, strengthening the weak and pusillanimous, and, notwithstanding his characteristic gentleness, threatening the scandalous. He took fresh notes of whatever he saw needed change, in order to apply due remedy in due time. He was most minute in investigating the conduct of the clergy, well knowing the influence, whether for good or evil, which it had amongst their people.

Whenever he met with any scandal, he corrected with kindness, but with vigour, hence great amendment ensued in several places. Finding that alienations of ecclesiastical property were sometimes made with too great facility, he had inventories drawn up

of all the moveable and immoveable effects belonging to the different churches: he made many arrangements for the support and repairs of the buildings, omitting nothing which could render his visit advantageous, nothing that could be expected from a good Pastor; and he has been known to administer all the sacraments, excepting Extreme Unction, in one single day.

We may form some idea of what he had to go through, from the following extract from one of his letters to Madame de Chantal, to whom he wrote most unreservedly: "The affairs of this diocese are not rivulets, they are torrents: I may own to you with truth that since the beginning of my visitation, my labours have been beyond measure: but all is for the glory of God, Who is so good as daily to work a little miracle in my favour; for when I retire for the night, I am so exhausted as to be unable to move, and my mind is wearied to the last degree; nevertheless, I feel better than ever in the morning. Oh what a consolation it is to me, to find such worthy people amidst these mountains: what honour, what welcome, what veneration they shew their Bishop! The day before yesterday, I reached this village at night, but the inhabitants had so lighted up their houses, that all seemed as light as day. Alas, they deserve a better Bishop than myself!"

Thus spoke the humility of the Saint, but very differently did the people speak: they deemed themselves unworthy to have so saintly a prelate; their veneration for him arose solely from the renown of his virtues, and from what they saw of his very exemplary life: he had no equipage, no pompous display to attract notice and honours: it was his virtue

which sustained his dignity; nor does that perfection, of which humility is the basis, subsist on a lustre dependant upon secular pomp. In another of his letters to Madame de Chantal, he says, "I have returned from the confines of my diocese on the Swiss side, and have managed to establish thirty-three parishes, where for eleven years there have been none but Calvinist preachers. I once spent three years with them, entirely without other aid, preaching the faith; and in my late journey God bestowed ample consolation upon me; for in places where before I had not found a hundred Catholics, this time I have not found a hundred Huguenots. The journey has given me much to suffer, and as I had to interfere in temporal concerns in making provision for the churches, I encountered a good share of opposition; but God has made all to end well, and even with some spiritual profit. I tell you this, because my heart conceals nothing from yours; for I believe the two are not dissimilar, or rather that mine is one with yours."

He interrupted his pastoral visit to preach the Lent at Chambéry, where he also solemnized the Paschal and Whitsuntide festivals: nor was he without other urgent occupations at the same time. On the eighteenth of July, he quitted the city, and resumed his laborious task; continuing it amidst vast fatigues till the twenty-first of October, when he returned to Annecy for the Feast of All Saints. It was during this part of his visitation that he traversed Faucigny, a cold country abounding in high snowy mountains. Here his sufferings were intense; humility and mortification alone did not now induce him to travel on foot, necessity

compelled it; he often had to drag himself along, and to crawl on his hands and knees in climbing up and over the rocks. Here, more than anywhere else, did he suffer from excessive cold, and then in the same day was exposed to so intense a heat as to cause equal suffering: one hour he was crossing a valley under the perpendicular rays of the sun, and the next climbing a mountain covered with snow. Once, when he visited a very insignificant village, his feet were so excoriated that he was unable to stand for ten days. Another day he visited a parish perched on the summit of a high mountain, where he arrived half dead with cold and fatigue, and with his hands and feet bleeding from the sharp edges of the rocks over which he had been scrambling. As he stood contemplating the prodigious apertures in the ice, which sometimes are of awful depth, the inhabitants came forth to meet him, and related how a few days before, a shepherd, who was in search of a stray cow, fell into one of these fissures, and would never have been discovered, if one of his acquaintance had not found his hat, which had been caught from his head by the edge of the precipice, as he was in the act of falling. Hoping that the shepherd might still be in a state to receive succour, or if not, anxious to secure him at least Christian burial, his friend was lowered by ropes into the fearful abyss, from whence he was drawn up half frozen to death, but bearing in his arms the corpse of his companion, now little else than one huge icicle. This recital moved Francis to tears, and turning to those who accompanied him, he said with a deep sigh: "Some persons perhaps think that we are doing too much;

and yet we do less than these poor people, one of whom has lost his life in seeking for a stray animal, whilst another exposes himself to the danger of losing it, in order to procure burial or assistance for his comrade. These examples speak for themselves, and confound us, who do less for the salvation of souls consigned to our care, than these poor people do for the cattle entrusted to their charge." Francis sent an account of this incident to Madame de Chantal, adding that these glaciers ought either to freeze him with terror or to inflame him with love. He also tells her in the same letter that he had found on these wild mountains many innocent souls, who really adored God in all simplicity and truth; that the poor widows and village damsels were fertile in good works, and might be compared to their own fruitful valleys; whereas Bishops, who are so elevated in the Church of God, are like the mountain ice; then he exclaims: "Ah! is there no sun powerful enough to liquefy that which stiffens me?" He returned from his visit to this parish in so deplorable a state that he was obliged to rest for a few days at Amancy, till his wounds healed a little.

Our Lord signalized the apostolic labours of the Saint by the gift of miracles; for certainly we may consider as such the expulsion of a hundred devils from different bodies, merely by giving his pastoral benediction, as he had previously expelled many from souls by the power of the divine word and of the holy sacraments. In three parishes only he delivered eighty possessed persons. There was something terrific in the howling of these poor creatures; some leaped aloft in the air, others laughed like idiots, whilst others were literally rabid; nor



was it any great wonder that the devil should exercise such sway in these countries, considering the abominable superstitions which prevailed. The Saint, compassionating their miseries, blessed them, and then ordering them to be brought separately to him, made them open their mouths and eyes, saying that the devil usually effects his operations on the tongue and eyelids; he then made a special exorcism over the individuals, and a general one over the villages, which were thenceforth delivered. He ordered the erection of various crosses, since when the malignant fiends have never ventured to disturb the peace which our holy prelate established in those localities.

He likewise, by means of his blessing, drove away from the curate's house at Thone a spirit which was so troublesome that nothing was safe; even the manuscripts belonging to a Capuchin Father were stolen, though they were restored when he had contrived to preach a sermon without them. But, what is far more important, his exhortations converted many of both sexes, whom witchcraft and superstition had reduced to the worst possible state.

## CHAPTER XII.

HE PREACHES THE LENT AT CHAMBERY—HIS EPISCOPAL FIRMNESS, ZEAL FOR RELIGION, AND PASTORAL CHARITY.

TOIL is as essential to man as flight is to birds, as the Wise Man says. The just never dispense themselves from a law whereby the Lord enjoins man to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow. But saints, who have more sublime motives for their labour, (such as the honour of God and the zeal of souls) knowing that they are born to work, only interrupt one task to undertake another; hence their only relief or repose consists in an exchange of work, leaving one to take up another. This was precisely the practice of S. Francis of Sales, who interrupted his visitation, not to take rest, but to go and preach the Lent of 1606 at Chambéry. Although this city is not within the precincts of the diocese of Geneva, he could not refuse the supreme senate and magistrates, who earnestly requested of him the same favour that he had conferred on Dijon. His occupations left him but little time for preparation; nevertheless he set out at the end of the carnival. As a good beginning to his apostolic labours, he repaired to the college belonging to the Fathers of the Society of Jesus, and made the spiritual exercises for eight days, saying that to be able to preach with profit he ought, like our Saviour and the Baptist, to retire into solitude, and then quit the desert to enter the pulpit. In his retreat, he acquired the

light with which he cleared the doubts of heretics, exposed the sad condition of sinners, and inflamed the hearts of the just.

He preached before the senate and the notabilities of Chambéry with the same success as elsewhere. Through the efficacy of his discourses, numbers were brought to a better and more perfect life, whilst others were won back to the bosom of the Church, insomuch that it was publicly affirmed that every one of his sermons was a miracle, and that instead of his Lordship of Geneva, it was the Holy Ghost who preached by his mouth. Our Lord illustrated his labours by an extraordinary manifestation. One day, as he was making the epilogue of his sermon, all rapt in God, it seemed to his hearers that they saw rays of light issuing from a crucifix placed over the tribune of the church, and that these rays extended to and rested on the Saint's face, which appeared quite resplendent. The people burst out in acclamations at the sight, to the great confusion of the Saint, who always studied to conceal the gifts and favours of God.

Although no heretics permanently resided at Chambéry, some occasionally repaired thither; of these he converted a few, amongst others two Flemings who accidentally assisted at one of his sermons, Divine Providence permitted that he should on that day treat of the invocation of saints, when they were so struck by his words that on leaving the church they called upon him, and a private conference concluded what the sermon had begun, for they made their abjuration in his hands. His example proved even more persuasive than his words; he never exacted anything of his auditory which he did

not first practice himself; and he used to say that, as the people look at the preacher whilst hearkening to him, he ought to preach to the eyes by his works as well as to the ears by his words. Practising what he taught, it is not surprising that his words were so efficacious as to obtain what he wished.

In addition to his sermons, delivered in the church of S. Dominic, he frequently preached to the nuns of S. Clare, in the oratory of the Holy Cross, in the confraternities of seculars belonging to the college, and in the holy chapel of the castle. He moreover applied himself to the pacification of disputes and litigations, when his knowledge of law no less than his mildness generally proved of the greatest use. He conferred orders twice in the church of S. Antony, and through the whole term of his sojourn heard confessions, having received from the Bishop of Grenoble ample faculties for the discharge of all the pastoral functions. Some critic was heard to say that the Bishop of Geneva fancied himself the Bishop of Grenoble; upon which Francis replied that such an idea was absurd, seeing that the Bishopric of Grenoble, like his own, was a small portion of the inheritance of Jesus Christ.

Labouring as he did with so much zeal and profit, it seemed strange to every one that for a frivolous circumstance he should have been treated with the little respect which we are now going to describe. A criminal affair which occurred in the diocese of Geneva was brought before the senate, which, to procure better information of the fact, requested Francis to order his Vicar to publish an admonition at Annecy, commanding the witnesses to reveal all that they knew on the subject, under pain of excom-

munication. The Saint examined the demand and the nature of the affair, and perceiving that the fact might be otherwise proved, and that it was not of such importance as to require recourse to ecclesiastical weapons, he entreated the Senate to excuse him, since he could not, with a clear conscience, condescend to its wishes. Generally speaking, he did not approve of appealing to the authority of the Church, or of disturbing the peace of consciences for things of little moment; and still less would he be willing to exclude any one from the common suffrages of the faithful, except in cases of great necessity—censures being the nerve of ecclesiastical discipline, and a weapon which prelates should use with the greatest circumspection, as the holy advise, for not to expose them to contempt they must not be readily made use of. For this reason he forbade his Vicar to grant the admonition if it should be asked for; and he was still more positive in his refusal when he ascertained that those persons of influence who asked for the excommunication were actuated by passion rather than by a sense of justice.

The Senate was offended by the refusal, though conveyed in the terms of civility so natural to our Saint, and a decree was drawn up requiring him to grant the admonition under pain of the reduction of the temporalities of his bishopric. This is one of the schemes resorted to by the magistracy, who attack the revenues of a bishop in order to obtain from him spiritual concessions; a thing which, though authorized by custom, but ill accords with the respect due to the pontifical dignity. Besides, it is evidently wrong to force a bishop to condescend against the dictates of his conscience to the blind pas-

sions of the secular power. The unjust decree was actually carried into effect, and his property sequestered, to the great scandal of the people, who publicly disapproved of the proceedings of the senate, which had actually taken part in the invitation requesting him to preach the Lent at Chambéry. It was considered a poor requital of a favour which made them the envy of other cities. But when the holy prelate was informed of these extreme measures, he said: "Blessed be God! this decree is not so injurious to me as it may appear at first sight: it is a clear proof that from henceforth I am to be wholly spiritual, seeing that I am deprived of all the temporals I possess. They know me but little, who expect to obtain by such means anything which my conscience forbids me to grant."

His answer was embarrassing to the Senate, the members of which at once saw that they would be unable to influence the prelate by the mere deprivation of goods, which he so little valued; whilst on the other hand, the more moderate of the Senators were ashamed that a Bishop should be thus treated, who was universally looked upon as a saint, and who was labouring so indefatigably at their own express request: indeed many of them were his friends, and had tried to prevent this shameful treatment, apologizing to him for what they were unable to avert. But worst of all, the Senator deputed to give orders for the sequestration, did it in a manner which would have been insulting to one of the meanest of the clergy; much more so to a prelate of such distinguished merit. The intrepid Francis gave a serious admonition to the indiscreet commissioner; teaching him to understand the respect due to his dignity.

As one of the letters written contained expressions derogatory to the reverence due to Bishops, he boldly demanded reparation, and the Senate was at last obliged to send him a letter of apology, couched in the most courteous terms. The man of God afterwards avenged himself in the manner saints usually do; namely, by giving a canonry of his Cathedral to the nephew of the Senator who had outraged him the most. Whilst the difference was pending, many of his friends advised him to apply to the Sovereign, convinced that His Highness would blame the proceedings of the Senate, which had been moved by passion rather than by zeal: "No," replied the Saint, "I have never had recourse to the prince for anything that regards my own private interest, nor will I begin now." The city continued to murmur about the affair, admiring the meekness of the Saint: in fact, the Senate grew desirous to arrange the matter, convinced that it had no chance of getting the admonition from so inflexible a prelate. Accordingly, they sent him word that the sequestration should be withdrawn, if he would but ask it. Francis however, deeming it a duty to maintain the honour of his character, would do no such thing; saying, that if the Senate was just, it would repair an injury without his interference, especially as he had had nothing to do with its infliction. The Senate was therefore compelled to revoke its own act of seizure, and to desist from annoying him: the holy man shewed no resentment, and returned to preach in the city with more zeal than ever; repaying insult with benefits, according to the custom of the saints. This conduct won for him redoubled applause, and covered with confusion his enemies, several of whom

were compelled to acknowledge the eminent virtue of the Saint.

About this time our Lord demonstrated what an empire over hearts He had bestowed upon His servant. A foreigner, who had forged base coin, was condemned to death: in utter despair, he refused to pardon his judges, and prepare himself for death. In vain did zealous men endeavour to rouse him from his deplorable condition; at last he was visited by our Saint, who often went to comfort the prisoners. The man could not resist his gentle, persuasive manner, so that Francis converted him to God, heard his confession, and prepared him for death. As he was to be executed on the spot where the offence had been committed, Francis accompanied him a considerable distance, even beyond the city; nor did he quit him until he had first embraced him, and given him consolation and encouragement; bathing his cheeks with his tears, and giving him a blessed medal, to which a plenary indulgence was annexed. He desired the curates of all the places through which he had to pass, to go forth and assist him; so that all admired the charity of the holy Bishop, who shewed in a stranger whom he had never before seen, the same interest as if he had been a personal friend of his own: acting thus, because as he used to say, "We are all brethren, all having a right to call God our Father."

On his return to Annecy, Francis found the whole country in alarm, owing to a report that the Genevese were arming themselves for the purpose of seizing the neighbouring provinces, especially Annecy. Francis was the only one who did not lose his ordinary composure: and many relied much upon



this circumstance as a fortunate augury. When he was asked how he would act in the event of such a misfortune, his answer was taken as a prophecy: "You are trembling with fear," said he, "where there is no occasion to fear: God will not again permit the Gentiles to seize His inheritance, profane His temple, or reduce Jerusalem to ruins."—"But suppose it should happen?" rejoined some, out of curiosity. "Then," replied the Saint, "I think I should have courage enough to withstand the wolves; indeed, if they ventured to approach my flock, I would not forsake my sheep; on the contrary, I would prove a faithful captain to my people." And he spoke of the example of Peter de la Beaume, the Bishop who was expelled by the Genevese at the time of the rebellion. "Do you think," he said, "Geneva would be in its present state, had it seen its Bishop and Prince ready to defend its gates? He was in truth a worthy man, a sincere Catholic, and deserved the cardinal's hat which was afterwards bestowed on him; but his pusillanimity was the cause of our misfortunes; and he showed it at the moment when a demonstration of courage was most needed. If, when he saw the Genevese embracing the novel doctrines, he had remained firm at his post; if he had climbed on to the walls of Jerusalem and called aloud on the people to be converted to the Lord their God, it is very probable that Geneva would not be at present the emporium of infidelity and iniquity which it is. As for myself, if our Lord should permit us to be tried by a similar persecution, I would remain with my people, to encourage them to fight and defend themselves; nor should I find any difficulty in encoun-

tering all the fatigues and sufferings incident to war; for the sufferings we bear in the cause of God are real rewards: besides which, it is my duty to expose my life for the safety of my flock. But I repeat to you, let us confide in God; He will have pity on us, neither will He leave to the mercy of wild beasts the souls of those who acknowledge Him, and pay Him the tribute of their praise."

A report was next circulated that the Duke was going to imitate the King of France, who to avoid greater evils had permitted liberty of conscience in his states. The Swiss pertinaciously clung to this demand; and it was not unlikely that the Prince would give way in order to avoid a war with those turbulent people. This news, though not believed by the Saint, distressed him much; because after all it was not impossible: with tears in his eyes he recommended the affair to God, and then felt assured that it would not be. In fact, the piety and religion of the Duke were too well known to Francis and to others. "But supposing it should be so?" exclaimed some of his anxious friends. "If you will have me answer to a conditional case," replied the Saint, "I tell you that I would formally oppose it, even if I were certain that it would cost me my blood and my life. What agreement can there be between Jesus Christ and Baal? between light and darkness? A prince who abandons the cause of God, who sacrifices it to ambition, interest, or peace, may be certain that God will forsake him, and that he will not attain his own ends. All the disasters of France have no other origin than this so-called liberty, which is the worst of slavery: and it is evident that all those reasons of state which

have induced kings to tolerate it, are fallacious, deceitful, and prejudicial." Then with a sigh he concluded, "Woe to the princes, woe to France, on account of this liberty. If I were the king's councillor, I would give him to understand how mistaken are all the motives which lead him to tolerate this diversity of religions in his kingdom, now that the Catholic party is the stronger."

In the meantime Francis went on encouraging and animating his people both by word and example to the performance of good works: there was no sick person in the city whom he did not visit, no poor whom he did not relieve, no prisoner whom he did not comfort; every sort of misery found assistance in him. In a short time the alarm subsided, and as frequently happens, the busy tongue of rumour was again found to be at fault.

Towards the latter end of July the Saint again left the city to resume his visitation, continuing it till the twenty-second of October, when he returned. It was at this time that he gave away his little silver cruets to a poor man of Geneva, recently converted, having literally nothing else to give him; and he afterwards disposed of the things most necessary to him in order to send a substitute to the tombs of the Apostles.

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## CHAPTER XIII.

### STATE OF THE DIOCESE OF GENEVA.

It was now time when, according to the custom of the prelate of Savoy, Francis ought to visit the

threshold of the Apostles: but being unable to accomplish this obligation in person, he sent in his stead his brother John Francis of Sales, one of his canons. He gave him every information with regard to the affairs of his diocese, and a document in his own handwriting, which he was to present to His Holiness. In it he clearly showed the amount of his zeal, as well as his thorough information as to all the wants of his flock, saying;—

“Seventy-one years have elapsed since the Bishop of Geneva was driven from the city with all his clergy, despoiled of all his moveable and great part of his immoveable effects; since which time he has resided at Annecy. The revenues of the episcopal establishment are so scanty as not to reach a thousand gold crowns; so that when the stipends of his officials are deducted, the bishop has scarcely enough left for the decent maintenance of his household. Francis of Sales is the sixth bishop who has been compelled to reside out of Geneva, is a native of the diocese, taken from the Chapter of the Cathedral, of which he was Provost for ten years, has been consecrated four years, but for the two first was unable to visit his diocese on account of the wars; during the last two years he has visited the greater part of it, and purposes continuing the visitation. His immediate predecessor was Monsignor Claudius de Granier, deserving of eternal remembrance for the pastoral solicitude with which he annually assembled the synod, gave the cure of souls only to such as were duly examined, and took care that the Church services should be recited according to the Roman form, and as ap-

pointed by the Council of Trent. The present Bishop endeavours to follow in his steps."

After a variety of statistics he stated that a hundred and forty parishes still remained in the hands of the heretics; that he had hopes of converting those under the dominion of the King of France, but not those dependent on the Bernese. As for Geneva, he says that city is to the devil and the heretics what Rome is to the Catholics and the angels: that it would be most gratifying to all who profess the true faith if that city were destroyed, or rather, if it were converted to live and praise the Lord, Who lives for ever and ever.

Furnished with this document the Canon of Sales proceeded to Rome, and in a few months returned, bearing ample demonstrations of esteem from the Pope and Cardinals. Cardinal Jerome Pamphili answered the paper in the name of the Sacred College, commending the zeal with which Francis strove to restore ecclesiastical discipline, his exertions in visiting the remote heights of his diocese, and his ardour for the salvation of souls. He attributed to a special mercy of Providence the blessing of so zealous, devout, and vigilant a pastor being given to this weak part of Christendom; by whose means it might be hoped that the good would be perfected and the sick be healed. Various patents were forwarded, authorizing him to reform the abbeys and monasteries, in all of which he succeeded, with great honour to himself, and to the advantage of those who lived in his diocese, though it will easily be conceived how much he had to go through before he could effect these reforms.

## CHAPTER XIV.

REFORM IN THE MONASTERY OF S. CATHERINE.—HIS  
MAXIMS WITH REGARD TO THE OBSERVANCE OF  
VOWS.

FRANCIS considered it one of his chief duties to watch over the virgins dedicated to our Lord. Being the most illustrious portion of Christ's flock, they ought to be assisted and guarded with a bishop's greatest care.

As the Cistercian nuns of his diocese had quite lost the spirit of fervour bequeathed to them by their holy Founder, Francis applied himself sedulously to restore primitive observance in their two convents. For this purpose, he apprized the Holy See of the disorders existing in them; and the Roman Court, convinced of his zeal, as well as of his mildness and prudence in the arrangement of delicate affairs, constituted him delegate of the Apostolic See, with power to reform the said Abbeys. He applied himself to the task effectually yet mildly; and with paternal and pastoral admonitions, as well as fervent exhortations, gave the nuns to understand how great an evil it was not to observe the Rule which they professed: but in spiritual infirmities, no patients are in so great danger, as those who will not own themselves to be ill. Several of the religious lived in security of conscience, because in embracing the monastic state, they had not obliged themselves to greater perfection than that which they found actually professed; as if it were not wrong to perse-

vere in disorder, or as if custom could canonize abuses: others, hardened in irregularity, had no courage to enter upon a more perfect course. The Saint saw he was only losing time, and therefore prudently separated those whose hearts were touched by grace, resolving to form a new community with them. They were only five in number, but virtue supplied the deficiency in other respects; and these five formed a seminary of sanctity, which afterwards propagated the Order of Reformed Bernardines through Savoy and France.

It was one of his maxims not to hurry in matters of business, so that the reform was not completed till the year 1618, when he separated from the rest the five who wished to lead a better life, establishing them at Rumilly, where they progressed so well as to be able to found another convent at La Roche, and some time later a third at Seyssel; all three in his own diocese. They adopted constitutions given them by our Saint, lived with great regularity, and shed a sweet perfume of virtue over their respective neighbourhoods. In process of time, these same constitutions were accepted by several other houses of the Cistercian Order; and being approved by the Holy See, are followed both in France and Savoy; so that Francis deserves the name of Reformer, Restorer and Director of the Bernardines.

His instructions, given with a view to promote the better observance of religious vows, are most admirable. When treating of the observance of the vows and rules, he says:

1. The predestination of religious persons depends on their love for their respective rules, and

on the punctual performance of whatever their vocation demands.

2. Walk in the exact observance of your rules; thus you will securely go to God, and He it is Who will conduct you.

3. I assure you on the part of God, that if you are faithful in doing that which the rule prescribes, you will undoubtedly reach the goal you have in view, which is, to unite yourself to God.

4. They who wish to live happy and perfect, must study to live according to reason, rule, and obedience, and not according to inclination or prejudice; and they ought to honour highly everything connected with their state; because if they despise one rule today, they will despise another tomorrow, and so by degrees all will go to ruin.

5. The rules are the most certain means whereby to reach that general end which all religious have, of uniting themselves to God, and to their neighbour for the love of God; and the general means of attaining it will be found in the exact observance of the three essential vows of religion.

With regard to poverty, he says:

1. By serving our Lord faithfully, we shall find that the consolation of having abandoned all things for His love, is worth more than a thousand worlds.

2. To wish to be poor without experiencing any inconvenience, is too great a piece of ambition: because it is to seek the honour of holy poverty, with the comfort of riches.

3. Poverty despised, rejected, refused, and abandoned, is true and real poverty.

4. Human prudence says, Blessed are the rich; but Jesus Christ says, Woe to the rich. They who



seek comforts, pleasures, and their own inclinations, cannot be called poor, for our Saviour expressly says, "Whoever does not renounce all that he possesses, cannot be My disciple."

5. "I am content with that which God has awarded me," says the Apostle. This is to imitate the condition of the angels, who stand in need of nothing: it is also a return to the state of original innocence, which was satisfied with little: it is conforming oneself, in a certain degree, to the liberty of our forefathers. It induces the sovereign goodness of God to shed in abundance His best benefits on the generous heart, which despoils itself of creatures to unite itself solely to God; and which seeks no other good than His love and His grace.

6. Nuns who use the words *mine* and *thine* are far from the perfect spirit of evangelical poverty, which seeks not its own interest, but which gives that sweet repose which the children of God ought to find in His loving Providence.

7. Every one knows that riches and worldly goods contribute much to dissipate the soul, by reason of attachment to them, and the care and anxiety excited in order to preserve them; no man ever fancying that he has enough. Now, the religious 'cuts off all these inconveniences by her vow of poverty.

Treating of Purity, he says:

1. The religious renounces all permissible as well as illicit pleasures, and all the sensualities of the flesh: this is another great means of uniting oneself to God most intimately; because, as sensual pleasures weaken the powers of the mind, dissipate the heart, and divide that love which ought to be given to God entire, we, by observing this vow, give our-

selves unreservedly to God; and not satisfied with leaving the domain of the world, we also leave the domain of our own selves, because we renounce the earthly pleasures of the flesh.

2. The Holy Ghost tells us in sufficiently clear terms, that nothing can equal a continent soul. Stand firm, therefore, to your good purpose; it was God who inspired the design of vowing it, and it is He Whose grace enables you to keep it.

3. Our body now belongs to us no more than the ivory in King Solomon's throne belonged to the elephant that had borne it: Jesus the great King has chosen our body for His seat; who then would drive Him from it? We must never surrender this point.

4. Chastity is a virtue which makes us like unto angels: it is constantly preserved in heaven, where sensual pleasures are not so much as named: happy they who begin to live in this world as they will for ever in the next.

5. What a noble virtue is this, which makes the soul white as a lily, pure as the sun, limpid as crystal: it consecrates the body, and causes us to belong entirely to God, heart, body, soul, and senses. What a happiness to renounce all worldly delights and pleasures of the body, to give the heart more perfectly to God!

6. Treat your body with great respect, not as belonging to yourself, but as something sacred, as a holy reliquary: inasmuch as no one would have the audacity to touch or profane a chalice consecrated by a bishop, so your body being consecrated by the Holy Ghost, be careful to treat it with great respect.

Finally, when encouraging nuns to the exact observance of the vow of obedience, he says :

1. This vow essentially constitutes religious life : many religious may be saints without meditation, but *none* without obedience, which is the virtue of the Spouse, in which, and for which, He was pleased to die.

2. One sort of obedience, highly pleasing to God, is that of wishing for no dispensation without an absolute necessity.

3. Obey the orders of your Superiors ; this is necessary : but, to be perfect, conform yourself likewise to their advice, wishes, and inclinations, as far as prudence and charity permit.

4. Unite your hearts by a holy submission to that of our Saviour, Who is the root of that tree, of which you are the branches, and your acts of obedience the fruit : despoil yourselves of every pretext and right of judging or desiring that which may seem best to you, leaving it entirely to the person whose office it is, to judge for you, you willing whatever she requires of you. " True obedience," says S. Gregory, " neither examines the precepts nor the motives of the law ; hence none know less how to judge, than they who best know how to obey."

5. The truly obedient soul does not look at the persons who command, but at God, by Whose authority they command. The devil cares but little when we chastise the body, provided we do it by our own will, because he does not dread austerity ; but he dreads obedience : now, what better austerity can we inflict on ourselves than that of keeping our own will always in subjection, and our liberty fastened to the cross, in order that this victim of God's good

pleasure may be consumed by obedience in the furnace of divine love?

By means of these, and similar maxims, did our Saint lead religious women to observe their rules; always assuring them that on this depends eternal salvation hereafter, as well as present peace of conscience. Moreover, he used to teach them that they must toil and labour, seeing that perfection is not to be attained by merely standing still with arms crossed, but by labouring generously to subdue one's inclination, temper, and all that is human or that savours of the world in us.

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## CHAPTER XV.

FRANCIS PUBLISHES HIS "PHILOTHEA, OR INTRODUCTION TO A DEVOUT LIFE."

THE charity of Francis would not have been satisfied, had it been restrained within the precise limits of his episcopal jurisdiction. That he might be useful to all sorts of persons, he published a work which is beyond all praise. It is in the hands of all who profess to care for their salvation; it will be sufficient therefore to state the motives which induced the Saint to publish it.

The holy man did not lose sight of those persons whom God had pleased through his ministry to call to a more perfect life; after generating them to Jesus Christ by the word of God, he continued to nourish them, according to the example of the great apostle, either with milk or with more solid food, as each one's necessities or strength required. Perceiving

that Louise de Chantal, of Charmoisi, who had chosen him for the director of her soul, was endowed with a spirit superior to her sex, and had an efficacious desire of perfection, he applied himself to her instruction, leading her, as by the hand, from the first even to the highest degree of Christian perfection. She committed to writing the advice she had received from him, in order to facilitate her memory ; residing as she did at Chambéry, she could not consult him by word of mouth, and therefore applied to him by letter, the Saint being always most exact in answering her. He had no other idea beyond that of guiding this good soul aright, nor did he for a moment think that what he was writing for her private devotion would ever be given to the public. Divine Providence, however, had other views. This lady was in the habit of confessing to Father Fourier, Rector of the Jesuit College of Chambéry, and usually shewed him the letters and the advice she had received from the holy prelate ; the confessor, admiring the solidity and worth of these precepts, and judging from Madame de Chantal's great progress in virtue that these instructions would be highly beneficial to the public at large, wrote to the Saint, advising him to revise and complete these manuscripts, and then to publish them, as being well calculated to sanctify those persons who were engaged in the world. The holy man excused himself, his humility not allowing him to believe that the fragments could be worked up into such a form as to be useful to souls. The Father however repeated his entreaties, going so far as to threaten that he himself would have the letters printed in their actual state, as containing maxims most useful

to the attainment of perfection, if Francis still persisted in his refusal. Recommending himself to God, and offering for this object several Masses, the Saint yielded to the desires of Father Fourier, reflecting that, after all, it would not be amiss that some one should instruct courtiers, nobles, and others in the manner by which they might attend to their perfection either at court or in the army, in public as well as in domestic affairs, and the more so as many authors have written in favour of those souls who are called to live hidden from the world; intending to shew that true devotion may be found in the world, just as a spring of fresh water is occasionally met with in the midst of the sea. That his *Philothea* was originally written for Madame de Chantal is evident from a statement in the Saint's own handwriting, preserved in the church of S. John de Grève at Paris.

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## CHAPTER XVI.

HE PREACHES THE LENT AT ANNECY—FOUNDS AN ACADEMY THERE—VISITS THE CHABLAIS.

At the entreaty of his own people, he preached the Lent of this year at Annecy, with his accustomed zeal and with a corresponding amount of profit to his hearers. While the bell was giving the signal for the sermon, he said his Mass, and thus entered the pulpit with the Precious Blood of our Saviour on his lips; a thing which he strongly recommends to preachers. No sinner, however obstinate, could resist the force of the spirit which spoke

through his mouth; and, if his public discourses were convincing, his private conferences invariably completed the conversion of those who applied to him, an affair to which he made all others yield. As there were no Huguenots in his city, he had no occasion to introduce controversy, but confined himself chiefly to the divine commandments; and as he addressed a people who listened to him with avidity, he ministered to them with all his heart, seeing that the Lord had evidently bestowed on them a great love for the maxims of the Gospel.

Amongst many others, he had the consolation of converting one noble soul, to whom he continued to give advice as long as he lived. This conversion was exceedingly precious to him, and had been a subject of anxiety to him for four years. Devoured as he was by zeal for the house of God, he happened, towards the end of Lent, to perceive a young gentleman, a relative of his, sighing and looking very fixedly at a young lady: hereupon he exclaimed from the pulpit: "Alas! what are we come to? Is insolence to be tolerated in the church, and during the sermon? Be ye who ye may, be quiet. Stop, beg pardon of God; for I will allow no such scandal. Unless you amend, I will publicly name and correct you." He then went on with his sermon, at the end of which the gentleman went to him and made a suitable apology.

Although he had been preaching regularly every day, he would not dispense himself from any of the more fatiguing duties of Holy Week, or from taking his seat daily in the confessional, where having spent the afternoon of the Saturday on which he had given Holy Orders, the Canon Deage, who still

reserved the liberty of saying what he pleased to him, told him that his indiscreet toil would soon put an end to his life, to which the Saint replied, with a smile, "O Sir, you would deem yourself highly honoured if one of your pupils should be a martyr, or should waste himself away in serving our good God, the Saviour of souls. But you brought me up too much of a coward to look for any such glory, a glory now-a-days so rare."

He received a visit about this time from the President Favre, a man of far-famed learning and eloquence, and they agreed to found an Academia at Annecy, which might give useful occupation to the higher intellects of the city. The plan was universally approved, and when carried into effect contributed much to promote religion and piety; for, by giving occupation to the nobility, it kept them from idleness. They named it the Academia Florimontana, meaning to imply that the muses flourished on the mountains of Savoy: the crest was an orange tree, with the motto, "*Flowers and Fruit.*" The Duke de Nemours declared himself its chief patron, whilst our Saint and Favre were the vice-presidents.

The object of the Institute was the practice of all virtue, the service of His Serene Highness the Prince, and the general good. Only men of good conscience and learning were to be members, and were to be presented by the Senior Academicians; the name, surname, country, and rank of the candidate were to be registered in the catalogue, and he was to give proof of his learning either in speaking or in writing. Each Academician was to choose a name and device, which, if approved by the censors, was to be affixed in the manner prescribed in the



ceremonial of reception, after which it could not be changed. The Saint chose for his device a star, with the motto, "*Non excidet.*" The lecturers, who were to deliver themselves with precision and judgment, were to be elected. Into the general assembly any men of acknowledged talent might be admitted, such as painters, sculptors, architects, and so forth. Public lectures were given, each one as far as possible comprising a whole treatise. The style was to be grave and polished, yet free from pedantry, the subjects theology, philosophy, rhetoric, cosmography, and arithmetic; varieties of language, especially of French, were also to be discussed. The academicians appointed to give the lectures were not to absent themselves without necessity. A notice was affixed at the door of the academy, announcing the subject, day, and hour of the lecture. The lecturers were to endeavour to teach much and well in a short time, and the audience could demand explanations at the conclusion of the lecture. Oratorical art was to be used in the various addresses more than in the lectures. Admission was forbidden to Jews, to enemies of the country and of the prince, and to any who were notoriously infamous. The members were to bear to each other a mutual and fraternal charity, endeavouring to banish all discord. The prince or his lieutenant was to decide disputes according to the dictates of prudence. There was to be no precedence or post of pre-eminence, though there was to be a reserved place for princes and prelates. The president, vice-presidents, secretary, censors, and treasurer were to be elected, and all were to subscribe towards the necessary expenses, it being

intended to exclude miserly people from the Academy. A respectable citizen was to act as porter, and receive a moderate salary.

Francis himself opened the functions of the Academy with a brilliant speech, and afterwards gave lectures on various subjects, political and theological. He was anxious that every one should have some knowledge of the latter, so as to be qualified to speak in defence of religion. This noble Academy drew to Annecy the finest minds of the Genevese, as well as from other parts of Savoy, to the great advantage of the province.

The Saint next visited Thonon, to encourage the priests belonging to the Holy House, and to arrange some differences which had arisen with regard to the dismemberment of the Priory of S. Hippolytus. To maintain piety in the hearts of the children, whom with so great toil he had begotten to Jesus Christ by the Gospel, he instituted a confraternity of penitents, under the title of the Most Blessed Sacrament and our Blessed Lady ; giving them a blue habit, and enrolling himself a member, a circumstance which proved of great advantage to it. He then made a pilgrimage to S. Claude, and crossed the lake into the heretical canton of Vaud, wearing his cross, and causing bells to be rung, a courageous act in those days, so that many people looked upon it as a miracle that he should have passed unmolested. A procession amounting to four hundred persons accompanied him back to Thonon, and wherever they halted on the road he contrived to have a short sermon delivered, he himself generally giving it.

From Thonon he returned to Annecy, to solem-

nize the funeral of Anna D'Este, Duchess of Nemours, whose body was brought from France, to be buried in the church of Our Lady. He delivered the funeral sermon, for although he had a great objection to those rhetorical compositions, in which princes so often receive undue praise, he could not refuse this office to the virtue of the deceased princess, or to the request of the Duke, who, when informed later of the eloquence and piety with which the holy prelate had executed the commission, expressed great satisfaction, and wrote to thank him for it, requesting a copy of the sermon, that he might have it printed.

Resuming his visitation, the Saint reached Essix, the birthplace of Father Peter Faber, first theologian, first priest, and first subject of the Society of Jesus, he having been the first to associate himself to St. Ignatius Loyola. Here he stopped to see the parents and home of this great man, whom he called the honour of Savoy: he used to exult at the thought that Savoy had given to the Society and to the Church two great lights in the persons of Peter Faber and Claude Jay, two of the first companions of the holy founder. He thanks one of the Fathers of the Society by letter for the loan of a manuscript Life of Faber, which was afterwards printed at Lyons, and dedicated to him, when he again read it with great consolation.

He interrupted his visitation for a few days to go over to Sales, to comfort his mother and family, then deeply afflicted at the death of his youngest sister Joanna, who had died in Burgundy, at the house of Madame de Chantal. Having satisfied this duty, he returned to his arduous task, and continued it till

compelled to return and preach the Advent at Annecy. He preached the following Lent at Rumilly, a large village in his diocese, announcing the word of God with the same consolation, fruit, and method as formerly at La Roche. On his return he met his acquaintance, Nicholas de Quoex, monk of Talloire, whom he thus accosted, "I am just come from my abode of delights, where I have had to deal with a humble, docile, and devout set of people. In great cities one meets with nothing but pride, and the rich flatter one another as if they were something wonderful: these villages contain the people for me, for they hearken to the word of God with extraordinary avidity, humility, and devotion." At Rumilly he expelled the devil from many souls, and from the body of one woman, who had long been obsessed. To avoid repetition, we may as well state here that shortly afterwards he delivered another at Thonon, brought to him from Faucigny. He again visited certain needy parishes, which he had been unable to provide for according to his wishes in his previous visit. He felt that a first visitation could only afford him a general and superficial knowledge of the people and their necessities. Moreover, he knew that it was useless to make decrees, unless he took care to have them observed; hence he retraced his steps to see how matters stood. God blessed his pastoral solicitude, rendering his journey as advantageous to the public necessities of the Church as it was privately beneficial to the souls of many of his people.

## CHAPTER XVII.

CONVERSIONS WROUGHT BY OUR SAINT—HE RETURNS TO THONON—IS CALUMNIATED TO THE POPE, WHO CHARGES HIM WITH NEW AND HONOURABLE COMMISSIONS.

WE ought to look upon it as a great happiness to meet and converse with apostolic men, for the Holy Ghost exhorts us assiduously to cultivate the acquaintance of a holy man. The truth of this was experienced by two ladies from Geneva, who went to visit some relatives at Annecy, and who, by conversing with Francis, were converted to the faith. His far-spread renown made them curious to see him, and on being introduced they were received by him with his accustomed courtesy. When the first compliments were over, he designedly alluded to some point of controversy, explaining it with equal clearness and force; they were bent, however, on being obstinate in error, and took leave of him without giving the slightest hopes of their conversion. But in a few days doubts arose in their minds, and they repeated their visit to the holy prelate, who spoke so powerfully that with the assistance of divine grace he converted them both. They abjured Calvinism at his hands, and marrying in Savoy, persevered to the end in the Catholic faith.

The saint intended to compose some works as soon as he completed his visitation, but he received orders from His Highness to proceed to the Chablais, in company with the President de l'Escheraine, and

one of the auditors of the chamber of peers. It was the Duke's wish to bring to a close some affairs tending to the advantage of religion, especially that of consolidating the establishment of the Holy House of Thonon. He set out immediately, and gave a beautiful instance of his spirit of mortification on the journey. Dining at the house of a rector, a friend of his, the servants had placed flour on the table instead of salt; the saint partook of it in the usual proportions, apparently heedless of the mistake, until one of the company noticing it, said that the contents of the salt cellar were more like sugar than salt, and appealed to Francis, who joined in the laugh with the rest, and said that it was all the same to him, but blushed when he found the company attributing it to the mortification which he always brought with him to table.

He despatched a great deal of business at Thonon, many things requiring remedy having arisen in the course of the year; for as is usual with new foundations, human prudence cannot possibly foresee every contingency. He had the great consolation of bringing two stray sheep back to the fold of Christ; these were two priests, one a doctor of theology belonging to Verdun, the other to Nice; the former assured the holy prelate that he had never taught heretical opinions, having confined himself to teaching philosophy and mathematics at Lausanne; that his apostasy had not arisen from a conviction of the Catholic faith being wrong, but from his desire to lead an irregular life; hence, as the Saint remarks, "This man strayed, not because he had a bad opinion of the Catholic Church, but that he might live licentiously." They afterwards published an

account of their conversion, sending it to the republic of Berne on the fifteenth of June, the day on which they made their abjuration.

On his return to Annecy, he learned from a Canon of Verdun, recently returned from Rome, that the Pope was dissatisfied with him, as not being sufficiently vigilant in preventing the reading of heretical works in his diocese; the canon added that he had been commissioned by one of the cardinals to give him this information, and to tell him that Father Cherubino of Moriana was the individual who had whispered it to His Holiness. In truth, the Saint well knew that nothing could be more prejudicial to the mind and heart than the perusal of such books, which were daily issuing from the press of Geneva, and he spared no pains to prevent the circulation of them in his diocese; vigilance in this respect could not have been carried further, therefore it is difficult to guess what could have been the real motive of the writer in sending the following statement to Rome: "New books are daily printed in Geneva, each one being worse than its predecessor; these works are widely spread throughout Savoy, and are eagerly read; we may justly fear that converts, as well as catholics of long standing, are thus seriously injured." The character of the writer however explains the case. He came as a missionary into the diocese of Geneva, and applied himself to the task with a zeal which needed discretion, and which consequently did more harm than good. He created a disturbance, which nothing but the presence and mildness of the Saint could have allayed; his sentiments were diametrically opposite to those of Francis, who ardently

desiring what was best, always employed gentle measures to effect it, whereas Father Cherubino blamed him as guilty of excessive condescension in this respect. After the patience of the holy prelate had been long exercised, he felt himself obliged to request his superiors to recall the missionary, who, looking upon this as an injury, allowed his over-heated zeal to hurry him into this misstatement about the books, and yet he must have been aware how considerately Francis had treated him in the course of his visitation, for in the synod he had actually prohibited under heavy penalties any retaliation, and had even applied to the prince to save him from punishment.

The Saint was deeply pained when he found that the Sovereign Pontiff (whom he revered as a father) was displeased with him: he would not, however, reproach the zeal of Father Cherubino, believing him to have been actuated by a good intention; but he wrote to the Cardinal who sent him the information, saying that if the case really was as His Holiness supposed, not only would his indignation be just, but that he (Francis) would be deserving of punishment for his negligence: he could however assure him, that he had concluded the visitation of his diocese, not having overlooked so much as one parish: that he had found no heretics (the mis-believers being confined to that part of his diocese which was subject to Berne and Geneva,) nor heretical works, with the exception of a few, which either from neglect or sheer contempt, were suffered to moulder in some dusty corner: that, God be thanked, the catholics were so scrupulous on this point, that if they merely suspected malice in a book, they either placed it in



the hands of the proper authority, or consigned it to the flames. He acknowledged that such books were constantly printed at Geneva, but denied the statement of their circulation in Savoy;—that possibly his diligence might be at fault here, as well as in his other pastoral obligations; but that he was faithful and sincere in labouring according to the little measure of his strength, and even with courage, for the interests of religion; although through weakness he might not have accomplished all that could be wished; and he concludes his letter to the Cardinal in these words: “Now, I beseech your Eminence to become the protector of that cheerfulness which is so necessary to me in such an afflicted province; a cheerfulness which greatly depends on the assurance that the Holy Father is not dissatisfied with me, and that I am not excluded from the general benevolence which he extends to all his inferiors.”

Thus did he describe his affliction, and justify his conduct, without the least injury to his calumniator: and he was soon completely satisfied, for the Cardinal wrote to him that the Pope was convinced of the zeal with which he had laboured for the faith in those countries;—that he had placed no reliance on the calumny, and that in a short time he would receive some evident proofs of the Pontiff’s esteem;—that in the mean time, he was to continue the faithful discharge of his functions as usual;—that the Pope was highly satisfied with his conduct and mode of action, &c.

In fact, His Holiness had said to several persons that he well knew the Bishop of Geneva, whom he looked upon as a saint; and that if all the prelates of the Church resembled him, the wolves would not

have obtained so large a prey, nor would they now so much endanger the fold of Jesus Christ. Not only did the Pope think highly of the sanctity of the Bishop of Geneva, but he likewise had a great opinion of his wisdom and learning, as we learn from all the authors of his life; and of this the following fact is a proof.

The famous question *de auxiliis* had been discussed before Paul V. The point turned on the manner in which grace becomes efficacious, and had been carried from the schools to the supreme tribunal. To calm the controversy, Clement VIII. appointed a congregation of Cardinals, who, in his presence, were to hear the disputation of the theologians, who warmly maintained their respective views of the subject. Death carried him off before the case could be sufficiently elucidated, and it was continued before Paul V., who, anxious to have the opinion of the most learned men of the age, and having seen an answer which our Saint had given to Anastasius Germonio, (afterwards Archbishop of Tarentaise and Cardinal,) commissioned Germonio and the Cardinal of Arragon to write to the holy man, and ask him to explain his opinions on this question. Francis, unwilling that his opinion should be the rule of others, expressed himself in very moderate terms, and concluded by saying, that, having given the question his best consideration, he found insuperable difficulties in it, for that danger was to be apprehended in both extremes: that seeing as he did so many deplorable disorders in the Church, it seemed to him to be an object far more deserving the attention of a great Pontiff to eradicate them, than to define such nice scholastic distinctions; to which definitions

moreover, some would not be willing to submit, although one was willing to believe that they had due respect for the Holy See: that the decision would perhaps bring but little advantage to religion, because men's minds are more disposed to evil than to good. Undoubtedly, neither party would ever teach anything that was inconsistent with faith; and they would always be sufficiently united amongst themselves to maintain union of heart, notwithstanding diversity of intellectual opinions. He wrote in the same sense to the Nuncio at Turin, and the Pope, having weighed all his reasons, acquiesced in the opinion of Francis, by imposing silence on both parties, and forbidding anything more being published on the subject. This shows how highly he must have esteemed the prudence, justice and wisdom of the holy prelate; the more so, as it has been affirmed that the Bull deciding the question was actually drawn up when he received the Saint's answer.

A few days later, the Pope commissioned him to undertake the reform of the monastery of Puy D'Orbe, and to accompany the Bishop of Basilea into Burgundy, to put an end to the dissension between the Archduke and the clergy, on the subject of the salt-works, a controversy which had been long pending. These were marks of the esteem and confidence which His Holiness was pleased to give him,

## CHAPTER XVIII.

HE REFORMS THE MONASTERY OF PUY D'ORBE.—CONCLUDES THE DISSENSION BETWEEN THE PRINCE AND CLERGY OF BURGUNDY.

HAVING received these orders from His Holiness, he made arrangements for his immediate departure; and whilst awaiting the arrival of the Bishop of Basilea, began with the first, namely, the reform of the Convent of Puy d'Orbe in the diocese of Langres. This was an ancient Abbey of the Cistercian Order, but woefully fallen from its primitive spirit: its restoration was no easy task, and the Pope, who was well acquainted with the prudence, mildness, discretion and patience of the Bishop of Geneva, deemed him the only person capable of restoring regular discipline in the Abbey. God was pleased to manifest his influence over hearts; for during the three days which he spent at S. Rambert on the journey, he put an end to a law-suit and quarrel between two gentlemen, which had been long pending, and which had baffled the skill of the ablest lawyers: moreover, he succeeded in uniting them in perfect concord, to the admiration of the people, who extolled to the skies the charity which had prompted the Saint to interfere in the affair, and the tact which had enabled him to give a decision that had satisfied both parties.

On arriving at the Abbey, before he entered on the affair which had taken him thither, he gave a few exhortations to the religious, in which he gave proof

of the zeal by which he was actuated. He was convinced that he must gain the good-will of the nuns, and convince them of the necessity of the reform, before he attempted to introduce it. The object of his discourses was to make them understand their actual state, in order that they might abhor it, and be desirous of entering upon one more conformable to their vocation: he used to say that liberty is so natural to man, that no one likes to be compelled to carry a yoke; and that whoever bears it unwillingly, is sure to try to shake it off. It was his maxim first to win the heart, and then induce it to wish to do well, and thus to effect a solid change. Acting upon this plan, he held several conferences with the principal religious, dwelt on the disorders resulting from the relaxation which had crept into the monastery, and persuaded them to renounce in reality the world which they promised to forsake when they retired to this holy place: he assured them that the only happiness they could hope for in this life, depended on peace of conscience and tranquillity of heart;—that these could only be attained by the practice of virtue, and by the exact observance of their rules. He next told them that he could, in virtue of the commission entrusted to him, restore the rule of S. Benedict in its full vigour, but that he had no intention of making them pass all at once from one extreme to the other; that he was willing to concede many points, and would even obtain the Pope's consent to this effect, provided they would submit to what he should deem necessary. He insisted on enclosure so far as to exclude all men, except in cases of indispensable necessity: he did not oblige them to close their doors against

women, satisfying himself with forbidding them from sleeping in the enclosure: he permitted the nuns still to go out of the monastery, but only very seldom, never alone, and not to visit their relatives or friends, unless in very urgent cases. He appointed a place for the reception of visitors, regulated the manner of going to communion, and ordered the confessional to be so contrived, that no one could either see or be seen from it. He had a Prioress elected, to whom all were to yield obedience in the absence of the Abbess. A Chapter was to be held every Friday, when a portion of the rule was to be read, followed by a spiritual conference, mentioning the faults which had been committed, with all charity, and proposing suitable remedies. He desired that all the pensions should be remitted to the Abbess, she binding herself in return to furnish all that was necessary for the community: he would not, however, positively insist on this point, being willing to wait till Almighty God should inspire those to acquiesce, who at present were the most opposed to it. The discretion used by our Saint in the reform of this monastery, shews to what a deplorable state it must have been reduced; the more so, as the Abbess herself was extremely well disposed, and was most anxious to restore regular observance in her community.

St. Francis dispensed the nuns from some corporal austerities, substituting in their place the practice of the interior virtues of retirement, prayer, humility and charity, which the spirit of proprietorship and commerce with the world had all but banished from the convent. The Abbess requested the holy bishop to give her some instruction for her own

perfection, and he recommended her to apply herself to the interior life, telling her that humility, simplicity of heart, and submission of mind, are the solid foundations of religious perfection; that he would rather see any other vices in the cloister than pride and vanity; because when a soul is under the dominion of pride, she may have every vice within herself, and yet fancy herself to be in a good state, despising the advice offered with a view to her amendment:—that superiors should endeavour to give great edification, and to regulate their government upon the model of that which God Himself gives; namely, that it should be sweet and tranquil;—that she should try to remove all cause for little murmurings and complaints; slight causes generally leading to serious disturbances in religious communities, just as heavy storms are formed by imperceptible vapours:—that religious orders were essentially injured by the promiscuous admission of all who applied: he therefore warned her to examine closely the spirit and vocation of candidates;—that birth and talent were not sufficient, a submissive mind being of paramount importance;—that postulants ought not to be flattered with the hope of sensible and spiritual consolations, which often fail:—that those cause serious injury to a community, who join it from some disappointment, or from other imperfect motives;—that when docility and simplicity combine with rank and talent, extraordinary results may be expected, because such persons act from more perfect motives, and because inferiors respect them for their virtues as well as for their rank; but when nobility and talent are not accompanied by piety and virtue, the individuals are often haughty, de-

spising the person and authority of superiors, claiming exemptions and dignities, and by degrees opening the door to all kind of abuses.

The Saint said nothing about corporal austerities to the abbess; generally speaking, he did not approve of such things for women, on account of their delicacy of constitution; but instead of them he insisted strongly on the pursuit of charity, humility, meekness of heart, recollection, contempt of the world, disengagement from temporal things, and from self; all of which are the virtues peculiar to the spouses of Jesus Christ. Once, when the reform of a monastery was discussed in his presence, some were for introducing the custom of going bare-foot, whereupon he gracefully interposed, saying that it was more necessary to begin the reform at the head than at the feet. And to one who wished to practise great austerities he replied, that the devil did not care much when he saw us tear our bodies with disciplines, when it was done to please our own will, because it is not austerity but obedience that he dreads, and that no austerity costs us more or avails us so much, as to subject our will to obedience.

Having contracted a friendship with the abbess, he continued to direct her by letter, giving her advice which it would be desirable for all superiors to read and follow. God blessed the zeal and efforts of the Saint; in progress of time the community was thoroughly changed, and christian and religious virtue flourished, to the great edification of the public. He left the nuns highly edified by the sanctity which they discerned in him, although he used his best endeavours to conceal it.



He next repaired to Dijon, where he succeeded in quelling a dissension which might have led to serious consequences, between the Carmelite nuns and a lady of high rank: from thence he proceeded to Montleon, the residence of Madame de Chantal, where a marriage was arranged between his brother and the daughter of the Baroness. He then proceeded to Franche-Comté, to execute the other commission entrusted to him by the Holy See.

The holy Prelate succeeded in satisfying both parties. The details of the quarrel, referring to the possession of some valuable salt springs at Salins, would be uninteresting to the reader: the decision was left to the Pope; who deputed the Bishops of Basilea and Geneva to investigate the affair in his name. It is inconceivable what pains our Saint took, in order to balance the claims of both parties, and what papers he had to read through; for several abbeys, collegiate churches, monasteries, parishes, and private individuals, had more or less right to the property: he minutely entered into every detail with a patience beyond all praise, listened to all the arguments, and then, together with the Bishop of Basilea, gave a decision which completely satisfied all parties. The Princes shewed how well pleased they were with the sentence, by presenting him with a magnificent service of plate, comprising six candlesticks, a chalice, two cruets, a bell, and various other articles. Under the circumstances, Francis did not think he could refuse the gift, without failing in respect to the noble donors: he therefore accepted it, and turned it to the benefit of the poor, as will be seen a little later.

The people of Burgundy treated our Saint with

the greatest honour, appreciating him at his true worth. He arrived at Dôle on the vigil of All Saints towards evening, and had no sooner reached his lodgings, than he was visited by the Syndicate of the city, expressing their delight at welcoming so distinguished a prelate, and requesting him to preach for them the next day, which he promised to do. On the following morning, the Fathers of the Society of Jesus went to invite and conduct him to their college, where he celebrated holy Mass, and was kept at the altar till past mid-day, giving communion; for as soon as it was known that he intended to do this, everyone became anxious to receive communion from his hand, and upwards of eight hundred persons approached the altar. After dinner he entered the pulpit of the Cathedral, and delivered a most learned and eloquent sermon on the wonderful predestination of the saints: unbounded was the admiration of the people, who proclaimed him a saint, and revered him as an angel come down from heaven, insomuch that the Jesuits preserved as a relic the berretta which he had worn at the altar, and carrying it to the sick, cured many by means of it. At the Cathedral he was shewn the miraculous Host of Favernay, which had been kept there for many years, and which was the only thing spared by the flames, when the abbatial church of our Lady was destroyed by fire, the Host remaining suspended in the air for thirty-three hours.

The city of Besançon seemed eager to rival Dôle in shewing honour to the holy man: out of respect to him, the Canons exposed the holy cloth in which our Saviour's Body was enveloped after death. As the Saint contemplated the form and marks of our

Lord's wounds, (the Canons allowing him full leisure to do so,) his heart seemed melting into tears: and by way of expressing his gratitude to the clergy and people for this favour, he delivered a most devotional sermon, taking these words for his text: "If I shall only touch His garment, I shall be healed." He was received with great magnificence at the Jesuits' College, whither he was accompanied by a vast concourse of persons, all eager to kiss his clothes; and the scholars recited compositions in his honour.

He again met the Bishop of Basilea at Beaume, and he contracted a close friendship with him, as well as with Margaret of Geneva, Abbess of the Monastery of Beaume, and cousin to the Bishop. Convinced of the talent and graces bestowed by Almighty God on Francis, she eagerly consulted him by word of mouth, and afterwards by letter, on the best means of advancing in perfection; nor was she the only one anxious to receive instruction from the holy Bishop; for during the whole time that business detained him in Burgundy, all his leisure hours were spent in hearing the confessions of those who sought to unburthen their consciences to so celebrated a director, and to be guided by his counsels: he moreover preached in various churches and monasteries. On his return, he passed through Salins, and was received with all due honour. Here he gave a proof of his mortification, and shewed how completely he was divested of the spirit of curiosity. Copying the example of Christ, he busied himself in those things which concerned the glory of his heavenly Father, without so much as going to look at the wonders of the salt

manufactory. Solely intent on promoting the kingdom of God, he spent the time, which he might so lawfully have devoted to this innocent recreation, in conversing on spiritual matters with a very holy matron, and with the nuns of S. Elizabeth of the Third Order of S. Francis. Travelling, which usually dissipates the mind, only served to increase his spirit of recollection; he watched his opportunity at all times and in all places, to increase the glory of God, and to sanctify the hearts of men.

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## CHAPTER XIX.

### REFORM IN THE ABBEY OF TALLOIRE.

THE holy prelate fully concurred with S. Augustine in the opinion, that as there are no better men than those who live in cloisters, so there are none worse than they who, living in cloisters, live not according to their profession: they may be compared to withered vines, fit for nothing but the fire,—to flavourless salt, fit only to be cast out. Having so sedulously undertaken the reform of distant monasteries, he would have scrupled to leave those of his own diocese in disorder. Being aware that the Abbey of Talloire was an object worthy of his zeal, and that it was his duty to prevent the progress of a corruption which was ruining the monastery and scandalizing the country, he resolved to attempt its reform; but with his accustomed discretion, he procured a Brief from Pope Paul V. in which His Holiness commanded him to enter upon the task. To avoid all occasion of dispute with the Abbot, he was not above

assuming the title of his Vicar: here we see the great humility of the Saint, who, for the sake of succeeding in an affair connected with the glory of God, made himself the surrogate of one who was his own inferior: and though he might have used the title of Apostolic Delegate, he accepted an ordinary authority conferred by the Abbot, as a means of facilitating the execution of his designs.

Tallore is a large hamlet situated on the banks of the lake of Annecy, having a magnificent view. The Abbey is close to the lake, and is so spacious as to resemble a little village, with towers, belfries, &c. A hill protects it from the east wind, whilst the other sides are graced by vineyards, fields, and fertile plains, which with the fine expanse of water, produce a most agreeable effect, so that many persons frequented the monastery for recreation. This in fact was the origin of most of the disorders which had crept in; from continual intercourse with seculars, the religious lost the spirit of their vocation, and became careless of regularity and perfection. To this may be added the negligence of the Abbots, as the Abbey being reduced *in commendam* (a misfortune but too common in those evil days,) the Abbots cared only for the revenues, and gave themselves no trouble in enforcing religious discipline. The monastery was founded by Rodolph, the last king of Burgundy, under the Rule of S. Benedict, and was entrusted to the government of the Abbot of Savigny. As the site was well calculated for leading a life of piety, devotion flourished there for several ages, some saints belonging to its catalogue of monks, and four members of the family of Sales having been professed in the house.

Francis was anxious that a monastery so celebrated, and situated so near his own residence, should not continue in a state of disorder, and consequently resolved to undertake its reform. The Abbot, Francis d'Albon, was fearful that the holy Bishop would receive ill usage from the monks, knowing that some of them were far from being well-disposed; but the Saint assured him that all should be quietly arranged, because he would endeavour first to gain their good-will by gentleness; whereupon the Abbot consented to his going. On his arrival he assembled the Chapter, and represented to the religious the obligations of their state; exhorting them so effectively to a change of life, that hearts of an ordinary stamp would have burst with grief. Most feelingly did he pourtray the miserable condition of those wicked monks, who do not keep the vows they have solemnly sworn to God, and mingling suavity with powerful argument, he drew tears from the eyes of the majority of his hearers. Some however remained obstinate, and asked him what he meant by the word reform, declaring that they would submit to no novelties, nor lead a stricter life than they had found in vogue when they entered the monastery. This is the usual cry of relaxed religious, whenever an attempt is made to bring them to their duty. The Saint separated those who were touched by remorse of conscience, from the others who held this language; and after invoking the assistance of the Holy Ghost, proceeded to the election of a Prior. The election fell upon the individual he most wished, namely, Claude Nicholas de Quoex, who had long been desiring the reform of the community. He was a man of great virtue, wholly free from the vices

of the rest. The Saint thanked Divine Providence for having thus mercifully favoured his designs ; and from this beginning augured well for the success of the reform : but not to ruin all by precipitation, he thought it better to do no more for the present, so after giving suitable advice to the new Prior for the guidance of his religious, he withdrew to his own residence.

The perverse monks, seeing that the affair was no joke, and that the Prior was firm in insisting on the observance of the Rule, raised such a tumult in the monastery, that he was obliged to seek safety in the house of a priest who lived close to the monastery : the next morning three of these graceless monks way-laid him, and discharged three pistols at him : God however did not permit him to be wounded by the shots. Then becoming conscious of their crime, and fearing with reason that exemplary punishment would be the consequence, they went to the Prior in the course of the following day, and with tears in their eyes, besought him to pardon an access of rage, which had been incited by others more wicked than themselves ; adding that of course he would carry his complaints to the Lord Bishop of Geneva, from whom they hoped for pardon, relying on the well-known characteristic meekness of the holy Bishop : but they conjured him not to accuse them to the Senate of Chambéry, or they would be irrevocably lost. They next repaired to Francis, and were followed soon afterwards by the Prior, who went to inform him of what had occurred : when he made his appearance, the Saint thus accosted him, “ Well, Father Prior, do these extraordinary caresses terrify us ? Had the shot not missed their aim, were we quite resolved

to pardon and to die? This is all nothing. The culprits have been here to appeal to me, fearing lest they should be accused at Chambéry; but no, this severity is needless: we have only to stand upon our guard; and though we are not to go and seek martyrdom in the midst of our enemies, if our enemies come and make martyrs of us, why, patience! And if at the day of judgment they are saved, they will be our friends throughout eternity, and we shall then see that they were not so much our enemies as we fancied. I have admonished and threatened them; and they have promised me to do wonders in the way of penance, and to change their way of life: I beseech you therefore, return to the monastery, and resume the duties of your office, without shewing any resentment: the issue will prove that God only permitted this accident in order to convert them."

Many individuals blamed the facility with which the holy prelate overlooked so atrocious a crime as intended murder by priests and religious, attributing it to mere chance and to the want of skill in the culprits, that the blow did not take effect. It was on this occasion that an illustrious personage said that he should like to be Francis of Sales, when he came to stand before the judgment-seat of God; but that he should tremble at having to answer for the sins occasioned by the too great meekness of the Bishop of Geneva. Francis replied that he would be quite as much embarrassed if he had to answer for his own particular sins: that as for himself, he would rather exceed in gentleness than in rigour, following the example of meekness given by Jesus Christ, who, as He was his Lord, was also to be his Judge.



Although the saint hoped that the lenity shown to the guilty would contribute to their amendment, his prudence would by no means allow the reform to remain at its present point: without denouncing the culprits, he obtained from the Senate of Savoy the admission of the Pontifical brief, and of the patents whereby the abbot committed to his care the reform of the abbey, and implored the assistance of the senate towards the execution of the orders of His Holiness. A senator was commissioned to accompany him, to second his endeavours, and to confirm them with sovereign authority. Returning to Talloire with the Senator de Buttet, he again assembled the chapter, and said to the monks: "You are bent on your own destruction, and I am resolved to save you in spite of yourselves." After a brief exhortation, he gave them to understand that within three months they were either to embrace the reform or be turned out of the monastery. The latter alternative was chosen by a few, who, leaving the partizans of God's law in peace, withdrew to other houses. The good prelate warmly embraced those who remained true, and animated them by a fervent discourse to live according to the rules of their Institute, and courageously to undertake the perfection which it prescribes. He then conjured the Prior to ground them well in humility and simplicity, and not to permit them either by word or act to reprove or censure one another, but rather to give mutual edification by their good example. "In prosecuting this great work," said he, "great longanimity is necessary, in memory of that of Jesus Christ, Who after a life of thirty-three years, only left a hundred and twenty disciples, and even amongst

them some were imperfect. A generous heart is required in a work of such importance, and to be satisfied with nothing less than perfection, but to obtain it great fortitude is necessary, awaiting the fruit in patience."

Francis next visited the hermitage and chapel of S. Germanus, which he advised the Prior to repair, and after visiting the church and monastery, and making such arrangements as he thought advisable, he quitted the abbey, hoping that the good work so successfully begun, would soon be completed. In the meantime, the refractory monks having taken their departure, the Prior wrote for further advice how best to govern the remaining religious. The Saint recommended him above all things to wait in patience for the fruit to be gathered by these small but satisfactory beginnings, mentioning that the palm tree, though the queen of trees, produces no fruit till it is a hundred years old,—that from more insignificant beginnings God had effected the most important reforms; that he was to fix in his mind the idea that he had to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, and that though God would assist him in the task, he would find that it was not to be accomplished either in one day, or in one month; that it would be necessary to give milk and honey to such as were yet unable to digest more solid food, seeing they were only children in the Lord, and he exhorted him to thank Almighty God for employing him in the salvation of Israel. But to descend more to particulars. He was of opinion that the religious should communicate at least once a week: that they should be taught the proper method of examining their conscience, and of making mental

prayer, endeavouring to bring them to adopt these two practices in the morning and evening, and to give them a high esteem of obedience, especially to the director. He recommended them to adopt uniformity in dress, assuming the habit worn by the reformed Benedictines; that no one should go out of the monastery without a companion; to be attentive to the ceremonies in reciting the Divine Office in choir, exterior decorum being of great advantage in many respects; he made several regulations with regard to modesty, but he did not at this time prescribe anything in the way of abstinence, beyond that of Wednesday, according to the old custom of the mitigated Order. The tonsure and beard were to be worn like those of other Benedictines, and the same with regard to the girdle and cap.

The Saint concluded his advice by saying that they would easily perceive that this was but little in comparison with the much which remained to be achieved, but they were to remember that the intention was the *first* thing, and accomplishment the *last*; that he had read their rule, which prescribes many admirable things, but nevertheless, he did not recommend passing all at once from one extreme to the other.

Thanks to the solicitude of the new Prior, and much more to the zeal of the holy bishop, regular discipline was restored in the monastery, and the sweet perfume of the virtues of its inmates being diffused throughout the country, several individuals soon applied for admission, and there embraced the religious state. Francis had the consolation of seeing the posts of dignity filled by persons of exemplary life, whose example edified the diocese as

much as the conduct of their predecessors had scandalized it. The children of this world again were found mistaken in their judgments, for they had confidently asserted that the design of the Saint would end only in smoke; nor could they possibly conceive that such small beginnings would have led to such wonderful results.

The successful issue of this affair induced the holy Bishop to thank God with all the affection of his heart, and whilst he was contemplating other designs still more important to the divine glory, our Lord was pleased to favour him with an extraordinary grace, either by way of fortifying him in preparation for new enterprises, or of recompensing his zeal in what he had just accomplished. He was alone in his room, pacing up and down, wholly recollected in meditation on divine mysteries, when suddenly a pillar of fire appeared before him, preceding him as he walked along; then separating itself into two parts, one part rested immediately over his *prie-dieu*, and the other close to his bed, assuming a pyramidal form. After a short time it disappeared, leaving him inflamed and filled with most ardent desires of extending the kingdom of God more and more. He related the circumstance confidentially to his confessor and chaplain, Michael Faure, with his usual candour and simplicity, adding that he did not know what Almighty God intended him to understand by it. Not for a moment looking upon it as a sign of his own sanctity, he said that possibly it was meant to forewarn him of his mother's death; saying in conclusion: "However this may be, we must adore all the dispensations of the Lord, whose mercies towards us are very great, and who disposes

all things sweetly and powerfully for the attainment of His own ends." But Faure felt convinced that by this favour God intended to shew how gratifying to Him were the sacrifices and offerings of His servant's zeal, and likewise to demonstrate that he, like another Moses, was to conduct many from the Egypt of this world into the land of promise, although Faure prudently concealed this his opinion in order not to wound the modesty and humility of the Saint.

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## CHAPTER XX.

FRANCIS CONSECRATES THE BISHOP OF BELLEY—CLOSE INTIMACY BETWEEN THE TWO PRELATES.

FRANCIS never performed a solemn function with greater satisfaction than when he consecrated Peter Camus, nominated by the King of France to the Bishopric of Belley. Pure merit had obtained him the honour, for he had piety, learning, and talent, both for writing and preaching. Similarity of character contributed to a friendship between them, which being founded in God, proved lasting. From his intimacy with our holy prelate Mgr. Camus acquired that zeal, light, and detachment, which rendered him one of the most distinguished, as well as one of the holiest personages of France. He himself acknowledged that, next to God, he was indebted to Francis for whatever good was in him: he used to call him his father, master, guide, and director: hence, so long as the Saint lived, he never undertook anything of importance without consult-

ing him. He kept a messenger expressly to carry letters and answers between them, and so entirely did he depend upon him, that on one occasion he would not so much as grant a dispensation for some soldiers to eat meat during Lent, without first asking his opinion. Replenished as he was with the spirit and maxims of his saintly friend, he published a golden book entitled "The Spirit of Blessed Francis of Sales," wherein he discloses the thoughts and most ordinary actions of the Saint; declaring that the holy Bishop was great in his every word and action, because the purity of intention with which he acted enhanced the value of the least of his acts.

It was he who gave that celebrated answer to Cardinal Richelieu, an answer indicative both of sincere piety and of great presence of mind. The Cardinal was one who appreciated men of merit; hence whoever was distinguished for learning in his day was sure of his esteem, and generally partook of his benefits. Now, although the Bishop never quitted his own diocese, the fame of his virtues reached the court of France, and the Cardinal wrote to him, requiring his presence at Paris, that he might consult him on an affair of some importance. The Cardinal soon perceived that his merits deserved a more lucrative remuneration than fell to their lot, and accordingly remarked to him that as his bishopric scarcely yielded the means for respectable subsistence, he would procure a rich abbey for him, being sure that he would not only serve it well, but also make good use of the revenues. The Bishop replied that the best use he could make of them was to refuse them; he therefore thanked his Eminence for the intended favour, adding that the

revenues of his see, though slender, were sufficient for his maintenance, and that he was convinced plurality of benefices was not lawful when one sufficed for our subsistence.

The Cardinal, who possessed several benefices, admiring his detachment, told him that if ever he were Pope he would canonize him. To which the Bishop promptly replied: "In that case, my lord, both you and I should obtain what we most wish for." An answer well worthy of the disciple of S. Francis of Sales.

As Camus was elected to the Bishopric of Belley, which joined the diocese of Geneva, he requested the holy prelate to perform the ceremony of his consecration. Although Camus had not then acquired the reputation which he afterwards possessed, he was sufficiently well-known to induce Francis to accede to his request. He therefore answered him as follows: "By all means come, dear brother, that by my ministry you may be adorned with the noble character of evangelical priesthood. In a certain sense it is most true, though flesh and blood cannot understand it, that we shall thus contract a spiritual affinity which will not be broken by death; it will endure eternally, and in consequence of it my soul will have a real relationship of paternity, affiliation, and fraternity with yours. God knows how willingly I would go to the end of the world to place a mitre on your head, and I should be jealous if another were to deprive me of this honour."

The Saint set out for Belley, and performed the august function in the cathedral dedicated to St. John Baptist.

Soon after the Saint's return to Annecy the new

Bishop went to thank him; and as the proximity of their dioceses enabled them to exchange visits at least once a year, they spent this time in reciprocally animating each other to renewed zeal, rather than in allowing themselves a little repose after their labours. Their intercourse was mutually familiar, though by no means devoid of respect. As it may prove both useful and agreeable to the pious reader, I will here give some details of their conferences, though they took place at different times.

In the first visit the Bishop of Belley told our Saint that he believed himself bound, on the score of friendship, to admonish him of a serious fault which he had committed, and of which he seemed to have no scruple, although he was a man of so great virtue. To this Francis replied: "Not only now, but on every other occasion, I beg you will do me the favour to correct me whenever you see me fail." Then the Bishop of Belley told him that the fault consisted in having consecrated him too soon, and that although his own fault was equally great, inasmuch as he had consented thereto, he could not believe that the one fault excused the other. "Oh," then," said the saint, "there is something still worse in the case; I fear Almighty God will never forgive me this sin seeing that I have no contrition for it. However it must depend on you to justify me on the score of this pretended fault, by continuing to go on as you have begun, and by studying to discharge faithfully all the duties of your episcopal charge." Hereupon the Saint took occasion to discourse with him on the duties of a bishop, explaining how he must ever be on the watch to remove



disorders from his diocese, must visit his flock, go in search of his stray sheep, support the weak, encourage the pusillanimous, and other similar things; sentiments well deserving the consideration of a bishop, as well as of all those who are entrusted with the care of souls. He recommended him always to have some trustworthy person near him, to whom he could open his heart; to have a good library of spiritual works, amongst which the works of Louis of Granada should rank next to the Breviary; he mentioned the works of Stella, Bellintani, Costero, the Confessions of St. Augustine, the Letters of S. Jerome, &c. These were recommended for his own special profit; but as helps to his government it was desirable that he should read S. Bernard, the Pastoral of S. Gregory, the *Stimulus Pastorum* of the Archbishop of Braga, the decrees of the Church of Milan, and the Life of S. Charles. He recommended particular devotion to the Guardian Angel of the Diocese, and to the titular saint of the cathedral. Above all, he exhorted him to preach, saying that this was a Bishop's indispensable duty; admonishing him however not to preach with a view to success in the art of preaching, but because God wills it; the plain unadorned discourses of a bishop often being of more real use than the laboured eloquence of other preachers; and he concluded his remarks with the words of S. Paul to Titus, which comprise all the duties and perfection of a bishop.

Francis perceived that the Bishop of Belley possessed the qualifications requisite for a distinguished preacher; he exhorted him therefore to devote himself to the task of dispensing the bread of the divine word amongst his people. He invariably reminded

bishops that this was one of the special obligations of their office ; and he used to say that consecration imparted to them a particular grace, to enable them to succeed in this ministry. He often discussed with the Bishop of Belley the best method of preaching the Gospel. He taught him how to make use of the Fathers, the Councils, and profane historians, the manner of applying similitudes taken from nature, (a point in which our Saint excelled, as may be seen in his works,) and the order to be observed in a discourse. He next alluded to the various interpretations of Scripture, and their proper application, and gave some rules for voice and gesture. But above all he impressed on him this maxim, that a good life was the chief disposition for giving efficacy to his preaching ; saying that whoever would reform others must himself be of irreprehensible life. That it is not sufficient for a preacher to be exempt from grievous sin ; he must also studiously shun venial transgressions, and whatever savours of levity, vanity or imperfection ; that on this account he should avoid the society of seculars, where the least exceptionable conversation turns at last on profane topics, and seldom ends without some free or licentious expressions, which suggest feelings contrary to those of the Gospel : "For," said he, "how is it likely that they can benefit by such things, whose office calls them to solitude ? Or why should they frequent company which usually dissipates the mind and leads to attachments, if to nothing worse ? He is not fit to preach penance who gives himself up to diversion ; nor to declaim against superfluity whilst his own is evident to every one. The people look on those

men as preachers who, by the ascendancy they have gained over their passions, know how to control them; whereas those who, having their hearts full of the things of this world, contrive to shew them as being full of the love of God, are merely actors. Hence we may always expect seculars to say of such preachers, that their lives do not correspond with their words; they know virtue without practising it, and by their conduct profane the Gospel which they preach." He further added that preachers ought not to resort to that worldly eloquence which consists in introducing antitheses, and in certain far-stretched interpretations of Scripture, which serve no other purpose but to shew off the preacher's subtle wit; that they ought to preach with a simplicity devoid of artifice; with words of fire, by all means, but without screaming, and without contortions of the figure; to propose solid truths which both instruct and arouse those who hear them, not such pieces of sublimity as are admired just because they are not understood; and he thus concluded, "A sermon is excellent when the audience quits the church in silence, and when, instead of praising the preacher, they think of the necessity they are under of changing their mode of life."

The Bishop of Belley adhered to this style, though on one occasion he happened to deviate from it in presence of Francis. He was requested to preach at the Visitation Convent, when his eloquence turned upon the sanctity of the nuns, of the example they gave, and of their charity towards the poor. Not that he had the slightest intention of flattering them: on the contrary, he only spoke the real sentiments of his heart, well knowing that generous

minds were stimulated by commendation as well as by exhortation, so that his object was to encourage them to persevere by rendering justice to their merits; perhaps too, he partly intended to honour their holy Founder. The sermon gave great satisfaction, and was highly applauded by those who heard it: Francis was the only one who said not a word. Camus waited in expectation of his opinion, but as he still remained silent, he ventured to ask him what he thought of it. The answer was, that everybody seemed pleased and satisfied, with one exception. On being asked to name the individual, he candidly owned that it was himself, adding, that as they had agreed together not to avail themselves of the chair of truth to flatter vanity, nor to mingle the praise of creatures with the divine word, (because this produces the most pernicious effects,) he had not expected such a discourse from his friend; that praise ruins virtue instead of sustaining it; hence holy Scripture admonishes us to praise no man in his lifetime, which, as S. Maximus of Turin explains it, means that praise is only to be conferred on a man when he is dead, when there is no longer room for suspicion that the praise proceeds from flattery, and when it can no longer produce self-complacency or nourish pride. That as he had forgotten this compact, he had not given pleasure to this one individual.

The Bishop was grateful for this admonition, and having made a resolution to follow such excellent advice, was most anxious for an opportunity of convincing the Saint of his good purpose. And so it fell out, for a few days later he was entreated to

give a sermon to the nuns of S. Clare, to which Francis was likewise invited. Fame had proclaimed the eloquence which graced the previous sermon, and attracted a vast concourse of people, who expected a most flowery discourse; but Camus depicted in such vivid terms the austerity of the Gospel, the necessity of reducing it to practice in order to salvation, and the justice of God, which rigorously punishes the least imperfections, that his hearers were astounded, and went away without saying a word. As may be supposed, the preacher received no applause.

As soon as the sermon was over he met the Saint, and asked him whether the individual who was dissatisfied with his former sermon was better pleased with this. Francis answered with a smile that he was delighted with it, and conjured him always to preach with the same solidity, adding, "Where can we proclaim to men those truths which it is our duty to teach them, unless it be from the pulpit?"

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## CHAPTER XXI.

### CONTINUATION OF THE SAME SUBJECT.

ABOUT a year had elapsed since the Duke of Savoy had offered the Abbey of Ripaille, vacant by the death of Thomas Pobel, Bishop of S. Paul, to our Saint; but he, not deeming it allowable to possess more than one benefice, had refused it, humbly soliciting his Highness to make it over to the Carthusian monks. The Duke consented, and Francis had the consolation of seeing an additional monas-

tery of Carthusians in his diocese. When the Bishop of Belley paid him his next visit, he proposed to call on his new guests, and accordingly the two set out together.

The famous monastery of Ripaille was founded by Amadeus VIII., the first Duke of Savoy, who withdrew thither with twenty knights of S. Maurice, after having, in order to enjoy peace of heart, resigned his states to his son, and thither did he again return, when with so much piety he renounced the pontifical tiara, in order to restore peace to the Church. The monastery is situated on the Lake of Geneva, in the midst of delightful scenery, and of all that can render solitude pleasing. On entering it, the two prelates met with many objects calling for observation. They praised the solitaries, who, disengaged from the world, live like angels upon earth, wholly occupied in meditating on eternal truths; unknowing, and unknown to, the world, they pass a tranquil life, with God for the sole witness of their actions, and their own conscience for their monitor. Envyng such happiness, they interrupted their reflections to read the inscriptions placed over the cell doors. The two following seem to have elicited the chief remarks: "Hæc requies mea in sæculum sæculi;" "Tu mihi curarum requies, tu nocte vel atra Lumen, et in solis tu mihi turba locis." "This is my resting-place for ever and ever." "Thou art my rest from cares, Thou art my light in the darkness of night, and in solitude Thou art a host to me."

Wondering what interpretation to put on these two verses, they concluded that they were meant to refer to Jesus, who, having been born in the night-

time, put an end to our sorrows, and enlightened our darkness, Who alone is able to fill our hearts, and Who in our solitude holds the place of all things to us. They then visited the Superior, having been unwilling to disturb his recollection even during the brief interval they were in the monastery. They afterwards retired to a country house, where a gentleman was leading a retired life, in the midst of rural and innocent enjoyments. In the evening they repaired to a small hamlet; and the Saint entering the Church to pray, a report was soon spread of the arrival of two prelates; whereupon many people flocked to pay their respects. One of the inhabitants who was dangerously ill, sent a request that the holy man would go and hear his confession. Francis at once consented; and the invalid, having made his confession and received absolution with great devotion, asked him whether he thought he would die of that illness? Francis, supposing him to have a dread of death, was unwilling to increase this feeling, and therefore told him that persons sometimes recovered from more dangerous complaints; but at all events, that he was to place his confidence in God, and to submit himself affectionately to whatever might be His will. He was surprised to find the poor man afflicted at this answer; but after a brief silence, he frankly owned that so far from fearing death, he rather dreaded living longer: hereupon the Saint, imagining him to have some hidden source of grief which made life odious to him, encouraged him to open his heart freely to him, for that he was most anxious to comfort him: the sick man replied that he had no subject of affliction, that Almighty God had bestowed on him sufficient temporal blessings for his comfort.

able maintenance according to his station; that he was happy in his wife and children, by whom he was loved and respected: yet all these advantages had not prevented him from feeling the bitterness of a life in which we are exposed to many evils, and in which true blessings are seldom met with. As for himself, he protested that if God had not commanded us to remain here below, until He pleases to summon us away, he should long ago have ceased to live. He next spoke of the bliss which God has prepared for those who love Him in terms so affectionate, and so vividly expressed the holy impatience with which he longed to possess the one true and only Good, which alone can satiate the desires of the human heart, that the Saint was exceedingly edified. He admired the way in which our Lord communicates Himself to simple souls, feeling convinced that our Lord Himself had taken care to instruct this good man. Whilst they were thus discoursing, he lost his sight, and his voice began to fail: Extreme Unction was administered, after which he thanked the holy prelate, and calmly expired, dying the death of the just.

So sweet a death drew tears from the eyes of Francis, who took occasion to address a few words to those who stood by, on the singular graces which the Lord bestows on those who serve Him faithfully; and on being reconducted to his lodging, where the Bishop of Belley was awaiting him, he related the whole circumstance to him, adding many remarks worthy of his piety. He said, "The Holy Ghost is a great master, who instructs the mind, at the same time that He fortifies the heart: the meanest rank, and the most neglected education, present no ob-



stacle to Him: He breathes where He will; and when He pleases, He replenishes even the most simple souls with such light, as could not be acquired by the speculations of the greatest." They then discoursed on the impression which grace makes on the heart, and on the almost necessary union there is between a good life and a holy death. People of the world, when brought to the point of death, are often miserable at the idea of losing the goods which they possess, and at the prospect of the evils which await them. "Then," said he, "there no longer remain for them glory, pleasures, fortune or distinction: all disappears at that moment; and in proportion as death approaches, fears are redoubled, on account of the fearful remembrance of their misdeeds, and the terrible image of eternity and of divine justice. Behold the state to which those are inevitably reduced, who have been unmindful of God and of their duty during life. The greatest princes and conquerors *must* some day reach this dreadful moment, with no other advantage than that of being praised where they are not, and tormented where they are, as the great S. Augustine remarks: or they may perhaps be admired in after ages, in the same way as we admire fine statues in a gallery; which are insensible to the admiration they excite, and only afford a pleasure to the spectator, of which they themselves are utterly unconscious."

Such was the conversation of the two prelates, who on their return to Annecy, one day allowed themselves the innocent recreation of a sail on the lake. As they were talking together on matters connected with their dioceses, the boatman, wishing to make some remark to Francis, gave him no other

title than Father. The Bishop of Belley whispered to him that this expression was too familiar, and that he ought to call him my Lord. "No, no," quickly interposed the holy prelate, "always call me Father; this qualification suits me much better than my Lord." Then turning to the Bishop of Belley, he quoted the words of the gospel, "The kings of this earth lord it, but as for ye, do not so;" adding, that his poor people called him father, because he loved them as if they were his children; and as such, he would gladly place and nourish them at his table: that the name of father was far dearer to him than that of my Lord, and all those titles of most illustrious and most reverend, with which many sought to tickle his ears: and hence too, he loved to live amidst the people, to visit and console them, and in a word, to be a father to them. He used to say that he rejoiced in this spiritual affinity with his poor diocesans, sharing with them the care of those innocent children, who were so many little angels.

When the Bishop of Belley heard of the death of the Countess of Sales, (our Saint's mother,) he hastened to Annecy to console him; and discoursing as usual on various pious topics, Cardinal Bellarmine happened to be mentioned. It was known that he had been made Cardinal against his will, and that Paul V. had afterwards named him to the Archbishopric of Capua. The Bishop of Belley added that the Cardinal immediately prepared to set out for his diocese; and seeing that the Pope wished to detain him, he entreated permission to retire to his residence, in order to fulfil his duties towards the people committed to his care; adding that he could not conceive his presence to be necessary at Rome, whereas his

episcopal title certainly obliged him to reside at Capua: His Holiness offered to dispense him from residence, but the Cardinal replied that such a dispensation would at once shew that he did not believe what he had spent so many years in teaching, namely, that the residence of bishops is of divine obligation. In fact, he was so thoroughly convinced of this, that on no other terms would he consent to remain in Rome, than that of renouncing the Archbishopric. Francis replied that he was of the same way of thinking; for as a bishop is a pastor of souls, he is bound to watch over his flock, and not abandon the care of it to others, who, however zealous and pious they may be, can never do them the same good as himself: nor did his practice differ from his opinion.

Such was the nature of the intimacy between these two great prelates; and if proximity of dioceses facilitated their intercourse, their own satisfaction was not the only advantage resulting therefrom: all was common between them; the interests of the one were the interests of the other. The Bishop of Belley clearly demonstrated this, when assisting at the States-General of France, he spoke quite as earnestly on behalf of the Diocese of Geneva, as he did on behalf of his own. The Saint had requested him to do so, telling him that he should send no one to plead the cause of his diocese, convinced that his friend would look upon it as his own.

## CHAPTER XXII.

HE PASSES THROUGH GENEVA TO GEX, WHERE HE RESTORES SOME PARISHES.—HE IS CALUMNIATED TO HIS SOVEREIGN.

No sooner had Francis returned to Annecy after consecrating the Bishop of Belley, than he received an order from the king of France to proceed to the territory of Gex, to meet the Baron de Luz, and concert measures with him for the advantage of religion. His zeal, ever eager to seize any opportunity of promoting the glory of God, paid no regard to the inconveniences of season or roads; therefore, as soon as he could collect a dozen persons whom he deemed essential to his purpose, he immediately set out. There were but two passages open to him, in order to effect an entrance into Gex: he must either cross the bridge of Geneva, or the Rhone, both equally difficult; for recent inundations had rendered the Rhone so rapid, that it seemed impossible to traverse it, the most venturesome declaring that to attempt it would be to expose oneself to manifest danger: in fact, on arriving at the banks, he perceived that his companions were so terrified, that he would not by his example oblige them to cross it. It was scarcely less dangerous to pass through Geneva, which must be done before they could reach the bridge. The Saint was known there; the hatred of the ministers and the people could not have been more inveterate than it was, and to make his appearance under the plea of going to confer with the Baron di Luz, ac-

accompanied as he was by such a retinue, would raise the suspicions of the Genevese; in which case, detention was the least evil he might look for, whilst assassination was by no means improbable. Every one knows what a rash zeal is capable of, especially in republics, where all take part in the government, and where all claim a right to interfere in public affairs.

In this dilemma, the Saint looked at his followers and said, "We must have recourse to our Lord, that He may inspire us what to do, and which of the two expedients will be best." Having said this, he decided on celebrating Holy Mass, adding, "since the Genevese will not come and hear Mass, let us take them one ready said." Whilst at the altar, he remained for some time with his eyes fixed on the Sacred Host after the consecration, and felt himself impelled to pass through Geneva: what was yet more remarkable, some of his suite who differed with him in opinion, and who, the evening before, had done their best to dissuade him from his purpose, now became so courageous as to be willing to follow him. Francis attributed this change to a miracle, and taking advantage of their good-will, immediately set out on the road to Geneva.

Arriving at the gate upon the bridge, which ought to have been closed, as it was then the hour for public service, the sentinels were informed that a Bishop with a large retinue were approaching; hence, when the officer in command enquired the name in order to register it, as was customary, Faure, the Vicar-General, who rode first, boldly answered, "the Bishop of the diocese." The officer paid no attention to the name, and Francis and his suite passed through the city,

towards the gate leading to Gex, situated at the other extremity. But finding it closed, as the sermon was already begun, he was obliged to enter an inn, known by the name of the White Cross, and there wait till the gate could be opened. Confidence in God supported him, for although his companions were trembling at the danger they were in, he was undismayed and tranquil; their fear, however, was not groundless, for the Saint was known in Geneva, and even his dress betrayed his episcopal rank. After the sermon, the gates were opened, and he sallied forth from his rebellious city, (of which he was notwithstanding the true Pastor,) and pursued his way to Gex unmolested. On his arrival, the Baron admired his zeal, but remonstrated with him for thus exposing himself to a danger which would have alarmed even himself. The Saint replied that he had foreseen it all, and that his companions, more prudent than himself, had warned him of it; "But what could they do to me?" said the holy man, "kill me? My death would be of no service to their republic. Detain me? I would not on that account have renounced my purpose. I put my confidence in God, and He has delivered me out of their hands: a little confidence can accomplish wonders. I passed boldly onwards, because my work referred to His greater glory; and it is useless to fear for what is past: on the contrary, let us thank God, and do yet more."

On the other side, the people of Geneva were astounded when they learned from the Registrar that the Bishop of Geneva had passed through their city; more especially when, on applying for information to the inn-keeper, they found that the pre-

late, after a halt of two hours, had proceeded on his route. If the officer at the bridge had been puzzled by the response given to his challenge, viz. "The Bishop of the Diocese," the name was no enigma to his fellow citizens. His generous courage was extolled, but that he might not escape recognition another time, this notice was inserted in the register: "Watch for his return." Some of the more bigoted were enraged at having lost so valuable a prey; and to give the world a proof of their good will, they actually printed books, bearing on the last page these same words: "Watch for his return." But they might have saved themselves the trouble; so bold a stroke was only to be made once.

The Saint laboured in the territory of Gex with his usual zeal, preaching and arguing, to the terror of the ministers, even of those of Geneva. He again challenged them to a public discussion, on very reasonable terms, sending them a promise in his own handwriting, which only served to increase their confusion, and draw honour on the Catholic Church. They sought out a few far-fetched excuses: viz. that they were in dread of the Flemish arms, and that they would have nothing to do with the Jesuits. They said this because Father Bonvard, Rector of the College of Besançon, happened to be then with the Saint. The two might well laugh at the cowardice of the ministers. Francis however held some conferences with those of the district; convincing several, and effecting numerous conversions, as we learn from the following extract from a letter written at this time: "The affairs of religion, which are daily multiplying, detain me longer

in this part of the country than I had expected. Yesterday the Catholic faith was restored in Divonne, a large village, and there is every appearance that the ensuing days will give us the same thing to do in other places: in addition to this, we preach to and converse with some stray souls. I look at these poor wanderers, converse with them, and consider their blindness, and then, O my God! how beautiful does our holy faith appear to me. I could die of love for it. Truly it is my duty to preserve, and diligently treasure up in my heart this precious gift which God has bestowed upon me."

The hope expressed in this letter was not futile. He did not quit Gex till he had re-established the Catholic faith in eight parishes previously occupied by heretics; and although this did not fully satisfy his insatiable zeal, he returned highly gratified to Annecy, crossing the Rhone, which could then be done without danger.

These unceasing fatigues brought on a violent fever, which confined him for several days; but it was a less heavy trial to him than the calumnies with which certain parties endeavoured to undermine him in the good opinion of his sovereign. They persuaded the Duke of Savoy that the excursion to Gex had been a mere pretext, and that in reality his intercourse with the Baron de Luz had no other object than that of advancing the projects of the French Court with a view to the possession of the city of Geneva;—that the Baron had been sent thither expressly for this purpose; that it was for this only, that his most Christian Majesty testified so much esteem for Francis, and made him so many liberal



offers;—that for this the Bishop had passed through Geneva, where he spent two hours in consultation with the authorities, (the city gates being closed all the time,) and that no doubt the Genevese would be willing to surrender themselves to the king, in order to cut off all chance of His Highness ever regaining possession of the city. A thousand other inventions were added, to give plausibility to the insinuation. Princes are naturally suspicious, especially when affairs of this nature are in question: the Duke gave credit to the falsehood, and conceived some displeasure against the Saint, whom he had so much loved and honoured. In effect the whole family of Sales were held as little less than rebels.

The Saint's comportment on this occasion may be inferred from one of his letters to the Baroness de Chantal, in which he writes thus: "On my arrival I found that a serious calumny had been raised, to ruin me in the estimation of my Prince, who has given me so many proofs of his love. I now await the issue, hoping that by the aid of God this storm may soon pass over; but though I call it a storm, do not imagine that it disturbs me, any more than the veriest trifle would do; for there is not the slightest ground for suspicion against me. Those who know me know that I never will interfere with state affairs; and if on many occasions I display courage, it is but the effect of simplicity. I will not call it simplicity of spirit, (for with you I cannot deal equivocally) but rather simplicity of confidence. All this however is nothing, and I say it only to you."

In fact it came to nothing. The Duke was resolved to ascertain the truth of the matter, and see,

ing how little foundation there was for the calumny, laid aside his suspicions. What most contributed to this desirable result was a letter written to him by the Saint, in which he candidly stated the real cause of his passing through Geneva, and assured him that he had not exchanged a word with any of the inhabitants during the two hours he was detained there; that during his stay in Gex he had applied himself solely to affairs connected with his own profession, of which he might be assured by those who had accompanied him; that he had never so much as had an idea of doing anything opposed to the interests of His Highness, or contrary to the fidelity due to him; though he owned that, as far as discretion and respect permitted, he had noticed and informed him of whatever he deemed essential to his service; and that he might have done so oftener, if he had not thought it sufficient to inform the Marquis di Lanzo, whom he had begged to assure him that the rumour of the French designs on Geneva was a mere chimera, concocted by some in order to colour their own pretended services. He added that he had given other information to the marquis, which it was unnecessary to repeat. He intreated him to believe that his duty was indelibly engraven in his heart, together with an utter aversion to all negotiations of such a nature: that he had no reason to suspect him of anything tending to the prejudice of his crown, or of any interference in such things. No man could feel more reluctance to speak or think of them than himself; for his profession kept him so fully occupied as to leave him little leisure for discussing the interests of princes, nor did he think of them otherwise than

in the way of involuntary distractions. Finally, he intreated him to believe that neither he nor any of his family had a thought contrary to the obedience due to His Highness; and that he could not conceive how calumny should have dared to misrepresent him so strangely, seeing that he lived in a manner which, if it did not entitle him to his good graces, ought at least to shield him from displeasure. He trusted in God that (in consequence of his inviolable fidelity) his calumniators would never be able to deprive him of the honour of being the servant of His Highness, &c.

This letter produced the desired effect. The Duke was undeceived, and answered that he had never fully relied on what had been represented to his disadvantage; that he still desired his friendship, and assured him of his continued good will, having no longer any doubt of his fidelity.

About this time a report was spread that Francis was about to change his see, but he, ever equal to himself, shewed the same indifference in ceding his own, as he had before shewn decision in refusing to accept another: citing the words of the Apostle, that he who is tied to a wife ought not to seek a separation from her, and that he who has none, ought not to seek for one. He wrote thus to Madame de Chantal, but he afterwards ascertained that the report had been a mere fabrication.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

DEATH OF HIS MOTHER—HIS RESIGNATION—HIS SENTIMENTS ON THE DEATH OF KING HENRY OF FRANCE.

THE Saint was labouring on behalf of the souls committed to his pastoral solicitude, visiting the churches of Annecy, when his mother, a lady of great piety, having probably some foreboding of her approaching death, went over to see him, less for the sake of witnessing the solemnities of his visitation, (all of which she assiduously attended,) than for regulating the last days of her life, as she expressed herself. She passed about a month at Annecy, spending her time in various pious exercises, under the guidance of this holy director, to whom she made a general confession of her whole life with extraordinary contrition. Family affairs requiring her presence at her home, she quitted Annecy, declaring she had never before derived so much consolation from him who was her son according to nature, but her father according to grace. She was soon after assailed by a mortal illness. When informed of it, Francis, who loved her tenderly, was deeply afflicted, and besought the Lord to give him fortitude sufficient to assist her to her last breath, as he did with admirable courage. He set out for Sales immediately, deriving great consolation from the conviction that her life had always been conformable to the maxims of the gospel. When the Saint was writing to Madame de

Chantal, and giving an account of his mother's resignation at the death of her youngest daughter, he says: "When my mother received the news, she wept for some time, and then withdrew to pray, without so much as uttering a syllable of impatience, or betraying the least uneasiness; she blessed God a thousand times, and evinced the most perfect resignation to His will: I never saw so copious a flood of tears, accompanied by a more tranquil grief, springing from her tenderness of heart, but without a murmur; and yet this daughter was most dearly loved," &c.

The death of this virtuous lady was felt intensely by our Saint. We have already related how carefully she had nursed and trained him. He was the first-fruit with which God had blessed her marriage, and certainly he held the first place in her heart; for though she was affectionately attached to all her children, there was a tenderness in her affection for him which she did not feel for any of the rest. Francis on his side loved her with an ardent and respectful affection, so that no one in the world was dearer to him.

If a good death is always the fruit of a holy life—God never forsaking in their last moments those souls who are faithful to Him—the death of this lady could not have been otherwise than precious. The Saint himself thus writes on the subject to the Baroness de Chantal. "What sorrows in the various events of this life! But O God, must we not, my dearest daughter, in all things adore that Sovereign Providence whose counsels are holy, good, and ever amiable? Behold, He has been pleased to withdraw from this miserable world our

dear mother, to place her, as I hope, near Himself, and at His Right Hand. Let us confess, my beloved daughter, that God is good, and that His mercy is from eternity. His will is ever just, His decrees reasonable, His good pleasure ever holy, and His orders amiable. As for me, I own, dear daughter, that I sensibly feel this separation; acknowledging my weakness, after having confessed and given praise to the divine goodness. Nevertheless a calm though poignant feeling has prevailed; and I say, in imitation of holy David, I was silent, O my God, because it is Thou Who hast done it. Had it not been for this I surely should have cried out under such a blow. And yet it seems to me that I should not have dared to cry out, still less to express any displeasure, under the blows of this paternal Hand, which in truth, thanks to her goodness, I was taught to love from my earliest infancy.

“As you would perhaps like to know how this dear lady closed her days, I will give you a few of the details. I speak to you, as to the one to whom I have given the post which my dear mother has hitherto held in the Memento of my Mass; without however depriving you of the one you had; for I could not, so safely are you lodged in my heart; therefore you now hold the first and the last place there. This dear mother, then, came over to Annecy this winter, where she spent a month, and made a general review of her soul, renewing with great devotion her desires of living piously, and she left me, as she said, more happy than ever, having received such abundant consolations. This joy lasted till Ash-Wednesday, when she went to the parish church of

Thorens, confessed and communicated with great devotion, heard three masses, and assisted at Vespers. On retiring to rest for the night, she was unable to sleep, and desired her waiting-woman to read her three chapters of the Introduction to a Devout Life, to give her subject for pious thoughts, bidding the attendant put a mark in the book at the page where the Protestation begins, saying that she would make it in the morning. But God was satisfied with her good will, and ordained otherwise. She rose in the morning, and as they were combing her hair, she fell down as if dead. My poor brother, your son-in-law, was still asleep, but on being informed, hastened to her in his night dress, and raising her up, assisted her to walk a little, applying the stimulants and essences usual in such cases. She rallied so far as to be able to speak, though not intelligibly, her throat and tongue being too much affected. I was immediately informed of what had occurred, and set off in all haste to Sales, accompanied by a physician and an apothecary, who found her lethargic, and paralyzed in half the body. She was easily aroused from her lethargy, and in those moments shewed that she retained the full use of her senses, attempting to speak, and making signs with the hand that she could still use. She spoke quite to the purpose, both of God and of her own soul. Being blind, she groped about for her crucifix, and kissed it. She took nothing without first making the sign of the cross, and whilst yet in this state, the holy oils were administered.

“On my arrival, blind and drowsy as she was, she caressed me affectionately, saying: ‘This is my son and my father;’ then she kissed my hand and my

cheek. She remained in this state for two days and a half, after which it was impossible to arouse her, and on the first day of the month of March, she calmly and sweetly surrendered her soul to our Lord, her countenance retaining all its beauty, so that I never beheld a more beautiful corpse. For the rest, I may as well tell you that I had the courage to give her the last blessing, and close her eyes and mouth ; giving her the last kiss of peace at the very moment she expired. But when all was over, my heart swelled, and I wept more than I have ever done since I became an ecclesiastic ; nevertheless, my tears were mingled with nothing of spiritual bitterness, thank God."

The holy prelate assisted at her burial, rendering the last honours with far more of piety than pomp. Every one admired his submission to the orders of Divine Providence, for it was known how much he loved, and was beloved by this good mother. Although all her sons deserved her affection, as being men of great virtue, Francis certainly surpassed them all in piety, learning, dignity, and every sort of perfection, as the sun transcends the inferior planets of the firmament. It was thus that the Saint overcame, first calumny, and then grief.

Not long afterwards Francis received news of the death of King Henry IV. which occurred at Paris on the 14th of May, in the deplorable manner known to every one. This great king had a high esteem for the holy bishop, and honoured him with his friendship ; and it was from no want of will on his part that he did not load him with benefits ; for it had always been his wish to win him over to France, and he would have succeeded, if Francis



had been less faithful to his vocation. He deplored the death of this prince, and gave him due commendation, as we find from his letter to Des Hayes, in which he thus depicts his Christian sentiments: "Europe could not have witnessed a more lamentable death than that of the great Henry IV. But who is there that will not, like yourself, be struck by the inconstancy, vanity, and perfidy of worldly grandeur? A prince so illustrious by birth, so great in military valour, so great in his victories, so great in his triumphs, in his successes, in peace, in reputation, in a word in every sort of greatness, that any one might have declared that he and greatness were inseparable, and had sworn mutual fidelity, and that his brilliant life would have been terminated by a glorious death, amid the applause of the whole world. Surely it would seem that such a life should only have closed after the spoliation of the East, and the destruction of heresy and of the Ottoman empire. And yet this vast amount of greatness ends in a death that has nothing of greatness in it, excepting indeed that it was greatly awful, sorrowful, miserable, and deplorable; and he who did not die when surrounded by a thousand dangers, falls beneath the contemptible stroke of a knife directed by the hand of an obscure youth."

However, as the saints never make reflections on worldly events, without referring them to God, from whose Hand they proceed, listening to the instructions which this great Master gives us, at the very time that He afflicts us; after deploring the monarch's death, he exclaims, "O sons of men! how long will ye be hard of heart? Why do ye love vanity and seek after lies? All the greatness that

the world displays to us, is nothing but a phantom, vanity, and deceit. Why, at least, are we not wise after so much experience? Why do we not despise this world which is so frail? Why do we not dwell at the feet of that immortal King, who, by His death, triumphed over death; and whose death is more lovely than the life of all the kings who ever reigned on earth?" After these pious reflections, proceeding from his very heart, he resumes his commendation of the king in these terms: "The greatest honour and the greatest happiness of this Prince, consisted in rendering himself the son of the Church; rendering himself at the same time the father of France: by becoming one of the sheep of the Great Pastor, he became the pastor of many people; and by converting his heart to God, he converted the hearts of Catholics to himself. This is the one great blessing, which gives me reason to hope that the sweet and merciful providence of our Heavenly Father may imperceptibly have given at his last moment that contrition to his royal heart, which would secure for him a good death. And I beseech the Sovereign Goodness to shew mercy to him who was merciful to so many; to pardon him, who pardoned so many enemies; and to receive that reconciled soul to glory, which had received into favour numberless fellow-creatures, when once they acknowledged and renounced their transgressions against him." He concludes his letter by recapitulating the offers made to himself; sufficient, as he says, to have retained in his kingdom, not merely a poor priest, but even a great prelate;—the benevolence with which he had ever uniformly honoured him, and the favours which he had conferred; all of which urged

him to continue praying for the repose of his soul, and for the welfare of his posterity. Thus it is that Princes, truly great in life, are still more so after their death; which is always deplored, when their life has been directed to those ends for which God grants it to sovereigns.

Unquestionably, Henry received no praises less open to suspicion than those of Francis: others may have eulogised him from adulation or self-interest; but the soul of our Saint loved truth too well, and his heart was too devoid of self-interest to have bestowed commendations where he did not believe them to be deserved.

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## CHAPTER XXIV.

FOUNDATION OF THE VISITATION ORDER.—DEATH OF DEAGE.—MUNIFICENCE OF THE PRESIDENT FAVEL.—CHARITY OF THE SAINT, AND CONVERSIONS MADE BY HIM.

THE year 1610, which was so disastrous to France in the death of Henry IV., was as glorious to the Church in consequence of the foundation of a new order of nuns, bearing the title of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. This Institute, worthy fruit of the piety, prudence and charity of the holy prelate, was, in progress of time, looked upon as his most important work; and, in effect, it did cost him, both now and later, an infinity of application and anxiety: the profit, however, which it afforded to so many souls, and the advantages which the Church derived from it, well remunerated him for all his

former sufferings on account of it. Now, as God, when He had made man, took special care of him, incessantly overshadowing him with the shield of His Providence, so the Saint, when he had once set this congregation on foot, assiduously laboured to perfect it. Small indeed was its beginning, only three individuals entering into possession of the new house ; nevertheless, when we look at its rapid propagation, we are compelled to own that the mysterious dream of Mardochai may be applied to it ; that is to say, that a small spring swelled into a vast river, from whence many streams rushed forth, and the light and the sun rose up.

During this year too, to the great grief of our Saint, died Jean Deage, the tutor of his youth, frequently mentioned in the first book ; who had carefully watched over him in his travels, as well as on other occasions. Francis, who was endowed both by nature and virtue with a strong sense of gratitude, bestowed a Canonry of his Cathedral on Deage, whose piety and learning well deserved it ; and he entrusted him with several negotiations connected with the diocese : always having him with him, and shewing him the same respect as in his childhood. When he passed to a better life, Francis deplored his loss, and testified his love and grief by solemnizing his funeral in a manner proportioned to his merits.

About this time, the Saint experienced another affliction, tempered however with pleasure ; viz., separation from Antony Favre, one of his most intimate friends. He had hitherto resided at Annecy, in quality of President of the district of Geneva, but being raised by the Duke of Savoy to the dignity of

First President of the Supreme Senate of Savoy, he was obliged to go and reside at Chambéry: having no longer any need of his palace at Annecy, he made it over to the holy bishop, declaring this to be a small mark of his affection for him; and beseeching him to ask of Almighty God the means of doing still more for him. With heart-felt gratitude, Francis accepted the favour thus generously conferred; but it did not suffice to remove the regret occasioned by separation from such a friend; although he sincerely rejoiced at seeing a man of so great worth and integrity, placed at the head of so illustrious a senate. On removing the furniture from the house which he had hitherto inhabited, (which he and his predecessors had held on lease from the time of the expulsion from Geneva,) he would have his own bed put up in a little room no better than a closet, which looked more like a tomb than anything else; and as there were several other spare rooms in the house, his attendants were anxious to have him more commodiously lodged. "No," he replied, "I would much rather sleep here; for after pacing these grand halls and galleries during the day, as is customary with the great ones of the world, it will be well that I should find myself shut up between four walls, at night, reposing in a little narrow bed: it will help to remind me that I am but a poor miserable man. After acting as Bishop of Geneva throughout the day, I shall retire for the night as Francis of Sales." In this miniature chamber, he would have neither tapestry nor paintings; a little bed, one little table with a crucifix upon it, and one chair, constituted its furniture, filling rather than adorning it. Here, retired from the world, even more

in mind than in body, he frequently reflected on that last hour which makes all men equal, excepting on the score of merit; looking on himself as a criminal condemned to death, awaiting the execution of the sentence. Here he spent whole hours, engaged with God on the great affair of his salvation, and weeping bitterly over sins which his love for God represented to him as being intolerable.

In the course of this same year, he signalized his charity in behalf of a gentleman belonging to the Chablais. A heavy storm had ruined this gentleman's property. Relating his misfortune to Francis, he owned that he had not even the means of sowing his land for the next harvest. The Saint knew from another quarter that this account was correct; he therefore commissioned his own bailiff to till and sow the fields belonging to this gentleman, exactly as he would do if they belonged to himself, and entirely at his expense.

Peter Rigaud, who printed the first edition of the "Introduction to a Devout Life," made an immense profit by the sale of it; hence he deemed it right to testify his gratitude to the author, and went from Lyons to Annecy for the purpose. After expressing his best thanks, he begged his acceptance of a purse which he presented. The Saint repeatedly refused, saying that he wished for no other remuneration than that of knowing that his work had contributed to the good of souls; but the bookseller continuing to importune him, and a friend who was present urging him to accept the purse, telling him that he need not apply the money to usury, he at length accepted it. But no sooner had he taken

leave of Rigaud, than he sent for a pious young lady, poor though full of good will, who was desirous of entering the Visitation Order, but could not from want of the necessary funds. Being aware of this circumstance, the Saint enquired whether she still retained this desire, and being answered in the affirmative, he closely examined her vocation, and being satisfied on this point, he gave her the purse, telling her that it contained four hundred golden crowns; that she was to take it to the Mother de Chantal, and ask to be received amongst her daughters. The young lady's pious desire was gratified; and the Saint blessed the providence of the Lord, so strikingly exemplified on this occasion.

About this time his zeal and charity were exerted in withdrawing several erring souls from Geneva, from heresy, and also from destitution. Fifteen such cases were counted in the course of one year. Amongst these converts was a certain Amadeus Moyne, of Gex, whom the Saint apprenticed to a tailor of Annecy, that by learning the business he might be able to gain his livelihood. And he did the same for two others. He next won over to the faith a lady of Geneva and her three daughters; for whom he provided all that was necessary, till he was able to procure them a pension from His Highness. A captain, also belonging to Geneva, together with his whole family, were the next trophies of the Saint's zeal. The Duke gave this officer an appointment in the castle of Momigliano, and placed one of his daughters, who was particularly devout, in the convent of S. Clare.

But what most increased the renown of the holy man was the conversion of the lady of St. Sergue.

She was connected with the most illustrious families of Geneva, obstinately wedded to heresy, learned beyond the generality of her sex, and equal to the most distinguished of the Calvinist ministers, having devoted herself to controversial studies for quite two-and-twenty years. Going to Annecy, on a visit to some of her relatives, she was asked to go and pay her respects to the holy prelate. She rejected the proposal with great warmth, saying she would take good care to do no such thing, for it was universally believed by her fellow citizens that he was one of the most subtle magicians upon earth, on which account his very name was odious to her party. Her friends ridiculed such an idea, and importuned her to accompany them, but being unable to succeed, they asked her at least to go and hear him preach. To this she consented, though with some repugnance; and having seen and heard him once, she agreed to pay him a visit. Francis received her with his accustomed courtesy, and at the first opportunity introducing controversy, he maintained it with so much modesty, meekness, and civility, that the lady, who was very vehement in defending her opinions, owned that she had never before encountered such sweetness and gentleness. Many were the arguments she brought forward; nor did she omit the usual invectives and calumnies with which heretics load their disputations. But Francis, ever equal to himself, overlooking all the rest, confuted her arguments with the utmost clearness and solidity. At length, convinced by the answers of the Saint, and all but converted by his mildness, she began to inveigh against the celibacy of the clergy; saying it seemed strange



that, contrary to the example of the ancient Fathers, (men so dear to God,) the Church should oblige them to chastity, a thing evidently opposed to reason, and exposing them to sin. The man of God satisfied her also on this point, adducing the example of Enoch, Elias, the two Johns, the apostles, the practice of the primitive Church, the doctrines of the holy Councils, of the Fathers of the first ages, and above all, the counsel given by Christ and by S. Paul; adding that no one could believe that they would recommend an impossibility,—that they who look upon celibacy as an impossibility know not the efficacy of divine aid; for, as S. Augustine justly remarks, “if God exhorts us to promise it He helps us to accomplish it.” In fine, he brought forward so many and such solid reasons, derived even from experience, that the lady owned herself conquered, and listening to the voice of the charmer who charmed so wisely, she embraced the Catholic faith, defending it henceforth to the utmost of her power; and being converted to the Lord her God, she made her abjuration at the feet of the holy prelate. When the Genevese heard of the conversion of this lady, who had hitherto supported their sect so zealously, they were not ashamed to accuse the holy Bishop of magic; nor would they believe that his prayers had obtained her change of heart, but declared that his enchantments had fascinated her mind. The widow of Theodore Beza, who, from her intimacy with that heresiarch had learned how to employ abuse, sent her a most insulting letter, calling her the “sow returned to wallow in the mire.” But Madame de St. Sergue despised such contumely, which in reality did her honour, and persevered faithfully,

blessing God for having enlightened her by means of His servant.

Nicholas Bartolonio returned to the bosom of the Church about this time. He was an Italian, a religious and a priest, who, proving faithless to his vows, and following the impulses of lust, repaired to Geneva and there took a wife. God looked down upon him with an eye of mercy, and finding himself disturbed by a counter impulse, namely, remorse of conscience, he had recourse to the holy Bishop, in whom he found the heart of a father, for not only did the Saint procure from the Holy See a dispensation from his vows, but likewise a theological prebend in the cathedral of Sion, where he gave proofs of a sincere conversion.

Francis also converted to the faith the Baron de Mantelon, a gentleman of Lorraine. By accident rather than by design he began to read the "Introduction to a Devout Life," and although the work does not treat of controversy, it disturbed his mind, and he resolved to become acquainted with its author, no matter in what part of the world he was to be found. The contents of the volume convinced him of the piety and learning of the man who had composed it, and ascertaining that he was residing at Annecy, he set out at once in search of him. On his arrival the Saint received him with all possible civility, and after several discussions, resumed at intervals during six or seven weeks, he renounced his errors, and embraced the Catholic faith. Nothing less than the patience of our Saint could have submitted to his importunities: his visits were incessant, although he must have perceived how much Francis was pressed by the engagements peculiar to

his position. The Saint was highly gratified at seeing him return to his own country a good Catholic, though he had left it a thorough Calvinist.

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## CHAPTER XXV.

MEEKNESS OF THE SAINT—PROFESSION OF THE VISITATION NUNS—HIS LETTERS, AND SOME OF HIS GOOD WORKS DURING THE YEARS 1611 AND 1612.

THE holy prelate was requested to go this year and preach at Salins in Burgundy, and was actually making the necessary preparations and arrangements for setting out, when two deputies from that town arrived, and requested him to defer his journey. Not knowing how to account for their strange mission, they could only say that some distinguished personages had deemed it inexpedient to compel so illustrious a bishop to travel in the winter season, and undertake the laborious task of preaching the Lent for them, and therefore hoped he would excuse them if they declined the honour which he was willing to confer on their town; that the present embassy was extremely distasteful to them, feeling it to be uncourteous to him to have thus deferred sending this apology till the very last moment, but that they could not refuse those who put the charge upon them. The studied and artificial language of these messengers convinced the Saint that there was some mystery under their fine words; nevertheless he received them with courtesy, listened to them with patience, and dismissed them with civility, assuring them that this sudden change of arrangement was

by no means annoying to him, and that he was quite as well satisfied to remain at home and hear the preacher at Annecy as to go and preach the Lent himself at Salins. The composure of the Saint on this occasion was much admired: neither then nor later did he show the least resentment for an affront which, as he afterwards learnt, was occasioned by the rivalry of another, who by intrigue secured the pulpit of Salins, after it had been offered to Francis. The monasteries of Annecy, especially that of the Visitation, profited by the *contretemps*; for three times a week at least Francis went and dispensed the word of God to them.

In the course of this year the three first nuns of the Visitation having completed their term of novitiate, made their profession; and they had already received a few novices. This function was a source of much consolation to the good prelate, and to all good people, though the malevolent did not fail to decry the undertaking, comparing it to a fire made of straw, which quickly dies out for want of substance. The newly professed then went out to serve the sick, to the immense advantage of the poor. Soon afterwards, however, God was pleased to try the virtue of Francis by means of the long and dangerous illness of Mother de Chantal, for had she died, the new establishment must in all probability have been broken up. When his brother, the Lord de Thuille, made this remark to the Saint, he composedly answered, "God is a good artist, and can easily use awkward tools for the production of His most perfect works. He knows how from stones to raise up children to Abraham." The illness was a long one, but at last she recovered, con-

trary to the expectation of every one, and for many years served her Order and the Church to the benefit of numberless good souls.

Although the Saint had reason to complain of the Senate of Savoy (as the reader will remember), he did not refuse to go and preach the following Lent at Chambéry, at the request of the said Senate and the city. Not satisfied with this, he used his best influence with the Sovereign Pontiff for the foundation of a cathedral in Chambéry, a thing which the inhabitants most eagerly desired. In the letter which he addressed to Pope Paul V. on this subject, he adduced many strong arguments in favour of it; viz. that Chambéry, as the capital of Savoy, was the ordinary residence of the Supreme Senate, and of the Council of State; that it possessed a large college, and several churches, both of seculars and regulars, frequented by people from many nations; hence it was not only advisable, but even necessary, that it should be provided with a bishop, a vicar being unable to enforce the respect due to the ecclesiastical state, or to keep the clergy in good order. The Bishop of Grenoble, who is the Ordinary, was unable to check the disorders which occasionally arose, on account of the vast extent of his diocese, and of his numerous avocations in France; hence Savoy was neglected. Diversity of temporal princes also must occasion diversity of tastes, manners, and inclinations in the people, and sometimes even jealousies and suspicions; all of which prevented the bishop from duly providing for the necessities of his diocesans. The bishop was not looked upon as the common pastor of both sets of people; on the contrary, he was deemed partial towards those

amongst whom he regularly resided, and that this was especially the case whenever the two sovereigns happened to be at war with one another. Considering all these reasons, and many others, it was easy to understand how essential it was to erect Chambéry into a Bishop's See; and that the Duke and the Holy See (for the spiritual profit of the people,) and the Bishop of Grenoble (to be relieved from a part of his diocese which he was unable to attend to properly,) would gladly accede to the arrangement. Nothing should be spared for the promotion of so desirable a work, which would tend much to the advantage of religion.

His application had not the intended effect. Nevertheless it displays the universal zeal of S. Francis of Sales, ever intent on contributing to the glory of God, and the means of sanctifying souls. As our Lord recompenses not only our good deeds, but even our good desires, we may suppose that He rewarded His servant for this instance of his zeal, though it did not effect its desired object.

The Saint wrote about this time to His Holiness in behalf of the cause of the canonization of the Blessed Amadeus, Duke of Savoy, the number and splendour of whose miracles was then illustrating his name. As Amadeus was a native of his diocese, Francis said that his canonization would ensure more abundant fruits from his intercession, so necessary now that the diocese was surrounded by heresy. He adduced this, together with other reasons, to the Cardinals of the Congregation of Rites. For the further promotion of the affair he sent a memorial to His Highness, in which he proved the popular belief in the sanctity of Amadeus, conjuring the Duke to

interest himself in obtaining a blessing which he had so much at heart. He likewise wrote to the Prince Cardinal of Savoy, who had great influence at the court of Rome. Although the canonization was deferred, owing to the wars, the recommendation of our Saint had great weight with Innocent XI., of holy and glorious memory, who permitted the Office of the Blessed Amadeus to be used in all the states belonging to the House of Savoy, and also in the church belonging to the Savoyards at Rome.

Hearing that the beatification of the venerable servant of God, Juvenal Ancina, Bishop of Saluzzo, was intended, Francis forwarded an ample testimonial of the esteem in which he had held him. In it he declares, that of the many individuals eminent for learning and sanctity with whom he had been acquainted during the five or six months of his residence in Rome, the virtues of that prelate had most of all struck him, and still dwelt in his memory. Then, speaking of the manner in which Mgr. Ancina treated his diocesans, Francis says, that although he loved them all, and drew to himself the eye and heart of each one of them, yet, like a good pastor, he could call all his flock by name, and lead them into verdant pastures, and with hands full of salt entice them to follow his footsteps. In conclusion he stated that he had never known any one more copiously adorned with all those gifts which the apostle requires in evangelical labourers. We may easily infer the weight attached to such evidence, since it cannot be believed but that the praises which one Saint confers on another, must be exempt from anything like flattery.

Fame having loudly reported the eloquence and

advantage with which the holy prelate had announced the word of God in Chambéry, the canons of the church of Lyons entreated him to honour their city by preaching the next Lent there. He informed His Highness of this request, but receiving no answer, he inferred that the Duke would not consent to it. Therefore, not to give umbrage, or expose his sovereign to any importunity on the subject, he apologised to the canons, but declined the proposal, assuring them however that he would not fail to serve them on some more favourable occasion, and declaring that he was most anxious to gratify persons who held so meritorious a position in the house of God. They deplored the evils of the times, and the whole city was grieved at the disappointment, so highly did they revere the holy prelate, who in his humility said that it was not worth while to go to the expense which would be incurred if he went to preach for them. We may here remark that the people of Lyons always testified the highest respect for him; insomuch that two ladies of that city went all the way to Annecy to visit him, attracted by his "Introduction to a Devout Life," and by the glowing accounts which they heard of the Visitation nuns. Anxious to have a convent of the order in Lyons, they obtained the Saint's consent for a few of the nuns to go thither for this purpose. As is usual in matters referring to the divine glory, this project encountered many difficulties and contradictions, but the foundation was at last happily accomplished.

The Saint had now to repair to Bonneville, to adjust the differences existing between the Count de Saint-Alban, and one of the principal inhabitants of



Geneva, the two having chosen him for arbitrator. It is astonishing that the heretics, who detested him to the last degree, had nevertheless so high an opinion of his justice and integrity that they willingly submitted to his decisions. In this case, he examined the documents belonging to both parties, heard the pleaders, and investigated the arguments with his usual diligence, after which he pronounced judgment in a manner held to be so reasonable that both parties were perfectly satisfied.

He thence passed over into Gex, where his new vineyard gave him much to do. He was moreover requested by the nuns of the Annunciation to write in their favour to the Archduke, and request him to patronize them; for wishing to found a new monastery, they were hindered by the sons of this world, who under pretext of piety, actually combated piety. The Saint undertook their cause, and obtained from the Prince whatever the nuns wished, or he judged proper to solicit.

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## CHAPTER XXVI.

### HE GOES TO TURIN AND MILAN—HIS RETURN.

ALTHOUGH Francis was a very zealot on the point of episcopal residence, never quitting his diocese but for some important motive, he resolved this year to visit Turin, and from thence to proceed to Milan, for a very pious object. He was anxious to visit the tomb of S. Charles, then recently canonized by Paul V., for he had recommended the Mother de Chantal during her alarming illness to the interces-

sion of this Saint, and he ascribed her recovery to the application of some of his relics, far more than to the efficacy of medicinal remedies. Besides this, he wished to recommend to him the choice which he was intending to make of a successor. He wished also to consult Cardinal Frederic Borromeo, who was not only the cousin and the successor of S. Charles, but likewise walked in his footsteps, and was considered one of the first prelates of Italy. He flattered himself that by consulting so holy a man he would be secure from committing any mistake in an affair of such importance, where an error would be both dangerous and irremediable. The purport of his journey to Turin was to propose several measures for the welfare of his diocese for the approval of His Highness. He intended to have travelled on foot, but was dissuaded from so doing by his friends, on account of his increasing age, and because his constitution was already materially impaired by past toil and fatigue. He set out therefore on horseback, accompanied by some of the principal inhabitants of the city, yet so contriving the journey that prayer and silence was the ordinary condition of the pilgrims. They made meditation and recited prayers in common with great devotion. After crossing the Alps they duly arrived at Turin, where Francis was well received by the Duke, with whom he made several arrangements, particularly some in favour of the new Order of the Visitation, which, as is usually the case with great enterprises, encountered innumerable difficulties at first, some of which could not be surmounted without the interference of the prince. Francis had no trouble in engaging His Highness to protect the nascent con-

gregation, for he was evidently already very favourably disposed towards it.

The Saint had observed with regret that the college of Annecy was badly administered. The superiors were incompetent, and as neither their example nor virtue seconded their authority, the youths entrusted to them had by no means such an education as could be desired. Hence the rich were obliged to go through their studies in foreign countries, to their own great expense and inconvenience, and even to the danger both of their spiritual and temporal welfare; whilst those who were less rich were obliged to put up with what they could get at Annecy, and were thus deprived of much necessary instruction. Now, as the Saint was persuaded that good morals usually depend on the education imparted in early life, he endeavoured to improve the state of affairs in the college, and even offered it to the Fathers of the Society of Jesus, but they were unable to accept it, owing to the numerous foundations which they then had on hand. The Duke proposed his offering it to the Barnabite Fathers, who were very learned and religious men, and sons of S. Charles, at whose request he had introduced them into Vercelli and Turin; and as they were ever ready to assist the bishops, he thought they would suit his purpose very well. He recommended him to consult the Fathers then in Turin, and on his arrival at Milan to arrange the affair with the Father General, who in all probability would accept the foundation as a means of extending the Order beyond the Alps.

The Saint followed the advice of His Highness. He made acquaintance with the Barnabites of

Turin, and was much pleased with them; and afterwards at Milan applied to the Father General, who pledged his word to the foundation, provided he were certified of the consent of the bishop, the sovereign, and the city.

Francis likewise spoke to the Duke in behalf of some gentlemen who were accused of being accessory to the assassination of Bertolet, Secretary to the Duke de Nemours. They had been so relentlessly prosecuted that even when they succeeded in clearing themselves of the calumny, they were utterly ruined by the expenses to which they had been subjected. A heart less tender even than that of Francis would have been moved to compassion by the sight of so many families reduced to distress on this account, especially as he was convinced of the innocence of the accused. He had brought documents from Savoy clearly proving this, and laid them before the Duke, insisting on the point so zealously and effectually that they were liberated from prison. No influence short of his could have obtained this result, as the prosecution was pressed by persons of high authority at court, so that he was compelled to make great exertions in the cause, of which he was both advocate and solicitor.

Having arranged matters with the Duke, Francis departed for Milan, where he was received by the Governor Mendoza with the most delicate demonstrations of esteem and respect, which were only surpassed by those of the Cardinal Archbishop Borromeo. He found in the garrison here several Spanish gentlemen, with whom he had formerly been acquainted at Annecy, in the course of the late war, and they took pleasure in recounting his various

acts of goodness and sanctity, which then came to their knowledge. This was the more gratifying, because at that time the Spaniards and Savoyards were not on the most friendly terms, so true is it that virtue can extort commendation even from an enemy.

The day following his arrival he celebrated Mass at the tomb of S. Charles, where he spent many hours in prayer, quitting the spot with a bright countenance, and with cheeks bathed in tears, from which his friends inferred that something more than ordinary had taken place. He prayed most earnestly for those virtues which rendered S. Charles so illustrious whilst amongst us, particularly the grace of ruling his diocese, and the fortitude necessary to bear up against the contradictions which perpetually assailed him. Such was the opinion of the holy man's sanctity that an artist was placed in a convenient spot expressly to take his portrait whilst he was saying Mass, and it is said that this is the one which is still shown in the crypt of the church. He next repaired to the Archbishop, whose opinion he asked on several matters connected with the government of his diocese, imparting to him his idea of resigning his See to his brother the canon, or else of applying to Rome and to the Duke for his appointment as coadjutor, he himself being desirous of employing the remainder of his days in attending to his own perfection, and in composing the works which he had already planned. Fearing however lest flesh and blood should have any share in this arrangement, he would not enter upon it without the approval of this illustrious prelate. Whatever may have been his advice to Francis, the coadjutor-

ship became a fact some years later, though unsolicited, either directly or indirectly, by the Saint, as will be shown elsewhere. Hence those writers are mistaken who affirm that he had asked and arranged it previous to his return from Paris.

He likewise consulted the Barnabites, and under certain conditions settled the foundation of the college at Annecy. Being anxious to possess him as their guest, the fathers offered him the apartment to which S. Charles used to retire in their college of S. Barnabas. The offer was so gratifying to him (as enabling him to revive in his soul the memory and veneration of the Saint) that he joyfully accepted it, humbly declining the invitation of the Cardinal Archbishop.

After this brief sojourn at Milan, as the festival of the Holy Winding Sheet was approaching, and as he was one of the prelates appointed by the Prince to expose this precious relic to public veneration, he retraced his steps to Turin, where he arrived before the 4th of May. Passing through Novara, he visited the tomb of S. Bernard of Menthon, once Archdeacon of Aosta, and he persuaded the canons to preserve with greater veneration the ashes of this Saint, who was a native of his diocese, and whom he used to call the Alexius of the Alps. At Vercelli, he venerated the relics of the Blessed Amadeus, which are preserved there.

In Turin, whilst assisting at the function of displaying the Holy Winding Sheet, it would be impossible to describe the sentiments of devotion excited in his heart by the sight of the divine Blood, the visible sign of God's love for man. We will cite his own words, copied from one of his

letters to Madame de Chantal. "When I was at Turin one year that the Holy Winding Sheet was exposed to an immense concourse of people, I being one of the assisting prelates, it so happened that several drops of perspiration trickling down my face fell upon the sacred relic, whereupon my heart found vent in this desire: Ah, Saviour of my soul, would that Thou wert pleased to mingle my unworthy sweat with yours, and to dissolve my blood, my soul, and my affections in the merits of Thy Sacred Heart! But, my dearest mother, the Prince Cardinal was almost angry when he saw my sweat on the Sacred Winding Sheet of our Saviour. However, I ventured to tell him that our Lord was not so sensitive, seeing that He poured forth His sweat and blood expressly that they might commingle with ours, and thus impart to them the price of everlasting life. I recollect that I used to notice that when my little brothers were ill, my mother used to wrap them up in my father's shirt, and let them sleep in it, saying that the sweat of fathers was good for their children. On this holy day then, would that our heart could lie down on the Winding Sheet of our Divine Father, and there be enveloped in His sweat and in His Blood; and as the dead Body of our Saviour was buried in it, would that we too might be entombed in the sepulchre of a determined resolution of remaining ever dead to self, until we rise again to everlasting life." Although the Saint here alludes only to the perspiration occasioned by the warmth of the season, the truth is that tears of devotion likewise streamed down his cheeks; a circumstance which humility caused him to pass over in silence.

He afterwards had a private audience of the Duke, who desired to be fully informed by him of the progress of religion, and other things of interest connected with it; this wise Prince being most anxious that his subjects should profess the same religion as himself, for there is usually danger of want of fidelity, where there is misbelief, or variety of belief. In effect, what reliance can be placed on the ties which unite men amongst themselves, when once they have broken those which united them with God? Fatal experience has shewn that subjects are seldom true to their prince, when they are not united with him in faith.

Having taken leave of the court and of his friends, he recrossed the Mont Cenis, and took occasion to admire the dispositions of Divine Providence, which furnishes subsistence here to so many poor creatures, who, in order to be of service to travellers, remain exposed to all the inclemency of the seasons, and other inconveniences, though they might live more comfortably elsewhere.

He reached Annecy on the vigil of Pentecost, and was met by the principal inhabitants of the city. On the following day he celebrated Mass pontifically in his own church. The canons had caused a piece of machinery to be fixed in the roof of the church, which was painted in imitation of clouds, from whence, at the moment of consecration, a white dove was to descend between two flames, to represent the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles. The mechanical part of the arrangement succeeded admirably, but the dove, alarmed either by the vast concourse of the people, or by the music, after flying about the church a little, went and perched itself



upon the holy prelate's head, to the admiration of the spectators, in whom the sight gave rise to much devotion. No one ventured to touch or drive away the dove, which rested there quietly for a long time, and then flew off of her own accord.

Having mentioned this incident, we may as well add that something of the same sort, only still more striking, happened on the festival of our Blessed Lady's Nativity, when the Saint was solemnly celebrating Mass in the collegiate church. The function was about half over, when a white dove flew in at the window, and after fluttering about for some time, went and rested first on his shoulders and then in his bosom, and this in presence of all the people, he being at the time seated on his throne. It recalled to mind what had previously happened in the cathedral, and was construed by the spectators into an indication of their beloved prelate's sanctity. After Vespers he preached on the glories of Mary, and referring to the dove of the morning, he declared that the Blessed Virgin was the peerless dove, in whom there was no spot, and he gave utterance to his ideas in tones so soft and moving, that the hearers almost fancied themselves listening to the gentle cooing of a dove.

He conferred with the syndicate and counsellors of the city on the approaching arrival of the Barnabite Fathers, and as they were all satisfied that any arrangement of his could not be otherwise than advantageous to the common good, they gave their consent in writing. This, together with that of the Prince, was sent to the Fathers at Milan, who then selected three of their members for the new foundation. On their arrival at Annecy, they were put in posses-

sion of the college, the holy prelate himself delivering an address in honour of the Fathers, who at once began to teach philosophy, rhetoric, and moral theology, to the great benefit of the whole province. They likewise undertook the task of catechising in various churches; so that what before had only been done by the Saint himself in the church belonging to the Dominicans, was now continued there for the scholars, for men in the collegiate church, and for women in the church of St. John of God; an arrangement as consoling as it was useful to the people.

He founded a college at Thonon for the same Fathers, to whom he awarded the Priory of Contamines, and the church of S. Augustine, with the obligation of teaching the sciences. These foundations proved of the greatest utility, and by the credit they gained for the Fathers, were the means of introducing them into France, though not till some years later.

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## CHAPTER XXVII.

FRANCIS PUBLISHES HIS WORK ON THE LOVE OF GOD—  
HIS ANSWER TO THE EMPEROR—HE VISITS THE  
ARCHBISHOP OF LYONS.

THE holy prelate had long been intending to publish a work, the purport of which should be to teach the practice of the love of God, as he himself tells us in one of his letters to the Archbishop of Vienne. The vast occupations of his diocese did not leave him as much leisure as he desired for this pur-

pose, but seeing the progress in sanctity of his religious daughters, he resolved no longer to defer the task, and availing himself of every spare moment, especially in the morning and evening, he spent a good part of the year 1614 in composing it. There can be no doubt that he depicts himself in this work, clearly demonstrating to the world the manner in which he employed his few hours of liberty from external occupations. If in his "Philothea" he appears as an angel conducting young Tobias through the perilous road of life, in his "Love of God," he appears as a seraph shedding fire from the heavenly altar, that is to say, the fire of divine love in the hearts of the more perfect. So that the former may be compared to milk, for such as are too delicate for solid food, and the latter to the bread of the strong, for such as are able to digest substantial diet.

This book clearly discovers the light and wisdom of his mind, and the ardour of his heart; for no one could write so appropriately and so clearly who did not possess the science of divine love in a great degree. Its composition cost the Saint much, on account of the sublime questions therein mooted. The Bishop of Belley (who had it from the Saint himself) tells us that fourteen lines of his "Love of God" cost him the perusal of one thousand two hundred folio pages of various works; nor would this have sufficed if his heart had not also been replenished with such an ardour as could enkindle the souls of those who read the book.

We must not silently pass over the rage with which the powers of hell watched the Saint, whilst he was composing a work which was to be of so much

benefit to souls. One day, as he was seated in his study, he heard as it were the roaring of a bull just behind him. This at first surprised him, but he did not lay aside his pen till a few minutes later, when the noise becoming very loud, he rose from his little table to look about, and cause enquiries to be made as to the origin of the uproar. Nothing was found that could in any way account for it: there were no dogs, horses, or oxen anywhere about the house. Hence he concluded that the noise must be preternatural. On several other occasions he was disturbed by sounds resembling the roaring of wolves and the howling of dogs, when he was engaged in the composition of his "Love of God;" from which he understood that the devil, foreseeing the benefit which it would produce in souls, and enraged at being unable to prevent it, strove at least to distract and annoy its author.

As the work is in every one's hands, it would be useless to say much about it here. It will be sufficient to remark that, after a preface in which he states his motive for undertaking the work, he with incomparable modesty justifies his "Philothea," and also speaks of his "Standard of the Cross:" he then proceeds to show the natural inclination all men have to know and love God, and the graces with which God incites us to love Him, and the little fidelity with which we correspond thereunto. He next alludes to the coldness of the soul with regard to divine love, so easily relinquishing it for the love of creatures, and to the inconstancy of the human heart, which allows those very things which ought to lead us to God to withdraw us from Him. He then

draws the distinction between the love of complacency and the love of benevolence, and speaks of their effects. Passing on to prayer, which is one of the principal exercises of divine love, he shews the difference between meditation and contemplation; explains the effects which contemplation sometimes produces; treats of holy quiet, the wounds of love, raptures, extasies, union, and the death of the loving soul; explains the conformity which ought to exist between our will and the will of God, and the submission we should show to His good pleasure, adding various reflections on the great commandment of loving God, and shewing how jealous He is of our hearts. Finally, in the two last books he demonstrates how love perfects all other virtues, and how it can even make use of our passions for its own purposes; concluding the whole with advice how to advance in holy love, and summing up in these words: "O Eternal Love, my soul seeks Thee, and chooses Thee for ever. Oh come, O Holy Spirit, and inflame our hearts with Thy direction and Thy love. O love! O death! to die and to love; to die to all other love, to live only to that of Jesus, and not to die eternally, but to live in Thy holy love. O Saviour of our souls, let us eternally sing, Live Jesus! I love Jesus. Live Jesus whom I love! I love Jesus, Who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen. May these things, O Theotime, which by the grace and favour of charity are written to your charity, so abide in your heart, that charity may find in you the fruit of holy works, instead of the leaves of commendations. Amen."

The value of this book gives us reason to regret that many others, of which he had formed the

design, should have been lost to the world, in consequence of his (comparatively speaking) early death. We are mainly indebted to the Mother de Chantal for this one; she was perpetually urging him to devote every spare moment to it; hence, in a note which he wrote to her on the 11th of January, 1614, he tells her that he can no longer resist, and that, cold as he was, he would nevertheless write on the subject of divine love. There can be no doubt but that the Saint had her before his eyes when he undertook to raise his "Theotime" to so elevated a post.

Loud was the applause with which the world welcomed this book. The General of the Carthusians, after reading his "Philothea," advised him to write no more, lest the lustre of the first work should dim the brilliancy of its successors, but having read the "Theotime," he wrote again, entreating him to apply himself entirely to writing, the honour of God requiring this. The Fathers of the Society of Jesus thought this work might be compared with the writings of the Fathers, and the Doctors of the Sorbonne said that it might be quoted on an equality with the works of the four Doctors of the Church.

Those who wish for further opinions on the merits of this book may consult the approbations printed in the earlier editions of it. However, as there must always in this world be some who will see spots in the sun, the Bishop of Belley tells us that one day letters were brought to the Saint from a learned, zealous, and pious priest, informing him that some of those who are styled *sensual men* in holy Scripture had been ridiculing a few chapters of the "Theotime," maliciously and profanely miscon-

struing them ; he therefore advised him to change some things which might diminish the honour of the work, and also scandalize the weak, especially in the ninth and tenth chapters of the first book. The Saint was grateful for the advice, but aware that certain persons will misconstrue even Holy Writ, using it as a snare, as S. Austin observes, he did not judge it advisable to make the changes, merely remarking to the bishop that these persons take away with the left hand what they give with the right, and that one cannot make them comprehend that many things are said merely with a view to explain what would otherwise be unintelligible ; that if God were honoured he was satisfied, as he wished for no higher reputation than such as God was pleased to allow him for His glory ; adding that he cared little to please the children of this world, although for the love of God he wished not to displease the sons of light. Thus spoke our Saint. If as the Apostle says, all is pure to him who is pure of heart, so may we likewise say that those hearts must be sullied which can take scandal at sentiments so modestly expressed, and that they might with equal reason forbear to read some of the writings dictated by the Holy Ghost.

In the course of this year the Turks made sad inroads upon Hungary, insomuch that the whole of Germany became alarmed. Anxious to oppose an equal force to these formidable enemies of the Christian name, the emperor summoned all the princes of the empire to meet the following year at the Diet of Ratisbon, in order to concert measures for repelling the invaders, and indeed for expelling them entirely from Hungary. Letters were accordingly

forwarded to Francis Bishop of Geneva, who, notwithstanding the rebellion of 1535, was still considered the legitimate sovereign of that city, and still retained his rank as a prince of the empire.

The reader will perhaps find an interest in the account of the manner in which the Bishop of Geneva was in those days summoned to such an assembly, for though to us the formality may seem useless, it proves that the emperors intended to maintain all the rights of the Bishop, and his claims upon the city, whilst at the same time it demonstrates their disapproval of the rebellion. According to ancient custom a courier repaired to Geneva, and on reaching the episcopal palace requested an interview with the Bishop on the part of his Imperial Majesty. On being informed that the Bishop was residing at Annecy, he made a juridical act of this answer, and then repaired to the place where he was actually residing, and delivered the imperial missive. On receiving the Emperor's commands, Francis replied that he would most gladly appear in person, in proof of the obedience which he owed to his majesty, and would most willingly devote both time and labour to the enterprise, and pay just homage to the august presence of the Catholic emperor, if the heretics had not deprived him of his revenues when they drove his predecessor from the city; but that under existing circumstances he was unable to do more than to beseech the Almighty to bless the imperial designs, and to grant him those succours which give weight to the councils and intentions of princes, and this he would undoubtedly do in his prayers and sacrifices. In fact, this was all that the Saint could do, and we may



presume that the emperor expected no more, as he was well aware of the state of the Bishopric of Geneva.

In the course of the same year Francis paid a visit to the Archbishop of Lyons, who was anxious to found a convent of the Visitation in his archiepiscopal city. The Archbishop, accompanied by a noble retinue of gentlemen, went forth to meet the man of God, and conducted him with all due honour to his palace. He preached at Lyons on the festival of SS. Peter and Paul, and after spending a week there, and making the necessary arrangements, he returned to Annecy, to the great regret of the Archbishop, who called him the honour and crown of the prelacy, and was most desirous of enjoying his society in a more lengthened visit. He soon afterwards went to Sion, at the request of Hildebrand Jodoco, bishop elect of that city, who wished Francis to be one of the assistant prelates at his consecration. He asked this favour as much on account of the high opinion which he had of his sanctity, as on account of the vicinity of the two dioceses. On reaching Sion Francis was met by the dean of the cathedral, accompanied by several of the canons, and the principal inhabitants of the place. The dean, in the bishop's name, delivered an eloquent Latin speech in honour of Francis. On the day appointed for the ceremony, Francis entered the pulpit in cope and mitre, and gave a soul-stirring sermon on the dignity and authority of bishops. The people, who had never before heard a bishop preach, were enchanted by the eloquence, learning, and energy of the holy man, and began to give free vent to their admiration; even the women of the

lower classes, who had left their children at home, ran off to fetch them, and holding them aloft as best they could, bade them look at the holy Bishop of Geneva. A number of heretics were present at the ceremony, and could not withhold their praise. As they contrasted his modesty with the overbearing demeanour of their own ministers, they owned themselves compelled to esteem our holy religion. In fact many went to consult and argue with him, so that his time here, as elsewhere, was fully occupied, and he had the consolation of converting several. In the course of his sermon he spoke of the Apostolical succession in the Holy Roman Church, in consequence of which one of the principal inhabitants began a long conversation with him on this topic, and being one of those deputed by the province to accompany the Archbishop of Vienne and our Saint on their return to their respective residences, he continued to discourse on the subject as they rode along, when he remarked that his lordship had done what for many a long year no one would have ventured to do in Sion, namely, had touched upon controversy, a thing strictly forbidden to Catholic preachers, but that, considering the solemnities of the day, and the respect entertained for himself individually, no opposition had been offered to him. "What must be the case then," said he, "in so many towns and kingdoms, where these preachers are not only not allowed to preach, but are not even permitted to reside? What remedy is there to the many evils spread through various towns of France and Germany, where heresy not only triumphs, but is used for purposes of state policy? In such places heretics are secure, there is

nothing to disturb them, nor is there the least opening for their conversion.”

These remarks cut the holy prelate to the quick. He fully comprehended that the wounds inflicted on the Church by heresy must be incurable, so long as Catholic preachers are excluded from many countries, and that in so desperate a case some powerful remedy would be needed. After maturely weighing the subject, he devised expedients which, if carried into effect, would prove most advantageous to the Catholic faith, and proposed them to the Pope's nuncio at Turin. His nephew, Mgr. Charles Augustus, declares that he possessed them in the Saint's own handwriting, but did not think it advisable to print them.

In a short time after his return he sent four of his nuns to Lyons, to found the second house of the new institute, and this gave the Archbishop of Lyons an opportunity of visiting him in October of the following year. The Saint went out to meet him, accompanied by the chief people of the place. Being most anxious to receive so holy and distinguished a prelate with all due honour, Francis requested him to celebrate solemn Mass and preach on the Feast of All Saints, and the Archbishop complied, preaching likewise in the church of the Barnabite Fathers on another occasion. He looked upon Francis as a Saint, and although he was the Primate of France he used to call him his father, saying that he perceived many extraordinary and superhuman things in him.

No sooner had the Archbishop quitted Annecy to return to Lyons than calumniators began again to revive the former suspicions of the Duke, who

lower classes, who had left their children at home, ran off to fetch them, and holding them aloft as best they could, bade them look at the holy Bishop of Geneva. A number of heretics were present at the ceremony, and could not withhold their praise. As they contrasted his modesty with the overbearing demeanour of their own ministers, they owned themselves compelled to esteem our holy religion. In fact many went to consult and argue with him, so that his time here, as elsewhere, was fully occupied, and he had the consolation of converting several. In the course of his sermon he spoke of the Apostolical succession in the Holy Roman Church, in consequence of which one of the principal inhabitants began a long conversation with him on this topic, and being one of those deputed by the province to accompany the Archbishop of Vienne and our Saint on their return to their respective residences, he continued to discourse on the subject as they rode along, when he remarked that his lordship had done what for many a long year no one would have ventured to do in Sion, namely, had touched upon controversy, a thing strictly forbidden to Catholic preachers, but that, considering the solemnities of the day, and the respect entertained for himself individually, no opposition had been offered to him. "What must be the case then," said he, "in so many towns and kingdoms, where these preachers are not only not allowed to preach, but are not even permitted to reside? What remedy is there to the many evils spread through various towns of France and Germany, where heresy not only triumphs, but is used for purposes of state policy? In such places heretics are secure, there is

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No sooner had the Archbishop quitted Annecy to return to Lyons than calumniators began again to revive the former suspicions of the Duke, who

throughout his diocese. The Most Blessed Sacrament was exposed in several churches, and he strove by various acts of virtue to draw down the blessing of God on the troops of his prince. There was also a scarcity of provisions that year in Savoy, so that his charity had much difficulty in supplying the necessities of the poor. But nothing was a source of greater grief to him than the rupture between the Dukes of Savoy and Nemours, who at this time declared themselves enemies. The latter laid claim to the sovereignty of Geneva, whereas the Duke of Savoy would only agree to his holding it as a vassal. After a vain attempt at an amicable arrangement they appealed to arms. The conjuncture was favourable to the Duke of Nemours, because the Duke of Savoy was already attacked by the Spaniards and the Mantuans, and could not furnish the necessary aid to Savoy without weakening his forces in Piedmont, and exposing his states beyond the Alps to invasion. Availing himself of these circumstances, the Duke of Nemours hastily raised troops and made his appearance on the banks of the Rhone, in a manner which clearly showed that he meant to enforce his claims with a strong hand. It was feared that his first attack would be on Annecy, as being the chief, and indeed the only place in the territory which could accommodate his followers. In anticipation of this project, the inhabitants promptly put it in a state of defence, and it stood a siege of three days, during which Francis was the main hope of his people, telling them that this display of shields (as he styled the commotion) would vanish. Many of his friends advised him to withdraw, his presence increasing their alarm, because, as the enemy's

ranks were composed chiefly of heretics, it was feared that they would sacrifice him to their enmity. It was moreover suggested that the Duke of Nemours might make him feel the weight of his resentment, the attachment of the house of Sales to the Dukes of Savoy being well known. In fact, within the city walls his brother Louis of Sales was the soul of the garrison, and it was his military skill which defeated the tactics of the enemy. His friends added that this scourge had evidently fallen upon them in punishment of the little profit they had derived from his saintly instructions, and they concluded that it would be unreasonable for the innocent to be involved in the chastisement intended for the guilty.

But the Saint, thanking them for the affection which dictated their words, replied that they were fearful when there was no cause for fear; that he trusted God would not permit His enemies to seize on His inheritance, and profane His holy temple; that even if he wished to retire he would not do so, because to abandon his flock as soon as the wolf appears would be to play the part of a hireling and not that of a pastor; that a true pastor was bound to expose his life for his flock; that as the troops of the Duke of Nemours were composed chiefly of heretics, it was doubly his duty to remain in the city, and in case of defeat save the inhabitants from being deceived, and the churches from being profaned, and prevent the violence and desolation which usually follow war: that he was well convinced of the hatred which the heretics bore him, and of the consequences which might arise from his determination, but that nothing could be more

desirable than to shed one's blood in defence of the faith. On the other hand, they might well believe that our Lord would withdraw the scourge, if they would but turn to Him with their whole heart, and to exhort them to do this was another inducement for him to remain where he was; that his life was not more precious than that of many others, who exposed themselves to all the danger, and since he must lose it some day or other, he could not lose it more gloriously than in assisting his people. In fine, he concluded as follows: "With God's aid, I will ever attend to my office. When it rings Vespers I will go thither: when it is proper to attend to business I will attend to it. If the foe enters upon the assault for the purpose of injuring me, behold me in the hands of Divine Providence. But no, such will not be the case; of this I can assure you. The two princes will come to terms, and the contending parties will lay down their arms." These words were in fact a prophecy, whilst his whole conduct on this occasion did but verify a remark of Cardinal de Berulle, viz. that the equanimity of Francis was imperturbable.

The Duke of Nemours was checked by the Rhone long enough to mar the success of his schemes, as the Savoyards were thus enabled to arm themselves, and though, as we have said, he marched upon Annecy and laid siege to it, the Prince of Piedmont had had time to raise troops and cross the Alps, whereupon the Duke, being inferior in numbers, raised the siege and withdrew. The Prince entered Annecy, and knowing that the resolution and fidelity of the holy prelate had saved the city (for now more than ever he had made himself all to all,



transforming himself from the pastor always watchful, into the father who provides, or the captain who directs) he proceeded straight to the episcopal palace, where he embraced the man of God, and loaded him with demonstrations of esteem and affection. In the meantime, the Duke of Nemours had derived no advantage from the war, and had been deceived moreover in his expectations of assistance from the Spaniards in Burgundy. Being unable therefore to pay his forces, amongst whom desertions were frequent, and perceiving the superiority of the prince's troops, he relinquished his pretensions, and laid down his arms. This result was mainly owing to Louis of Sales, who was despatched by His Highness to Dôle, where he detected the schemes of the Spaniards, and was able to defeat them. Peace was therefore concluded, the interest of both parties requiring a cessation of hostilities, which weakened the strength of the one in Piedmont, and was no less disastrous to the other. A perfect reconciliation was effected, the prince recrossed the Alps into Italy, the Duke returned to Paris, and Francis was again free to resume his usual exercises.

Previous to the Prince of Piedmont's departure from Annecy, Francis availed himself of the favourable circumstance of his presence to press the reform of the monks of Savoy. He presented to him a memorial to this effect, suggesting the following remedial measures.

1. To separate the abbatial from the conventual revenues, so that each member might have his own separate share, in the same manner as in the abbeys of S. Victor and of S. Germain at Paris.

This plan would cut off all subject of dispute and scandal between the abbots and the religious.

2. To compel the religious to observe community life.

3. To ordain that superiors should be changed every three years.

4. To introduce a reform amongst the Benedictines, substituting the Feuillans for the Cistercians.

5. To bring back the Canons Regular to their duty, or else to assign revenues for increasing the number of Secular Canons in the collegiate establishments, especially in that of La Roche.

6. To break up the female communities in country localities, and transfer them into towns; to oblige them to accept a reform, and to observe the decrees of the Council of Trent.

7. To transmit these articles to the ambassador of His Highness at Rome, that he might procure from the Pope an authorization to the Bishops of Savoy, whereby they might enter upon the task.

The Prince approved of these suggestions, and promised the Saint to use his influence in furtherance of this desirable object, which was effected in the following year, to the advantage of the state, as well as of religion.

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## CHAPTER XXIX.

### FRANCIS PREACHES THE LENT AT GRENOBLE.

DAUPHINE was at this time governed in the king's name by Francis de Bona, Duke de Lesdiguières, who was considered the staunchest sup-

porter of the Calvinist party in France. He was as noble and successful a soldier as he was zealous in Calvinism, a man of strong mind, learned, and attached to his sect. Henry IV. was obliged to grant to the Calvinists, by the edict of Nantes, several privileges, which rendered them so insolent that in the very heart of his kingdom they established themselves into a sort of independent republic. As state interests were sometimes incompatible with theirs, they contrived always to have some brave leaders on their side, even raising handsome salaries for this purpose; and Lesdiguières was one of the number. About this time a member of the Parliament of Grenoble fancied that he perceived in the duke some slight inclination to the Catholic faith, and felt certain that no one would be more likely to foster such a sentiment than Francis of Sales. He consulted other members of the Parliament, who decided that the holy man should be requested to preach the next Lent in their city. This plausible pretext covered the real motive of the Saint's journey, whilst it would give him full time to attempt the conversion of the duke. The formal request was dispatched, and favourably received by Francis, who however answered that he was unable to quit the dominions of his sovereign without his consent, and that there were reasons which must prevent him from applying for such a permission. The parliament however, not discouraged, sent two councillors to present their request to the Duke, who immediately acceded to it. The Saint, persuaded of the great advantages which would accrue to the Church from the conversion of this celebrated man, deemed the hope of effecting it a sufficient motive to justify a

dispensation from residence, and accordingly applied to the Pope, who willingly granted it, whereupon Francis prepared himself to enter the grand arena, in which he met with a glory commensurate with his toil.

The parliament sent two of its councillors to Annecy, to accompany him on his journey, and on reaching Grenoble he was received with extraordinary demonstrations of honour. Francis on his side preached with incomparable zeal, whilst many instances of his virtue gave efficacy to his words.

He had foreseen that the mixed presence of Calvinists and Catholics would oblige him to introduce controversy, in case any of the former should assist at his sermons, as they probably would, and he warned his audience of this in his first discourse, adding that, having entered the chair of truth, no consideration should deter him from proclaiming it with all possible purity and sincerity; that if he should unhappily do otherwise, he prayed that his tongue might wither and cleave to his jaws, and that as one dumb he might be unable to utter a word. This statement, forcibly and devoutly pronounced, seemed to electrify the audience, and being seconded by the Spirit of God, disposed both Catholics and heretics to flock to his sermons, seek interviews with him, and admire his sanctity. Notwithstanding his endeavours to conceal the latter, it shone forth in his every word and action, and, joined to his far-spread fame, made the people most assiduous at his sermons, to the benefit of numberless unbelievers and sinners; and as at this time the number of heretics at Grenoble about equalled that of the Catholics, conversions became so frequent

that the Huguenot ministers forbade under heavy penalties any of their people to attend the sermons of the Bishop of Geneva. The prohibition did not produce the intended effect; man naturally longs for that which he is not allowed to have, and such was the case in this instance; neither did conscience recoil before the breach of a precept, which was dictated by no other motive than a dread on the part of their ministers lest their own fallacies and impositions might be detected; consequently the numbers who went to hear our Saint continually increased, as did the number of converts.

The first to make public abjuration at the hands of our Saint was Claude Boucard de Verdun, who drew tears from all on the occasion, by the following statement. He was born in Lorraine of respectable parents, had been baptized and educated in the bosom of the Catholic Church, had entered a religious order, and having completed his scholastic course, had taught philosophy and theology, being then a priest. He had passed over to Calvinism, not because he disbelieved the truths of the Catholic Church, but because he wished to live as he pleased, and to give free license to his unbridled passions. Since he had joined the Calvinists he had not taught their errors, having refused the degree of minister, but had contented himself with teaching philosophy and the liberal arts at Louvain for eight years. At last the absurd discourses of the centuriators convinced him that the truths taught by Catholics are the same that the apostles taught, and then reflecting on the sterility of the sect in which he was living, in which there was no piety, devotion, or faith, he contrasted this with the

Catholic Church, where sanctity abounds. He had been pressed too by the writings of Bellarmine and others, as well as by the stings of his own conscience, and had consulted the Bishop of Geneva as to his return to the Church. In fact, in the year 1608, he had abjured heresy in Thonon before the same prelate, who had absolved him from his vows according to faculties granted by the Pope for this purpose. At the same time he had been reinstated in the honours which he had forfeited by his fall, having resumed his degree of doctor of divinity. But, unable to persevere in his good purposes, he had yielded to affection for his wife and children, and about two years back had returned to the Calvinist party, not indeed to profess its errors, but to gratify his passions. Notwithstanding all this guilt, he had a second time been reclaimed by the mercy of that Lord, who willeth not the death of the sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live. He hoped for compassion from the Church, which rejects not those who return to her with a contrite heart, and was ready to renounce the errors of every sect opposed to the Catholic religion.

When Francis suggested to him the propriety of informing the people of the motives of his return and conversion, he, with many sighs and tears said he had observed that it was with Calvinism as with the heights of Gelboë; the dews and showers of heavenly consolations never fell thereon. He had also noticed the confusion reigning in that tower which Luther had erected in opposition to the Church of Jesus Christ; the former is divided into innumerable sects, one not understanding the language of the other, and all reciprocally contradicting

one another ; whereas, on the contrary, the Catholic Church, though dispersed throughout the universe, always teaches the same truths, and ever maintains unity, by means of its visible head. Then he added : “ I believe this to be the true Church, the Spouse of Jesus Christ, out of which there is no salvation. Hoping in the mercy of God, and relying on the benignity of Holy Mother Church, I again had recourse by letter to his lordship of Geneva, and being assured by him that the bosom of this benign mother was open to me, I came to Grenoble to assist at his sermons. I now accuse myself of my sins ; I abjure and detest every heresy ; and I beg to be restored to the communion of the Holy Church.” He received absolution from the man of God, and as the fame of this event resounded through the whole province, many other persons appealed to Francis for the solution of their doubts.

It is believed that this is the man alluded to, though without naming him, by Father Theophilus in his “*Spiritual meadow*,” who gives some circumstances worthy of being remembered : in the first place, that the cause of his apostasy was the fact of his having been called to Rome by the General of his Order, who had been informed that too great a familiarity existed between him and his penitents ; but instead of obeying the summons, he stopped at Lausanne on his way through Switzerland : secondly, that he married, and afterwards, in a fit of passion, furiously kicking his wife, occasioned her premature confinement and death, thus repeating the crimes of Novatus : thirdly, that contracting a second sacrilegious marriage, the lady who had been hitherto robust and healthy, was found dead in her bed the

first morning after the wedding; fourthly, that having been converted by our Saint, and by his means again received into his Order, (a very strict one,) as he was listening to certain conclusions of theology, (of which he was one of the Professors,) he was utterly unable to understand the meaning of the term 'efficacious grace;' so true it is that luxury makes the mind stolid, as S. Gregory remarks: and that incautious intercourse with women has occasioned the ruin of distinguished men.

But, to return to our history from what is perhaps not a useless digression, seeing that the falls of the great may serve as warnings to the little. Whilst the Catholics were rejoiced to perceive that few of the heretics who consulted our Saint, remained unconverted, so in proportion were the ministers enraged at this, and they resolved to insult him, continually exciting the fury of the most bigoted of their partizans against him. Their schemes, though secret, reached the knowledge of the first President of the Parliament, who offered Francis the protection of an escort; but the holy Prelate declined the offer, saying that he would have no defender but God, in Whom he placed all his confidence, and Who had already so signally protected him on many occasions; adding, that being unwilling to change his ordinary custom, which had hitherto answered so well, he earnestly entreated him to pardon whoever should personally insult him, as he himself did from his very heart.

When he was remonstrated with for thus exposing himself to the fury of his enemies, he replied that Jesus Christ had had no consideration for Himself, exposing His Divine Person, until He was *satu-*



*ratus opprobriis* ; that, as for himself, he hoped all things from the grace of God, knowing that in proportion as we are humbled, He is glorified.

In the mean time, one of the ministers who fancied himself more learned, or who was more rash than his compeers, proposed a public discussion with the holy Bishop. The challenge was promptly accepted, and the day and hour appointed. In a long preface, the minister gave vent to his bile, and to a long string of invectives, fancying that he could more easily confuse him in argument, if he could first work him up into a passion ; after which he would propose his objections, and state his proofs in support of his sect. But the holy prelate preserved his composure marvellously, uttered not a word, and listened calmly, till the other was actually obliged to pause for want of breath : then the Saint quietly took up his arguments one by one ; and whenever the minister interrupted him, either for some fresh insult or for some extravagant rejoinder, Francis was silent till he had quite finished speaking ; and then resuming the thread of the discourse, precisely where the other had interrupted him, continued his argument with his accustomed moderation, to the astonishment and admiration of the spectators. A Calvinist who was present, struck by the contrast between the sound judgment of the Saint and the insolence of his adversary, publicly declared that the parties were not fairly matched, because whilst the Bishop proved the goodness of his religion, even by his very silence, the minister damaged his cause by the means he employed to defend it. The conversion of this man, and of several others, was the first fruit of this conference, in which the Saint so evidently had the

advantage, that the heretic died soon afterwards of sheer vexation and confusion. Some of his friends reminded the Saint that Christian patience has its limits, and therefore it was his duty to have checked the insolence of the minister with warmth, as some of the ancient Fathers did, who had reproved the heretics with cutting words, whereas he had calmly listened to all his adversary's outrages. "It is true," replied he, "I might have done so, but my object was neither to confound him, nor to vindicate myself: I simply wished to gain and convert him, and sharp words would not have effected my purpose."

Hitherto Lesdigières had not had courage to be present when Francis preached, being unwilling to give umbrage to his party; but at length the preacher's fame reached such a height, that curiosity triumphed over every other feeling. Having once heard him, he attended assiduously at his sermons; and, grace touching his heart, he resolved to consult him in private. Without losing time in frivolous discussions, the Saint enquired the reasons which bound him to the sect of Calvin; and then, after making its errors plain, he completely demonstrated the fallacy of the mis-called reformed religion. The Duke was convinced by his profound learning, and was charmed by his engaging, noble demeanour: he particularly admired his prompt presence of mind, joined to such unalterable composure. The first visits were strictly secret, but as the Duke was a noble-spirited man, he scorned dissimulation and received him thenceforward in public; declaring that he was as much pleased with the manners of the Bishop of Geneva, as he was annoyed and scandalized by the overbearing conduct of the ministers.

His words so alarmed them, that (little suspecting what was to follow,) they repaired in a body to his palace, in order to give him a reprimand. The Duke received them with civility mingled with martial pride, as was habitual with him: he listened to the harangue, which was quite long enough to be wearisome; however, he testified no impatience till the speaker began to revile the holy Bishop, when he sharply interrupted him, saying, that in his presence at least, he would have due respect shewn to a personage of Francis' noble birth, and distinguished merit and dignity; that he was a Bishop and a prince of the empire. Then, addressing the whole company, he said, "If you had as just a claim to Geneva as the Bishop has, you would contrive to bring it under due subjection, for you would not content yourselves with Annecy, as he does." When the ministers took their departure, he suffered them to go unattended, which mortified them excessively, and led them to fear that they had completely forfeited his good opinion; nay, they almost doubted whether he might not think of becoming a Catholic, an event which did not then take place, the morals of the Duke offering the chief obstacle. The eye of Lesdiguières was certainly not pure enough to discern truth, which is the sun of the soul; and as his mode of life was not that of a Christian, it is no wonder that he had not courage to embrace the Catholic faith; which not only requires that we should believe aright, but also that we should lead a good life. With his usual peace of mind, Francis waited for the day of divine mercy to dawn on this soul, whose conversion was to deprive heresy of one of its chief props.

One of the Calvinist ministers named Barbier was

more prompt than Lesdiguières in listening to the voice of God: he assisted at the Saint's sermons, had several private interviews with him, and being convinced of his errors, made his abjuration, afterwards publishing several works in defence of the Catholic faith. Two gentlemen were so much struck by one of Francis' sermons on the text, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!" that, renouncing the world, they entered religious orders. He was universally applauded and looked upon as a saint: theologians were in admiration at the ease with which he rendered the most sublime truths intelligible even to obtuse minds; whilst others said it was no wonder their sermons produced so little fruit, because they preached without devotion, and taught what they did not understand, whereas the holy prelate was a real theologian and a preacher, who acted as he spoke, and spoke what he understood. His labours were unceasing; besides preaching every day, he heard the confessions of all who applied to him, and received the visits of whoever needed his advice or consolation: he visited two convents of nuns, in which he was anxious to introduce a reform, disputed and conferred with heretics, so that it seemed absolutely miraculous how one man could accomplish so much. His sermons were so highly appreciated that three men of distinction, two religious and a councillor of the parliament, undertook to transcribe them—no slight proof of the learning and efficacy with which the Saint propounded the truths of the Catholic faith and the maxims of the gospel.

As Francis returned to Annecy without completing the chief task which had taken him to Grenoble, many persons thought that affairs would remain *in*

*statu quo*, and that Lesdiguières, withheld by human respect, had no idea of changing his religion. However, as the Parliament was anxious that Francis should preach another season at Grenoble, Lesdiguières was requested to apply for the Duke of Savoy's consent, which he did, after first consulting the holy Bishop. The request of so great a man, (who that same year was to contribute much to the pacification of Italy,) could not be refused; therefore, towards the end of November, the holy Prelate proceeded to Grenoble, intending to preach the ensuing Advent, and the following Lent there, as he did with his usual success. People were astonished that he could find anything new to say, after the eloquence and efficacy with which he had preached the previous year. Great was the delight of Lesdiguières, who renewed his intimacy with the holy man, and at last surrendered. To effect this, Francis had indeed much to do; he had to combat the heart quite as much as the mind of the Duke. It was one of our Saint's maxims to do nothing by halves; now, as Lesdiguières, in addition to his heresy, was likewise strongly addicted to vile sensual excesses, he was to be made a good Christian as well as a good Catholic; nor would Francis be satisfied if his morals did not correspond with his faith. Most earnestly did he pray to God for this two-fold conversion, which at length was granted, to the delight of the Catholics.

The war between the Dukes of Savoy and Mantua had reached its third year when Lesdiguières was commissioned by the King of France to assist in his name at the conferences to be held for the purpose of concluding peace. He was obliged

to repair to Turin, and this journey deprived the Saint of the glory of completing his conversion, which the duke had promised him. When peace was concluded, Cardinal Ludovisi, (who had assisted at the treaty in the pope's name,) was on the point of returning to Rome. In taking leave of Lesdiguières, who had conceived a great affection for the cardinal on account of his many virtues, he paid him the compliment of wishing to see him raised to the Papacy. His Eminence made some modest and suitable reply, adding that the pontificate would be acceptable on condition that he were sure of receiving the Duke de Lesdiguières into the bosom of the Catholic Church, since he could not but most ardently desire the conversion of a man of such distinguished qualities. The duke answered that if his elevation to the papacy depended only on this, he would not have long to wait for it, and as the cardinal urged him to promise his conversion in the event of his ever being pope, Lesdiguières gave the promise. Hence, when Ludovisi was elected, and took the name of Gregory XV., he took care to remind his friend of his promise. The duke, true to his word, made his abjuration at Grenoble, at the age of eighty-four. This conversion was so gratifying to the king, that he honoured him with the office of grand constable of the kingdom, and with the order of the Holy Ghost.

We must not omit stating that the Lent which our holy prelate preached at Grenoble was so satisfactory to the inhabitants that they founded a convent of his order in the city. It was the fourth house of the institute, the nuns who were to found it arriving on the eve of Palm Sunday, whilst the

Saint himself was at Grenoble, so that he had the satisfaction of going forth to meet and welcome them.

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## CHAPTER XXX.

FRANCIS PAYS A VISIT TO THE GRANDE CHARTREUSE.—  
DEATH OF HIS BROTHER.

AFTER the Easter festivals, Francis resolved to pay a visit to the Grande Chartreuse before he returned home. He much wished to enjoy the company of the good Religious, who received him with all the respect due to his merit and dignity; but, as he disliked distinction, he chose to be like one of themselves, as long as he resided amongst them. He admired the holy simplicity of which these recluses make profession; he discoursed with them on the happiness of those who live only to serve the Lord, on the peace of a good conscience, and on the instability of human things; and revealed, almost inadvertently, his long contemplated design of procuring a coadjutor, to whom he would resign the charge of the See, that he might withdraw to a certain solitude, and there devote the remainder of his days to his own sanctification, and to the composition of some works of which he had already sketched the outline. God, however, intended this world to be to him a place of toil, not of repose, and therefore ordered otherwise. Francis returned to his pastoral duties, leaving the monks as much edified by his gentleness and piety, as he was by their many virtues, especially by that simplicity, of which, in

the present day, they give so beautiful an example. He himself related the following instance of this to the Bishop of Belley. When Francis arrived at the Grande Chartreuse, he was received by the General of the Order, who conducted him to the apartment appropriated to visitors of distinction: after conversing together exclusively on heavenly topics, the Father took leave of him, saying that he should have been most happy to remain with him during supper and till bed-time, but thought his piety would excuse him if he preferred obedience to civility, and therefore he would retire to his cell at the usual hour, to be ready for Matins in the night, as the next day happened to be a saint of their own order. Francis highly admired this exact regularity in the Prior, who on leaving the Saint's room, met one of the Fathers, the procurator of the monastery. On the latter enquiring where he had left the Bishop of Geneva, and who was with him, the good Prior answered that he had left him in his room, and had taken leave of him, in order that he might be ready for the morrow's festival; upon which the procurator rejoined: "It is very evident, Reverend Father, that you understand but little of the ceremonies of the world; have we guests every day of such rank in this desert of ours? You will have plenty of time to sing the praises of the Lord, and will often enough be able to go to Matins; whereas, who is so fit as yourself to entertain this distinguished prelate? It would be a disgrace to the monastery to slight so great a man merely on account of a feast of the Order." "My son," said the Prior to him, "I believe you are in the right; I have certainly done wrong." Whereupon he returned to Francis, re-



lated what had just passed between him and the procurator, and apologised for his want of due attention, which he assured him was entirely owing to ignorance. The Saint was exceedingly edified by this ingenuous simplicity, and afterwards, when narrating it to the Bishop of Belley, he declared that he made more account of it than if he had seen a miracle: so true is it that they who aspire to heaven find no difficulty in reducing themselves to the simplicity and sincerity of childhood, even though they may be distinguished for rank and talent.

On his return to Annecy, after preaching the Lent at Grenoble, Francis found many subjects of affliction, of which the chief was the death of his brother Bernard of Sales, Baron of Thorens. He was tenderly attached to this brother, who was the mainstay of the house of Sales, as it was in his favour that Francis had renounced his rights of primogeniture. When informed of his death, he raised his eyes and hands to heaven, and calmly said: "Yea, Father! for so hath it seemed good in Thy sight: I was silent and opened not my mouth, because Thou hast done it: may the name of the Lord be blessed!" Then he added, "I adore all the secrets of Providence, whose judgments are incomprehensible, and whose ways are impenetrable." Afterwards, giving vent to his tears, he retired to his oratory, and sought and found in prayer the consolation which he needed in such painful circumstances. At the expiration of a couple of hours, he proceeded to the Visitation Convent to carry the news to Mother de Chantal, and her daughter the Baron's widow, who usually withdrew to the convent, when affairs called her husband to a distance from

home, and devoted herself to exercises of piety, undisturbed by the commotions of the world. Madame de Chantal was already well accustomed to such blows, and displayed such generous submission that her daughter had no suspicion of the sad reality for that day at least. On the morrow, the holy prelate returned to the convent, and after hearing the lady's confession, said to her: "Well, my dear daughter, you belong entirely to God, do you not?"—"Yes, my lord," replied she, "absolutely and without reserve."—"But," continued Francis, "are you prepared to accept from His holy hand whatever He shall please to send?" Upon this the lady exclaimed: "Yes, my lord;" and after a moment's pause, added, "Ah! you mean to tell me that my husband is dead!" The Saint said a few words of consolation to her, and then, knowing the piety of her heart, left her to give vent to her grief and affection at the feet of her God, whilst he celebrated Mass, in which he gave her communion. It seems that the lady had had certain forebodings of her husband's death, and had prepared herself for the sacrifice, though it cost her life three months later, when after giving birth to a son, who did not long survive, she herself expired, having made her religious profession on her death-bed. She was the first one buried, as she had herself predicted, in the church of the convent; so that Almighty God required that the foundress should be the first to make the sacrifice of the life of a loved object, who was doubly her daughter.

The feelings of Francis on this occasion will be best shewn by a few extracts from some of his letters written at the time. To his sister Madame de

Cornillon, he says: "It becomes us to submit our will to that of God, Who has greatly favoured the poor deceased by withdrawing him from the world, and from a profession which exposed him to many dangers. As for me, his death has caused me to shed many tears, for I loved him tenderly, but I feel exceedingly consoled when I reflect that he died piously in the arms of the Barnabite Fathers, of our worthy Dom Justus, and of the Chevalier. He made a general confession, received absolution thrice, and afterwards the Holy Viaticum and Extreme Unction, with every demonstration of devotion; so that nothing more could be desired, as far as his dear soul is concerned. As for the body, he had every succour; the Prince-Cardinal, the Princesses, and the ladies of the court, took care that every want was supplied, and after his death the Prince-Cardinal testified his regard by sending twelve torches to the funeral. May God be eternally praised for His goodness in placing this soul amongst His elect; for, after all, what else is there that we should aspire to? It would be impossible to describe the virtue which his widow has displayed on the occasion, or the universal regret of all who knew him." To Amadeus de Chiuron, Baron de Villette, he thus expresses himself: "Alas, that I should have to tell you that you have lost a most devoted nephew and faithful servant, and I a most beloved brother, to whom I was affectionately attached for many other reasons besides the tie of consanguinity! It seems like a dream to a waking person, when he hears of the death of a young man who had so recently entered the country, and who was cut off before he had even time to see the Prince, to whom he was going to dedicate his life and his

valour. However, after all the reflections which grief suggests, I conclude that since God has willed it thus, it is the best for him : Blessed and adored be His decrees for ever and ever ! I believe our relatives deeply deplore his loss, especially those whom he so well loved ; and if he is now wanting to them, the fault is not on his side ; may God in His goodness protect and guide them amidst the dangers of the present war. Notwithstanding her tears and affectionate grief, my poor sister-in-law displays the most unwavering, the most edifying piety, so that she consoles us greatly with the hope that her babe, as yet unborn, will be preserved for the solace of the brothers. This poor young man, having devoted himself to the military career, might have been carried off in a hundred ways, infinitely more distressing. Blessed be God, who preserved him from duels, seditions, and the innumerable other occasions of offending God, which that vocation presents."

That the Baron of Thorens was a man of virtue and merit may also be inferred from a letter to Madame de Chantal, in which our Saint gives an account of his own mother's death. After dwelling on the young Baron's devoted attention to her throughout her illness, which he says would have compelled him to love him as a brother, even if he had been a stranger, he says, "I know not whether I am mistaken, but I find him exceedingly changed for the better, not only in a worldly point of view, but still more as regards the soul." To a Visitation nun, he says of him, that he was accomplished in every way ; that he was universally beloved, and had distinguished himself before the Princes on several occasions. He was buried in the church of the

Barnabites, at Turin, and his epitaph informs us that he died at the age of thirty-four, on the twenty-ninth of May, 1617.

Announcing the death of the young Baroness, his sister-in-law, to one of his friends, he says, "God has been pleased to afflict our family within the last few days, by calling to Himself the widow of Thorens, one of the best, most virtuous, and most amiable of women. Whilst she lived, I scarcely felt that my brother was really dead. She established herself at the Visitation, in the first moments of her widowhood; indeed, she had already intended this at the time of her husband's departure, and God has enabled her by His grace to die in that house a death which gave clear indications of a sanctity of no common order. Before her death, she petitioned for the religious habit, and made her solemn vows."

To a Superior of the Order, he writes thus: "She was no longer the Madame de Thorens whom you knew, amiable as she was even then. She was completely changed, wholly dedicated to God, wholly raised up into God, and desiring only to live to God, being replenished with spiritual lights of the knowledge of God and of herself; so that in a very brief space she became a second Mother de Chantal." He then speaks of the universal opinion of her sanctity, of the edification she had given, and of her resignation under the sufferings of death, when not a word or sign of complaint was perceived, everything in her breathing the most ardent love of God.

Towards the beginning of the year 1618, died Philip de Coez, commonly called the Seigneur of S. Catherine de Talloire, Canon of the church of Geneva. He was Penitentiary of the Cathedral, and con-

fessor of our Saint, who, deploring the loss which the diocese would experience in his death, earnestly besought our Lord to prolong his life; but God gave him to understand that this petition would not be granted. He therefore repaired to the sick man's house, and encouraged him to submit resignedly to death, promising not to quit him when his last end should approach; but not expecting him to die that night, he gave orders to be summoned if a change came on for the worse, no matter at what hour it might be, and he had to rise from table in order to visit him. Taking the sick man's brother, the Prior of Talloire, aside, he told him that God had revealed to him that Philip would die, God intending to call him to Himself; that he would have to undergo great sufferings, but that they would supply for those of Purgatory. He told the same thing to Louis of Sales. When the Prior of Talloire approached the bed, the dying man, who had sent for him, perceived that he was in tears, and said to him: "Wipe away your tears, and let not my death afflict you; His Lordship has promised me to take care of you. I beseech you never to undertake anything without his approbation; and bear in mind what I say to you, now that I am on the point of being separated from you; I must not carry a secret of such importance to the other world. His Lordship is a great saint; you may look upon him as a S. John Baptist in point of purity, and a S. Charles in humility and poverty of spirit." These are words of great weight, as proceeding from so holy and devout a man, at a moment when he would not venture to praise or flatter. Soon afterwards the sick man fell into his agony; a servant was immediately despatched

to inform the holy prelate, who hastened to him, and, after a few encouraging words, recited the commendation of his soul, gave the pastoral benediction, and closed his eyes with his own hands. The Saint wept over the death of this worthy priest, and desired to have his rosary and girdle, to keep as a memento of his respect for him. In a letter to the Mother de Chantal, he thus speaks of him: "When I was summoned, it was to the Seigneur of S. Catherine; and supposing it to be a fainting-fit, as had so often been the case before, I bade him repeat devoutly ten or twelve times, 'Live Jesus,' and protest that he placed all his hopes in the Passion and death of our Lord. He did so with great spirit and vivacity, and then, on the feast of the Conversion of the glorious S. Paul, went thither, where we too hope to go. God, Who had lent him to our service, has taken him to His glory; blessed be His holy name! In the meantime, live on in peace at the feet of the providence of that Saviour, for Whom we live, and for Whom, with the assistance of His grace, we will die. God will know how to supply this loss, and raise other workmen in place of the one whom He has been pleased to withdraw from His vineyard, to make him sit at His table. Keep your heart in peace; this is necessary; and, as the Scripture says, weep a little over the dead, but always praising God, because all our hopes are in Him. Amen."

The worthy Canon was universally deplored; and when his testimony of the holy prelate's virtues became more generally known, the opinion of his sanctity increased immeasurably, in spite of all his own endeavours to conceal it.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

## HIS MEEKNESS UNDER INSULTS AND CALUMNY.

As the kings of this earth are distinguished from other men by the sceptre, crown, and regal purple, so has the royal priesthood of Bishops its distinctive badges—widely different indeed—consisting of persecutions, injuries and calumnies. Jesus, the High-Priest and Bishop of our souls, was not exempted from these, neither were the Apostles and holy Pastors of the primitive ages; by their patience they triumphed over the devil, who strove to make them suffer. In this respect, our Francis fared like other saints; and as God had prepared him with innumerable blessings, so He would not deprive him of suffering, which is so profitable to, and so much desired by those who truly love Him. On numberless occasions, he had shewn a meekness worthy of the heart of an apostle, and of one well trained in the Saviour's school. In several parts of this work, we have alluded to his heroic patience and gentleness; but much more still remains to be told, too honourable to his sanctity to be passed over in silence.

Some gentlemen of his diocese, who seemed to think that nobility covered every delinquency, and exempted them from all chastisement, had ill-treated a curate, forgetful that the priesthood raises a man to a rank even superior to monarchs, according to the remark of S. John Chrysostom. The Saint was informed of the offence, and immediately brought an action against the delinquents, carrying it on with



all the ardour that such a cause demanded, for he was fearful that if this disgraceful circumstance were overlooked, others might be induced to imitate it, and by degrees the fault would become general. But when the culprits were condemned, and he was assured that they were penitent, he went to visit them himself, treating them with paternal affection, and having made them give satisfaction to the offended party, he forgave them, exhorting them to lead good lives for the future, and to respect the clergy as much as they had before insulted them, which they promised to do.

Another gentleman, powerful in station but most corrupt in morals, conceived such a hatred against the Saint, owing to some false reports which he had heard, that for six months he incessantly strove to annoy him. He began by circulating infamous libels and pieces of satire, but perceiving that no notice was taken of them, he used to go in the night with his hounds and men with hunting horns, and make the most hideous noise in the vicinity of the episcopal palace; thus disturbing not only the Bishop but the whole neighbourhood, no one daring to chastise him. When some threatened to bring the matter before a court of justice he only laughed at them, and defied them to interfere with a man of his importance. He even went so far as to throw stones and fire pistols at the windows, using most insulting expressions, and this conduct was persisted in for six months. The brothers and domestics of our Saint, together with several of the neighbours, were most eager to rush out upon him with arms, to chastise and drive him away; and this was precisely what the gentleman wished to provoke them to do,

because then his influence would have obtained sentence against the partizans of Francis ; but the latter would on no account consent to any sort of retaliation. As soon as the uproar began he rose from his bed—of course sleep was out of the question—knelt down at the foot of the crucifix, and repeating the words of S. Stephen, besought our Lord to pardon his tormentors. Some friends advised him to appeal to the Duke, but he answered, “No, that would be to lose him, and my object is to gain him.” At length, after submitting to all these annoyances, he happened to meet the said gentleman in the parlour of the Visitation Convent, when he saluted him most courteously, embraced him, frankly and cordially expressed a wish to gain his friendship, and spoke as kindly to him as if his conduct had always been as decorous as it was in reality infamous. The nobleman was confounded. Overcome by such heroic sanctity, he apologised and offered every sort of satisfaction, declaring that from thenceforward Francis should have no friend more faithful than himself. In after times the gentleman used to say that this truly christian way of acting on the part of the holy prelate had greater effect upon him than a hundred sermons, and Francis, satisfied with having gained his good will, would accept no further compensation.

Another gentleman, a relative of his, fancying himself offended by him, went to the palace with dogs, horns, and drums, and made a great uproar in the court-yard. Not content with this, he ascended the stairs, filling the whole house with discordant noises, and threatening all sorts of insult to the Saint. The affair was scandalous to a de-

gree; nevertheless Francis only answered him in the most civil manner, in spite of which the nobleman went away in a rage. The Prior de Coez, who was present, expressed his astonishment at the Saint's forbearance, when he thus replied: "You see, father, I have made a compact with my tongue, whenever anything calculated to put me in a passion is said to me, never to say a word. In fact, what would have been the use of exasperating this good man? I should not have convinced him of his rashness; but a day will come when he will be conscious of it, and be sorry for it." And so it turned out; for a few days later the gentleman called upon him, and begged his pardon.

A young man of Annecy, having to sustain a thesis in philosophy, had requested the Canon Novellet to act as president. His antagonist was another youth, who had just completed his studies. Carried away by the warmth of the debate, he troubled the president's mind so much that he admitted a proposition without reflecting on the consequences. The holy prelate modestly interfered, and by a clever distinction solved the difficulty. The disputant was indignant at this, and had the audacity to say that such a distinction had never been heard of before. The whole assembly was displeased at this impertinence, but Francis contented himself with saying that he must not speak in such a manner again. Every one admired the humility, meekness, and prudence of the Saint, who was afterwards thanked by the canon for having (as he said) saved the honour of a poor old man, who had forgotten the sophisms of the schools. Francis gracefully replied that it belonged to the younger to lend support to

the aged, as the aged had sustained the younger in the weaknesses of childhood, such being the appointment of Providence.

On another occasion, when theses of philosophy were held in the hall belonging to the college of the Barnabite Fathers, our Saint not only honoured the disputation with his presence, but even took part in it. As he was proceeding in his own moderate way, a religious was bold enough to interrupt him, as if he thought him incompetent to the task. The canons of the cathedral, indignant at such audacity, cried out that the religious should be turned out of the hall; but the Saint, with his usual equanimity, made signs to pacify them, and stood silently awaiting the issue. The poor man floundered from bad to worse, and denied a proposition without being able to answer the proofs of it, so that he gained for himself the title of an ignorant, as well as of an audacious man. Francis, however, took up the argument, and so skilfully and prudently covered the failure of the other, that the spectators scarcely knew which most to admire, his humility, charity, and patience, or his profound learning.

A distinguished nobleman, fancying that Francis had persuaded a lady who had lately entered the Order of the Visitation, to cede to the congregation certain property, over which he pretended to have some right, was so angry with him that he went to the palace, reproached and insulted him, and even raised his hand to strike him. The Bishop calmly assured him that he had nothing to do with the affair; that the lady had not consulted him, although it was true that he had been informed of it.

This did not appease the nobleman, who threatened to go and break open the door of the convent. To this the Saint answered that his threats were all to no purpose; that he was a man whose justice would not allow him to be guilty of such insolence. Almost every one expected that he would attempt some violence against the convent, as he had sworn to do; but Francis repeatedly said that he would do nothing of the sort: in the end, he let the matter drop, so that the words of the Saint were looked upon as a prophecy.

But no one proved so hostile to the good prelate as a lawyer of Annecy. He hated the Saint to the last degree, though no one knew for what reason. He incessantly defamed, annoyed, and insulted him; he went so far as to tear down a monitory and letters of excommunication which were affixed to the church doors, and drew with charcoal all sort of improper figures on his confessional. Francis was aware of all this, and happening one day to meet the advocate in a passage, where he could not elude him, he saluted him courteously, and taking him by the hand, spoke to him in the kindest manner. Seeing that his words were all to no purpose, he added: "I am aware that you detest me, though I know not why; at all events, if you went so far as to tear out one of my eyes, I would still look at you affectionately with the other." The innocent charm of such unparalleled goodness sufficed not to soften this obdurate heart. His friends endeavoured to convince him of his fault in hating such a Bishop without any reason, predicting the fatal consequences which this groundless rancour would entail; but all in vain. Twice did he attempt to shoot Francis through a win-

dow, and meeting him one day in the street, he discharged a pistol at him, which missed him, but struck his companion, the Canon Rogez, his vicar. This scandal caused a great commotion in the city; the lawyer was arrested, and in spite of the earnest entreaties of Francis, who pleaded for him, the Senate condemned him to death. As a favour to our Saint the execution of the sentence was deferred, and he, availing himself of the delay, so effectually used his influence with his sovereign as to obtain his pardon. He himself repaired to the prison to announce the glad tidings to his persecutor, and entreated him to lay aside his unjustifiable hatred; but even this unlooked-for favour and clemency produced no effect; he returned to his old habits, and loaded the Saint with abuse, upon which he humbled himself so far as to beg his pardon, as if he were not the offended but the offender. Seeing that nothing could touch him, the good prelate placed in his hands the act of grace which he had extorted from the Duke, and in taking leave of him said: "I have rescued you from the hands of the justice of men, beware of falling into those of the justice of God, for then I shall not have the same power." All occurred as Francis foreboded. In a short time the lawyer met with fearful chastisement, the Lord cutting him off by a miserable death.

He was frequently exposed to obloquy and insult when he had to defend the interests of God and of the Church, especially in the distribution of benefices. The holy man well knew what serious evils have resulted to religion when benefices have been bestowed on those, who instead of applying their revenues according to the intentions of the Church,

spend them in the gratification of their own sensuality. No recommendation, not even the sovereign's, could induce him to confer them on unworthy subjects. At the time when the Archbishop of Lyons visited him, he was holding an examination of candidates for a vacant curacy; among the rest there was a noble but ignorant applicant, strongly recommended by His Highness. Relying on his powerful influence, this man boasted that the curacy would certainly fall to his share. On making his appearance with the rest of the competitors, he protested against being examined in Latin; and when the Missal was opened, and he was desired to expound the Gospel (which happened to be that in which the mother of the sons of Zebedee made her request for them), it was evident that he did not understand a word of it, although he boasted as if he were a learned doctor. The whole assembly laughed at him, and as the Saint dismissed him, he good-naturedly quoted the words of the Gospel, "you know not what you ask," adding that he could not confer the benefice upon him, seeing that he had not the dominion but only the stewardship of it, and that he must bestow it on some more deserving person. The disappointed noble gave vent to the most insulting expressions, threatening to inform His Highness of the slight account made of his recommendation, but the Bishop remained unmoved, continued the examination, and then conferred the curacy on a doctor of eminent learning and of exemplary piety. The temerity of the first candidate did not end here: on the following Sunday, whilst the Saint was assisting at the Divine Office, seated on his throne, he presented to him an infamous libel, a

compound of insult and calumny. The patient prelate overlooked the scandalous act, but one of the canons having read the document, related it in chapter, and a suit was instituted against the priest, in punishment of his audacity. A rigorous sentence would have been passed, if Francis had not entreated the chapter to suppress the case, saying that the poor man would soon repent, and that voluntary repentance was infinitely preferable to such as was compulsory. In fact the priest soon went to beg his pardon, which we need scarcely say was easily granted; Francis even wrote on his behalf to the Prince of Piedmont, and obtained for him an honourable office, for which he was far better qualified than for ecclesiastical functions. It was this circumstance which gave rise to a saying in Savoy, to the effect that to offend the holy prelate was the sure way to obtain every sort of benefit from him.

A knight of the Order of Malta had procured the ordination of one of his servants, away from the diocese of Geneva, and afterwards wishing to place him in a certain vacant curacy, he requested the holy Bishop to bestow it upon him. Francis bestowed none of his parishes except by competition; hence, finding the candidate ignorant when he came to examine him, he refused it, more especially when he understood that the man did not lead the life of a priest. The knight became furious, and after much abuse told him that if he had no respect for himself, at least he might respect the cross which he wore, adding much abusive language, till Francis interrupting him, said with an engaging smile, "Do you think I could do otherwise than respect the cross you wear on your breast? Have I not even written a work



in defence of the cross?" These few gentle words quite confounded the knight, who, perceiving his error, went in a few days to make his excuses, and ever afterwards respected him. Thus it is that patience usually gains the good will, even of the most inveterate enemies. Many other friends, besides this cavalier, were gained by the meekness of the man of God, whilst others lose friends by indulging their impetuosity and resentment.

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## CHAPTER XXXII.

### INFAMOUS ATTACK ON THE SAINT'S REPUTATION.

God permitted, for the glory of Francis and for our instruction, that his reputation should be assailed by one of the most dreadful calumnies which history records: a calumny so artfully concocted, that the most keen and wary were deceived by it, and many completely lost the high opinion they had of his heroic virtue: we will give the details as they occurred.

A woman endowed with all the qualifications calculated to inspire vice, occasioned continual rivalries, strifes, duels, and innumerable other crimes in Chambéry; till, attracted by the offers of a gentleman attached to the suite of the Duke of Nemours, she settled at Annecy, at the very time that His Highness was dissatisfied and angry with the whole family of Sales. She had not been long in the town before she occasioned the same disorders as had attended her elsewhere; and her scandals were so notorious, that it was impossible to overlook them.

With his usual prudence the Saint caused her to be privately admonished: he next had recourse to threats; but the protection of the Duke of Nemours shielded the gentleman, and enabled the guilty woman to disregard both admonitions and threats. The Saint, therefore, felt himself obliged to have recourse to more powerful means, in order to obviate the evil: he entered the pulpit, and spoke so energetically and openly, that several of her friends abandoned her. This provoked her to such a degree that she vowed vengeance, no matter at what cost.

Owing to some private pique, the gentleman hated the whole house of Sales, and willingly seconded her designs. He was particularly ingenious in imitating the hand-writing of others, and accordingly, in conjunction with her, he forged a letter to her in the Saint's name, carefully copying his style as well as his writing; in this letter, he apologised for having been obliged, by the duty of his office, to preach against her; then he made him speak like an impious wretch, deploring the necessity of being obliged by his position to conceal his real sentiments: declaring that when he spoke, it was not from inclination, but merely that people should have no occasion to condemn his silence; that he would convince her of the affection which he felt for her, if she would but appoint a place where he could meet her by night, and treat with her alone and with full liberty; concluding with expressions wholly unworthy of a man of our Saint's character. The more licentious the letter was, the less probable was it that Francis could have written it; nevertheless, the copy was so perfect a fac-simile, and the style so well imitated, that the Saint himself was actually astonished when

the letter was shewn him. The plot being so far arranged, the gentleman conveyed the letter sealed to the woman, who read it; and then they agreed that she should display great indignation against him for having purloined one of her letters.

Accordingly, she complained loudly to several of her acquaintance of her accomplice, pretending that he had snatched from her a letter of the utmost consequence, and entreating them to interpose in the affair, and try to persuade him to return it to her, declaring that if he did not, she would never forgive him. By this means, the letter became publicly talked of; and to those friends who interfered in the matter, the gentleman took care to shew the contents of the letter, pretending that it was not safe to trust it in the hands of a woman of her profession. By this diabolical artifice, the wicked man succeeded in destroying the reputation of the holy prelate, whilst he actually acquired credit to himself, as being a discreet cavalier, anxious to spare the fame of a respected bishop.

It is incredible how much this vile letter damaged the fair fame of Francis. His life, innocent even from childhood, his labours for the faith, his fortitude and zeal, his sanctity (illustrated even by miracles,) and his universally acknowledged piety, were unable to stem the torrent of this artful calumny; so that in great measure, he forfeited the esteem of many persons. Those who loved him best, and those who were disposed to judge most favourably, felt perplexed, and knew not what to think; and indeed it must be owned that this was the most terrible trial, to which Almighty God could permit his virtue to be

subjected ; but His design was to purify in the highest degree a heart already pure.

Whilst the calumny was daily circulating more widely, the gentleman contrived that it should reach the ears of the Duke of Nemours. This was easily effected by alluding to the rupture between the gentleman and the woman ; whereupon the Duke enquired the cause of it, but the traitor answered that he could only explain this to him in private, and that it was a communication which would greatly surprise his highness. The Duke retired with him to his cabinet, and there the gentleman confidentially disclosed to him what he had already revealed to so many others. Knowing the character of our Saint, the Duke refused to believe the report unless he could see the letter, which was immediately produced, examined, and compared with others in the Bishop's own hand-writing. So perfect was the counterfeit, that the Duke, like every one else, was imposed upon, and exclaimed that since the Bishop of Geneva was a hypocrite, a cheat, and a deceiver, he knew not who could be trusted. He detained the letter to shew it to his chamberlain, a gentleman named Foras, a relative of our Saint, whom he highly esteemed. Having summoned him, he asked him his opinion of the Bishop of Geneva. Foras replied that he looked upon him as a living saint, and with good reason, considering the virtues he displayed ; but the Duke interrupted him, saying, " Here is something that will undeceive you : read that letter ; observe to whom it is addressed, as well as its contents, and do not allow yourself to be blinded by the appearance of a virtue which is sheer hypocrisy."

The good gentleman read the letter, and admitted

that the writing so closely resembled the Bishop's as really to appear to be his own; nevertheless, he could not believe that he had ever penned such a missive, and assured the Duke that time would clear up the mystery, adding many remarks calculated to disabuse the mind of His Highness, who merely laughed at his partiality for, and favourable opinion of his relative; his own, produced by the letter, remaining unchanged. The Duke entrusted him with the letter for a few days, and he accordingly shewed it to Francis, who hitherto had not heard a syllable about this infamous intrigue. He perused it without so much as a change of countenance, and without betraying the slightest sign of anger; and composedly returned it, saying that the writing was very like his own, though the style was not; for, certainly, he had never written anything like the contents of that letter. He advised him to return it to the Duke, adding that he left his justification to God, Who well knew the measure of reputation which he needed for His divine service; and this was all he wished for. Foras, who was a courageous, fiery young cavalier of six-and-twenty, had no notion of taking the matter so quietly. Suspecting that the same gentleman who had given the letter to the Duke, was likewise the author of it, he sent him a note, telling him that he would return the said letter to him, sword in hand, naming a place and an hour, and intending to make him confess his crime, the most atrocious that could have entered the brain of any man.

The gentleman accepted the challenge, but his absence from court, and the non-restitution of the letter, led the Duke to suspect the real state of the

case; so, to prevent the duel, he despatched messengers in all directions in quest of the parties. In the mean time, the Saint's suspicions were also aroused, and accordingly he sent his brother, the Chevalier, to conduct Foras to him. The young de Sales was fortunate enough to meet him just in time; and though he did all he could to disengage himself, under the plea of urgent business, the other was determined not to lose sight of him; so Foras, knowing that he could not carry out his plans in the Chevalier's presence, was obliged to defer the hostile meeting to another day, and then agreed to accompany him to the holy prelate. Francis reproved him for his fault, made him confess it, and then told him very seriously that he would never see him again till he had reconciled himself with God, adding, "I have protested to you that I will have no other protector of my innocence but God; and are you rash enough to suppose that He is not as powerful as you are to defend it? and then again, to think of justifying me by such impious means!" In fine, he said so much, that Foras promised to go to confession, and to give up all thought of the duel: notwithstanding that he foresaw the consequences, he was resolved that the letter should never be returned to the Duke, and therefore he tore it into a thousand pieces. In high displeasure at this, the Duke forbade him his presence, and deprived him of his office at court: nothing could pacify him, nor would he so much as allow the courtiers to speak in his favour. In the course of time, however, the friends of Foras watched every opportunity of removing the Duke's prejudices, and he was again restored to favour, and to his original post. In the mean

time, nothing was done to justify Francis, and opinions varied on the subject. The few who knew his inmost soul, and who had witnessed his uninterrupted practice of virtue, never lost their esteem of him, but as the masses of the people are, in general, maliciously inclined, they spoke of the Saint as if he were really guilty of this intrigue; and when they heard him preach against this scandalous vice, as he continued to do in spite of the calumny, they ascribed his words to revenge instead of to zeal, as if he strove by this to cover the disclosure of the letter which had dishonoured him before the world. But worse than all the rest, the blow fell indirectly upon the daughters of the Visitation, of whom all sorts of discreditable reports were circulated; nor did their virtue suffice to shield their honour. This was a deep affliction, and cut the holy prelate to the quick; because honour is most essential to women, more especially to those who are consecrated to the Lord; a shadow or a suspicion will suffice to wrest it from them, whereas scarcely anything can restore it. One circumstance seemed to favour the sinister suspicions of the world; namely, that Madame de Chantal and her daughters did not then observe enclosure, but went out for purposes of charity, such, at first, being the Saint's object. Now, although their demeanour on these occasions was so edifying that it ought to have disarmed calumny, still where there is a propensity to misconstrue things, false judgments may be grounded on the very circumstances which ought to annihilate them.

Three years passed on, during which God, who usually undertakes the protection of the innocent,

seemed to have forgotten to justify these oppressed and injured individuals. Nevertheless the Saint's fortitude, tranquillity, and confidence never wavered. Satisfied with what the apostle calls the testimony of a good conscience, and holding himself as it were superior to the judgments of men, he calmly awaited the moment when our Lord should please to deliver him from "the contradiction of tongues." Those who have never experienced such a terrible persecution, or the anxiety which it must occasion even in the firmest souls, can form no correct idea of the heroic virtue of the holy prelate, who endured it for such a length of time without discomposure, without defending himself, and without the interruption of his usual peace and equanimity; and this of itself ought to have been enough to confound his enemies. But at last, divine justice, which sometimes seems slow to our impatience, and which had never lost sight either of the innocent or the guilty, disclosed the truth so manifestly that the most incredulous were compelled to see and acknowledge the sanctity of Francis.

At the expiration of three years, the attendant of the Duke of Nemours (the author of the infamous letter) had orders to repair in all haste to Paris, on business of importance; and after travelling two days he was seized with an attack of colic in a small village, where he was obliged to accept a lodging at the curate's house, as there was no other fit to receive him. The malady made rapid progress; and information was forwarded to the duke, who immediately despatched physicians and surgeons to his aid. They became witnesses to the innocence of the Saint, as if Providence had summoned them



from a distance expressly to justify him in a way that should be beyond suspicion. Every remedy proving useless, the curate, who was a worthy man, perceiving the gentleman to be in danger of death, warned him of his state, and advised him to put his soul in order, and receive the last sacraments. He made his confession, after which he summoned the physicians, surgeons, servants, and others, and in their presence, and in that of the parish priest, publicly acknowledged the artful calumny which he had himself invented against the holy Bishop, beseeching them all to undeceive the Duke of Nemours, and all others who had knowledge of the disgraceful affair; he conjured them moreover to go in his name and beg pardon of the holy man, offering every possible satisfaction, and protesting that he deeply regretted being unable to repair in person the injuries he had inflicted on so distinguished an individual. There was no great difficulty in obtaining the Saint's forgiveness; but divine justice was satisfied with nothing less than the gentleman's death, who ended his life in excruciating torture. This terrible example teaches us that God does not always wait till the next life to punish certain faults.

When the holy prelate heard the news, he wept over the death of the gentleman, and went immediately to celebrate Mass for the repose of his soul. He also ordered public prayers for the same object, expressing the deepest regret that he had not been able to embrace him, and attend upon him in his illness.

In this manner did God justify the innocent Francis, and his spiritual daughters, who had shared the calumny. The Duke of Nemours publicly de-

monstrated his respect for the holy prelate, doing his utmost to repair the injury and prejudice occasioned to his reputation by his own too easy credulity. Foras, already restored to favour, was now quite triumphant, and learnt to confide in the Lord, who never forsakes those pure souls that trust in Him alone, whilst we too may learn from these circumstances, to make it our chief study to serve the Lord faithfully, leaving Him to take care of us, of our reputation, and of all our affairs.

In like manner one of the canons of the cathedral was visibly punished by God. He had been several times corrected by our Saint, and this provoked him so much that he went down to the palace and abused him shamefully: he went so far as to ask how he dared to think of correcting him, whilst his own life was but a tissue of hypocrisy, considering his guilty intercourse with the Mother de Chantal and her daughters? As long as the abuse was confined to himself individually, Francis listened to him calmly, but when he began to vilify the nuns, he undertook their defence, saying, "Abuse me as you please, for I am truly a great sinner, but touch not the saints, say not a word against the angels." He repeated these words several times, in order to check his slanders, and whilst the canon was at the very height of his invective, he was suddenly struck and fell down as if dead. A physician named Grandis, who happened to be in the antechamber, waiting to speak to the Saint, apprehensive lest the canon was assaulting the Bishop, and uncertain which of the two had fallen, abruptly entered the room, and found Francis endeavouring to revive his assailant: his endeavours being unavailing, he desired the doctor to go

and procure some restorative, he in the meantime praying fervently for the unfortunate man. As Grandis re-entered the room with the medicine, he found the canon so far recovered as to be on his knees begging the Saint's pardon. This was readily granted, and our meekest of prelates, instead of chastising him, constituted himself the director of his conscience, and gave him the spiritual exercises, by which he was so completely changed, that thenceforward he gave as much edification as he had before given scandal to the city. This incident, known but to few, would have been completely lost to us, if the physician had not recorded it on a piece of paper, which was found after his death in one of his books. He accounts for his silence on the subject by stating that the holy Bishop had obliged him to promise on oath never to speak of it, but having, on the one hand, a scruple of conscience about concealing a thing of this nature, whilst on the other he was bound by an oath, he thought he could satisfy both sides by committing the circumstance to writing. As the document has been seen by persons whose virtue and merit render their testimony unimpeachable, I should not feel justified in passing it over unnoticed.

Another instance of visible chastisement on the part of Almighty God occurred in the person of a soldier, who fell into a passion with Don George Rolando, the steward. The Saint, hearing the commotion, went down from his room into the court-yard, to try to pacify the enraged man, but not succeeding, he withdrew, when the soldier was suddenly covered with a hideous leprosy, of which he was not cured for several months, and then through the inter-

cession of the Saint, whose tomb he went to visit for the purpose.

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## CHAPTER XXXIII.

### OTHER INSTANCES OF MEEKNESS—HIS MAXIMS CONCERNING THIS VIRTUE.

THE holy prelate was aware that though it is commendable to overlook one's personal wrongs, it would be equally blameable to tolerate injuries directed against the Church. Hence, patient and forbearing as he was when his own grievances were in question, he was resolute and constant in upholding the rights of his see. In order to defend them against the officials of the Duke of Nemours, he had to sustain several law-suits, which occasioned him much anxiety, and drew forth many traits of heroic meekness. As he never undertook a suit without first carefully and dispassionately investigating his own claims, he always came off victorious. In order to avenge themselves, the defeated officials strove to calumniate him to the prince, and they so far succeeded that, for a time, he and the whole house of Sales were in disgrace, so much so that the Saint was obliged to withdraw from the city to avoid the first effects of his anger; but as Lent was approaching, he returned to Annecy for the purpose of discharging his ordinary functions at that season. He found however that the Duke's indignation was still at the highest pitch. I am not certain whether it was on this occasion that, on being advised to be on his guard, he gave this noble answer:

“What can they do to me? If they imprison me I shall have all the more time to study; if they deprive me of my bishopric they will only be relieving me of a heavy burden.” I know that he wrote to the President Favre, telling him that on his return he found the old calumnies against him and his brothers still quite fresh; adding that he should have laughed at it all, were it not for the displeasure of His Highness, but that he really regretted this, on account of the respectful affection which he entertained for the prince, whose kindness he had experienced on many occasions. It seems strange that whilst other delinquents found so much clemency, the brothers of our Saint should have been treated with the utmost rigour. It was no sufficient excuse for their enemies to say that they inflicted no personal injury on them, so long as they contrived to deprive them of one of their most precious privileges, namely, the good graces of their prince. The Duke had often enough before detected the falsehood of the charges brought against the house of Sales, nevertheless he seems to have delighted in listening to all that was said to their prejudice, and in acting upon it. In any other part of the world it is a crime to hate one's neighbour, but at Annecy it was a crime to love him, and though the Saint's relatives were irreproachable, they were persecuted merely because they bore him that affection which was justly due to a man of his worth. Favre gloried in loving, and in being beloved by him, and it was a grievous trial to have to forego all intercourse with him; thenceforth God alone was to be the witness of the mutual affection of these two noble hearts, for Francis would not expose his friend

to the risk of being disgraced on account of his friendship for him. After telling him this, he added, "A day will come when no one will be blamed for having loved me, neither do any of those who particularly love me deserve to be reproached on this account." By these words the Saint would seem to have prophesied what we have since seen realized. He went on to ask Favre's opinion of a letter which he was thinking of sending to the Duke, as being fearful lest it might only increase his irritation, he wished to submit it to the revision of a man who was as well versed in politics as in other sciences.

In this letter he said that night was but a bad witness, and that those who walk in the dark are liable to dangers which no one can foresee. As for what was stated to have occurred on certain nights, the accused could prove that they were elsewhere at the time, and they ought to be allowed to defend themselves before being condemned; he entreated His Highness to allow him the discreet liberty (which his office authorized) of reminding him that as the great ones of the world are often in danger of being deceived by accusations and reports, therefore justice should always be extended to the accused. That His Highness had done right in receiving the accusations, provided they had reached no further than the ear; but when they reached the heart, His Highness must pardon his respectful and pastoral affection, which obliged him to say that then he offended God, and that he must repent thereof, even supposing the accusations to be true. That he should only betray his soul if he spoke otherwise; because, however trustworthy the accusers might be, justice required that he should admit the justifica-

tion of the accused ; and he added many other things which disproved the calumny and vindicated his brothers. Favre advised him to send the letter, which, together with the esteem which the Duke could not help feeling for the holy prelate, completely undeceived him.

He knew that scarcely a day passed without some malicious individuals endeavouring to defame his family ; nevertheless, so far from ever shewing them the least resentment, he sought every opportunity of benefiting them. At the very time that the persecution was at its height, when he appeared to be somewhat distressed, he wrote as follows to a friend, " You will see the trouble that has somewhat moved me, but this news having reached me at a time when I was wholly resigned to the dispensations of Providence, I said nothing in my heart, but, ' Yes, heavenly Father, for such is Thy will,' and this morning, on awaking, the thought struck me that I was to live entirely by the spirit of faith ; hence, I will just what God wills, and what will tend to His service, without caring for any consolation, and I beseech our Lord that I may never lose this feeling."

On another occasion, when several persons were persecuting the Institute of the Visitation, he wrote that one ought not to make much account of the sayings of the malevolent, because truth would come to light some day, and because iniquity is of itself fallacious ; that one must be content to let frogs croak, since the noise does nothing worse than annoy the ear, and that dogs will bark even at the moon ; after all, these things are mere importunities and nothing more ; that the spiteful cannot be better

punished than by despising their slander, without losing an atom of one's own peace of mind.

In the year 1619, when a furious storm was raised in Paris against him and his Institute, he wrote thus to the Mother de Chantal: "I commit all these pestilential breezes to the Providence of God; let them blow on, or let them cease, as pleases Him; tempest or fair weather are equally agreeable to me. If the world did not speak ill of us, we should not be good servants of God." After alluding to our Blessed Lady, who did not utter a word in self-justification when she saw S. Joseph's uneasiness about her, he says, that reading this gospel gave him the idea of recommending the tongues of calumniators to her: then he adds, "I likewise resolved to abandon this affair to God, and to keep myself in peace. What does one gain by trying to oppose the wind and tide? Nothing but foam. Ah, my dear Mother, you must not be so sensitive on my account: it behoves me to suffer and to be censured; if I do not deserve it in one way I do in another. The Mother of Him who deserved everlasting adoration did not say a word when He was loaded with insult and ignominy. The patient and the meek are to possess the land, and are promised heaven. As I say, you are over-sensitive in my regard. Shall I be the only one exempted from the obloquy of this world? Nothing has afflicted me so much throughout this business as your affliction under it. Remain in peace, and the God of peace will abide with you, and will trample on the asp and the basilisk. If we are but His servants, nothing will disturb our peace. That love is indeed great, which leads us to love one another, and it is also glorious to us."



His friends did not approve of his conduct in this respect; they frequently told him that he ought to defend himself more vigorously against calumny, and in support of his pastoral dignity; but he always replied that gentleness ought to be the characteristic of bishops; and that although the world and self-love had established other maxims, he would not adopt them, because they were contrary to those of Jesus Christ, Whom he should always glory in copying; adding, that silence defended him better than words, and that the best way of avenging calumny, is not to notice it: that God had reserved vengeance to Himself, leaving to us the glory and advantage of forgiving. On another occasion he wrote, that as for himself, he was convinced that it was his duty to practise the doctrine of the Apostle, "Not revenging yourselves, my dearly beloved, but give place to wrath:" that Divine Providence knew the measure of reputation necessary to his success in the enterprises he was employed in; and therefore he desired neither more nor less than that which was appointed for him.

He had to bring an action against the inhabitants of Seyssel, for the tithes due to the Chapter of the Cathedral, to which was annexed the Priory or Curacy of that place. He tried his utmost to effect an amicable arrangement, but it was impossible to bring the parties to reason, and he was obliged to appeal to the Senate, especially to obtain the punishment of an act of insolence committed against a preacher, whom they had attempted to throw into the Rhone. In a letter to Favre, he says that since his elevation to the episcopacy, no incident had afflicted him so much as this; not only because the obstinacy

of the people passed into violence, but also because this violence compelled him to demand their punishment. "On one side," said he, "I am grieved that such insolence should not have been repressed, that the magistrates should have been contemned, and the clergy ill-treated; whilst on the other hand, I am grieved at the chastisement of the seditious, because they are my diocesans and my children: at all events, it is necessary to punish them a little, with a view to their amendment, seeing that advice and admonitions have been lost upon them: it is better they should have to weep over a temporal, than over an eternal punishment." Then he concludes thus: "In fact, the insolence was too public to be overlooked, too grievous not to be punished, and too dangerous not to be repressed; I trust, however, to your prudence." From all this we see how beautifully he maintained his peace and his meekness, even when he demanded justice in support of the rights of the Church. Without losing his tranquillity of mind, and imitating our Lord, he forgot not mercy, when obliged to have recourse to anger. In him, meekness had its limits, yielding to episcopal fortitude, when reason required that he should maintain his point.

But in nothing did the peace and composure of our Saint shine forth more conspicuously, than in the persecutions he had to undergo on account of the Order of the Visitation, the work of his hands and of his mind, which cost him prayers, journeys, and exertions beyond number. It was certainly dear to him as the apple of his eye; yet he saw it several times on the brink of ruin; for this holy Institute was too excellent not to meet with contradiction

both from men and devils. Historians of the Order will have much to relate on this point, for it was assailed by some with a good, and by others with a bad, intention. He, however, never lost his unalterable peace: he even wrote to some one, saying that he praised God because his little congregation was calumniated; that, in truth, the sin of the calumniator afflicted him, but the injury he received thereby was an evident sign of the approbation of heaven, our Lord having taught us this secret; for after having suffered much, He says: "Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice sake."

He always practised what he taught; namely, not to speak and complain of the insults, persecutions, and calumnies which befall us, saying, "Self-love always magnifies them, so that we never complain of them with due moderation, and our complaints being excessive, (unless we are very much on our guard,) we become excited by our own words, and our imagination, forming a vast idea of the injuries we receive, leads us to violent resolutions, wholly opposed to the spirit of the gospel." Another danger attendant upon complaints arises when, instead of confiding our troubles to meek, kind-hearted persons, we trust them to hasty characters, who foment our anger and resentment, as if they were just; this easily happens, either as an effect of natural inclination, or from some interested motive. He said that great people ought to complain less than others, because, revenge being more in their power, there is all the more danger of their being hurried into violent measures: that the flatterers who usually surround them, never fail to ingratiate themselves by agreeing with them in opinion, and by advancing

plausible pretexts for augmenting their displeasure ; and this is particularly the case when the persons of whom they complain are in prosperity, because the flatterers, envious of their good fortune, endeavour to undermine it, by exciting the animosity of their illustrious patrons.

Discoursing with his spiritual daughters on the manner of making complaints, he said that it might be done when necessity required it, on condition that it was done simply, without exaggeration, and without shewing a wish to be pitied : that we ought not to relate our trials for the sake of exciting compassion or of making them known, but in order to be strengthened in patience ; because they who suffer really for the love of God, seek not the esteem of men ; adding, that if we are pitied, we may indeed accept this charity, but without rejoicing in the compassion we excite. He could not endure the common expressions of complaint, saying that such words, besides being discreditable to those who make profession of serving God, betray a faint-heartedness which savours of impatience, annoyance, and unwillingness to suffer. He wrote as follows on this subject to one of his penitents : " Whatever may be the guilt of the man whom you suspect, speak but little and speak conscientiously of him ; be not too diffuse, nor too frequent in your complaints, and assert nothing as positive, unless it be well known to you, or unless your conjecture be very sure ; speak doubtfully of doubtful things."

He drew a distinction between lodging a complaint, and stating an evil. On many occasions the latter is obligatory, in order that a remedy may be provided, but even in this case he says it must be done

quietly, without exaggeration or grumbling. This coincides with the remark of S. Teresa, that complaining is not a simple statement of one's grievance, but it is repining, and making a great display of affliction. Speaking one day of Christian patience, he said that some people like great persecutions which make a sensation, because then they fancy their merit must be vastly extolled, and they make it a point of honour to recapitulate their afflictions to everybody. Others, again, like to be persecuted for religion, for defending the innocence of their friends, for resisting the oppression of the unfortunate, &c., because such persecution is a proof of their power. In these instances, pride will inspire patience, as persons flatter themselves that they are looked upon as possessing extraordinary virtue, whereas, to endure an ignominious calumny, such as to have betrayed a confiding friend, is the effect of true patience, for such a calumny could not be borne without a special aid from God, because it is a thing which would render us despicable to every one.

He moreover remarked, that many flatter themselves they have courage to suffer such persecutions as merely affect themselves, but cannot endure such as touch their friends or family. Others, again, would willingly suffer, provided the world did not think that they deserved their sufferings in punishment of their misconduct. "None of these reasons," he added, "are of sufficient importance to make us shun calumny, when it is the will of God that we should suffer from it; but because we are ashamed to own our natural inclination to live amidst applause, we seek pretexts to excuse our want of patience.

Finally, in assigning remedies against calumny, he highly disapproves our having recourse to law, as such litigation multiplies, instead of terminating, the mischief: and although he admitted that we might use means to make the calumniator retract his words, we ought always to overlook the injury, because slander despised is the sooner forgotten. He highly commended those who forgive freely for the love for God, and who do so without lamentation or show of repugnance, more especially as the sincerity of the forgiver brings out more strongly the error of the calumniator. Having done our part to remove what irritates the evil-minded, we should await our deliverance from God, as from Him, Who specially watches over the innocent. Having thus subdued passion, which makes us seek revenge, (though persons who have only a little of the fear of God in them, call it reparation, not revenge,) we are able to withstand the seductions of self-love. With regard to little trials, not only would he not allow us to complain of them, but he would not even have us ask for patience under them; saying that the least particle of common modesty should enable us to bear them properly.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

SOME EXTRAORDINARY AND MIRACULOUS POWERS CONFERRED ON FRANCIS.—HIS POWER OVER THE DEVIL.

THE lengthened chain of holy actions, wrought by the good prelate, daily drew new graces upon his soul, but as he carefully covered them with the veil of humility, only the most public have reached our knowledge, or some few which were disclosed by the secret providence of God; to which it is due that all the wonders wrought in him, have not been lost to us. We have already related several in the course of our history, such as, the intellectual vision with which he was favoured at the time of his consecration, the doves which rested on his head and bosom, and the pillar of fire which he beheld in his chamber; and some others ought not to be omitted, among which the visit of our Lord to him, on the feast of His Incarnation, deserves the first place.

Francis had been preaching to his people in the collegiate Church of our Lady, at Annecy, on this incomprehensible mystery of love, and towards evening he retired to say the rosary. Having accomplished this duty to the great Mother of God, he knelt down and began to reflect on the immense charity of God Who, by means of this mystery, has given Himself to man in so loving a manner. Scarcely had he begun this meditation than he felt his heart enkindled, and the Holy Ghost in visible form fell upon him. He beheld Him as a globe of fire, which separated itself into numberless flames, which soon

filled his little room and enveloped him, though without injuring either his person or clothes. At the first sight of this luminous globe, the Saint felt timid, but he soon found himself replenished with the celestial sweetness, which God bestows on faithful souls, and he was given to understand that this fire was not intended to burn his body, but to enkindle love in his heart. Whilst he was in this state, his brother Louis entered the room, and perceiving his face thus inflamed, was afraid that he was ill, and was on the point of ringing for the servants; but the Saint prevented him, and, binding him to inviolable secrecy, told him what had happened. He could eat nothing that evening, his whole soul being plunged in that torrent of delights which God reserves for those who love Him.

Another time, as he was in the pulpit on one of the Sundays after Easter, explaining the first commandment of the law of God according to his custom, he made towards the end of the discourse a fervent prayer, addressing his words with tender devotion to the Eternal Father. By degrees his countenance became inflamed by the force of the love which burned in his heart, and all the people perceived a brightness about him; rays of light surrounded his face, so brilliantly that the light of day seemed as it were eclipsed by it. All the spectators were full of admiration at the sight, which strongly confirmed their opinion of the sanctity of their beloved Bishop. He was similarly favoured in the church of the Barnabite Fathers at Annecy. As he was preaching there on the festival of the Conversion of S. Paul, he was rapt in extasy after uttering with much energy the words, "I live, now not I, but



Christ liveth in me." The same thing happened to him on many other occasions, and as he was careful in noting down divine favours, many such would have been revealed to us, if humility had not persuaded him to burn the papers on which they were recorded.

In the chapel of the castle of Annecy a singular circumstance occurred, which it was impossible for him to conceal, because it happened in presence of the Duke of Nemours and his court; amongst others, Father Armand of the Society of Jesus was in the chapel, and afterwards attested the fact on oath. As the Saint was in the act of baptising a child, a brilliant light appeared over the sacred font, and completely surrounded the good pastor; at the same moment, the vessel of chrism which he held in his hand in order to anoint the child was suddenly carried away by an impetuous gust of wind. Strange to relate, after circling several times round the chapel, it fell straight into the hands of the holy prelate. Hereupon, unable to restrain the flame which burned within him, he broke forth into a brief discourse on the wonderful effects of baptism, telling the audience that this visible sign had been vouchsafed to the prince and his retinue, in order to confirm them in the faith.

Even in his youth he had been accustomed to receive many lights and consolations from God, Who had also granted to him the gift of tears. God alone knows the number he shed in the course of his mission in the Chablais, and the fulness of that celestial sweetness which sustained him under the toils of that mission; though, as we have said, few memorials of it have reached us. When visiting

the catacombs of Rome the Canon Chizzè often found him bathed in tears, as he did also in the chapel of the holy house of Loreto; in these places time seemed to him to fly, so that when called to retire from them he would entreat to be left a little longer. We may guess from the tenderness of his devotion that his spiritual consolations must have been great. A note which was accidentally left amongst his other papers tells us that he was once singularly favoured on the festival of the Annunciation, when, although he was a priest, he received communion from the Pope's hand. We quote his own words: "Having received Holy Communion from the hand of the Sovereign Pontiff on the day of the holy Annunciation, my soul remained excessively consoled; God was pleased to favour me with great lights on the mystery of the Incarnation, giving me to understand the inexplicable manner in which the Divine Word became Man, by the power of the Eternal Father, and by the operation of the Holy Ghost, in the chaste womb of Mary, deigning to dwell amongst us, since He was to be a man like unto us. The Incarnate God likewise gave me a sublime and sweet idea of the mystery of transubstantiation, of His entrance into my soul, and of the ministry of the pastors of the Church."

As the Son of God overcame the principalities and powers of hell, depriving them of their dominion, and putting them to flight, no less from the souls than from the bodies of men, so is it His will, that they who believe in Him and love Him above all things, should participate in His victory. S. Francis of Sales was one of these; but we do not undertake to enumerate the battles he gained over the

infernal spirits, when they were in possession of the souls of men, for this would be an endless task, but we cannot pass over in silence the instances in which he expelled them from the human body. It is true that these victories are less important, but as they are more evident and more rare, they are more noticed. We have already spoken of the obsessed whom he released when making his visitation, and we will now narrate a few more incidents of this nature, equally deserving of remembrance.

When he was preaching the Lent at Grenoble, a gentleman requested him to visit one of his daughters, who was said to be obsessed. The Saint consented and appointed a day. When the time came, the family was awaiting his arrival, but the devil, by the mouth of the young lady, declared that the Bishop was detained by other business, and would not be able to come, and yet the young lady herself knew nothing whatever of the intended visit. Her friends were all the more confirmed in the belief of the obsession, especially when soon afterwards a messenger arrived from the Saint, apologising for his inability to attend that day. On the following day he made his appearance, took the young lady aside, spoke to her, and after various questions touched her throat, and gave her his blessing. In taking leave of the family he assured them there was nothing the matter with the damsel, that the subject was to be mentioned no more, and that in a short time she would be demanded in marriage; all of which occurred precisely as the holy man foretold. The lady was molested no more, and lived happily with the nobleman whom she espoused.

A woman of Annecy was brought to him by her

husband. She had been touched on the breast by a soldier who was looked upon as a magician, and from that moment had been very much tormented. For three successive weeks she could not eat, drink, or sleep, and was actually raving mad. The Saint took her into his chapel, heard her confession, and then administered to her the Sacrament of confirmation, immediately after which she fainted, and fell down on the altar-steps. She was soon raised up by the servants, when she said she felt so full of consolation that she was sure she must be cured. The Saint exhorted her to live in the fear of God and to frequent the Sacraments; he then dismissed her; and she was not molested any more.

One morning as he was leaving the church of the Visitation convent, he met a lady who was possessed by the malignant spirit. Calling him her good pastor, she entreated him to lighten her sufferings, and to afford her some relief. Hereupon the devil threw her on the ground, but the Saint commanded her to rise and to recite the Pater noster; he then gave her his blessing, which entirely delivered her, as was evident from the uproar which the devil made on quitting her. A report of this favour having spread through the city, many people glorified the Lord, and esteemed their saintly Bishop more than ever; but there were some few who censured him, as if he paraded the power conferred on him by God, and a satirical composition on the subject was put into his hand. He read it with the utmost composure, and said to those who were condemning his critics: "They did not notice that the lady recited the Pater noster, and that God heard her prayer, delivering her from a great evil, in order

that she might no more be led into temptation by the enemy that possessed her." And then he added, "If we did but recite this prayer according to the spirit and intention of Jesus Christ, we should find a remedy for all our evils, in the same way as I now find a remedy for this pasquinade, by saying, Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us."

He likewise delivered another lady by merely hearing her confession, giving her his pastoral benediction, and putting his hand upon her head; and yet she had been molested for a long time, and had been a nuisance to her neighbours, as well as a grievance to her family.

These numerous cases were soon rumoured abroad, and obsessed persons were brought to him from all quarters. When some attributed to the sanctity of his life the power which God had given him over devils, he cut short all such praise by saying gaily: "The fact is, these poor people have great confidence in me. I give communion to these innocent souls; I give them my blessing; I make them look up to heaven, and tell them to go in peace, that nothing is the matter with them; they believe me, and then go away declaring that the Bishop of Geneva is a saint." It is generally affirmed that he released upwards of four hundred obsessed or possessed individuals. He never argued with the devils, deeming it unbecoming, especially in presence of the people; he never named them, or did anything more than make the obsessed persons confess, give them communion, and pray for them. The most that he did was sometimes to recite the exorcisms in a whisper, and breathe on

the face of the individuals. This sufficed, and he sent them home cured, in virtue of that faith which, when perfect, can work even greater wonders. On one occasion seven or eight possessed persons were brought to him that he might exorcise them; he looked steadily at them for some time, without saying a word, till at last his steward reminded him that he ought to say a few words to the good people who had such confidence in him. Francis, apparently recollecting himself, said with a smile, "Quite right, and I shall be much pleased if Signor Rolando will teach me how to work a miracle." He addressed to them a few words of instruction and piety, gave them his blessing, and sent them home cured. He did the same to ten or twelve others, who were brought to him from Rochesevin. There was something quite shocking in the sight of their contortions; the bodies of some forming a complete circle, and rolling over the ground like wheels; whilst others vaulted aloft far beyond the natural power and agility of man. The relatives of these unfortunate creatures described the strange ways in which the devils affected them, which deeply moved the holy Bishop; he made them all go to confession, gave them communion himself, and his blessing, sending them home in peace entirely freed.

A priest of Val Romey brought to the holy prelate a whole troop of deplorable beings, who were either possessed or obsessed by the devil; they howled like wolves and barked like dogs, so that it was really piteous to behold them. The Saint looked each one steadily in the face, and then separated one of them, a youth, from the rest; he was not

possessed, but pretended to be so, in order to avoid working, and to share in the charitable succours afforded to the others. The Saint told him that he was well aware of his deceit, and desired him to acknowledge it. The poor man was astounded, and confessed his fault. Francis gave him a severe but kind reproof, made him promise to approach the holy tribunal of penance, and making a few exorcisms over the rest, sent them away cured. This circumstance proves that Almighty God had bestowed on him the gift of discernment of spirits, as well as that of power over devils.

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## CHAPTER XXXV.

### HE PREDICTS FUTURE EVENTS.

ALMIGHTY God, having ever shewn Himself so liberal to the synagogue, which He treated as a hand-maiden, enriching it with the gift of prophecy, could not withhold this gift from the Church, which He loves as a spouse. Hence, when our Lord was taking leave of His disciples, He gave them, according to the promise made by His prophet, all those graces which are called *gratis datæ*, especially that of predicting future events, to which S. Paul assigns the first place. This gift was not confined to the apostles exclusively, but has been granted to their successors and children in every age of the Church, verifying even in our latter days, the promise that some should prophesy. Saint Francis of Sales was one of this number. His careful study to conceal all that was extraordinary in him, added to his sin-

gular tact in combining an ordinary method of life with the most consummate sanctity, occasioned many of his predictions to be overlooked, or taken as mere jokes: we give a few which have been remembered. The proprietor of the Castle of Coisy was so much threatened by an enemy of his, that life had become a burthen to him. Some of his friends advised him to have recourse to the holy bishop, and Francis, after looking at him in silence for a short time, said, "Fear not, my son, it is very probable that your enemy will assail you, but his gun will miss fire; hope in God, Who, in spite of the ill will of your adversary, will not permit him to take your life." Everything happened as the Saint foretold. The man returned continual thanks to the divine goodness, and ever afterwards looked upon the Bishop as a great saint.

Twice, when his people were alarmed about war, he assured them that they would have nothing worse to suffer than their own fears. When he was ill-treated for no other reason than because his friends were attached to him, he foretold that a day would come when it would be no crime to love him, as it then seemed to be.

Once when the city of Annecy was in great dread of a famine, the Saint, to console his people, entered the pulpit, and promised that if they would but observe the laws of God, this chastisement would not befall them, adding, with great energy, "Hunger after God, and God will expel hunger from your bodies; for, as our Blessed Lady sings, He will fill the hungry with good things." The event verified the prediction; the people conceived an ardent desire of serving the Lord with greater perfection, and



were freed from the threatened scourge, in the same way as they had been delivered from their fears, by the emphasis and force of the Saint's words.

Bernard Paris, the baker who supplied the Bishop's household, went to speak to him one morning, as he was taking breakfast with two Barnabite Fathers. As usual, the baker was accompanied by his little daughter, who was delighted at being noticed and petted by the good Bishop, according to his custom with children. On this particular occasion, after caressing her for some time, he said, "My little girl, you will not pass your seventeenth year." And so it turned out, though at the time the child paid no attention to his words. However, when she died, the two Barnabite Fathers recollected the circumstance, and thenceforward revered the holy prelate more than ever. He likewise foretold the death of James Mouxy, Abbot of Sixt, telling one of his nephews positively that the Abbot would not outlive the following month. Well was it for him that the Saint had won his affection; he said several times to Francis, "I remit myself, my property, and my soul into your hands." To this, in great measure, may be ascribed his pious death, for Francis first settled the dissensions which had long existed between him and his religious, then heard his general confession, and did all that was necessary to help him to die well.

I have said that many of his prophecies appeared like jokes, as for instance when the Mother de Chantal said to him one day that she felt convinced he would be canonized, and that she hoped to have a hand in the affair, he answered very seriously that God could work even such a miracle

as that, but that the persons were not yet born who were to act effectively in the work. This proved to be the case; for the Mother de Chaugy was not born till some months after this conversation, whilst Father de Chaugy, her brother, was still younger; and these were the two main instruments of this great work, which cost them infinite pains. They had to recommence the whole affair, as the first processes taken in the lifetime of Mother de Chantal were declared null and void through the omission of some necessary formalities.

The Seigneur of Chatillon, of the illustrious house of Varax, sent two of his sons, accompanied by a priest, to receive the tonsure at the hands of the Bishop. Francis happened to be absent from Annecy, and they were accordingly presented to his brother and coadjutor, the Bishop of Chalcedon. Having examined them, he only conferred it on the younger of the two, because the eldest, named James, candidly owned that he had no wish to be a priest. On their return to the castle, the father was exceedingly angry to find that one of the youths had not been tonsured. A few days later, ascertaining that the Saint was at home, he sent his son to him, accompanied by the same priest. Francis asked the youth whether he wished to be a priest. He answered, No; adding that he hoped to marry and have children, but that he came to ask for the tonsure in obedience to his father. Then Francis, with a prophetic spirit, said, "Well, my son, I will not on this account withhold the tonsure; you will marry and have children, notwithstanding which you will be a priest, and what is more, a good servant of the Lord." All this was verified; he married Mademoi-

selle de Leuron, of the house of Savigny, and had sons and daughters: one of the former was Gaspar Count of Chatillon, and one of the latter became a Visitation nun. After the death of his wife he took holy orders, and led so exemplary a life as to give general edification, especially by his spirit of recollection, and by his austerities; finally he died, and as Francis predicted, was looked upon as a great servant of God.

Moreover, he foretold the future of the celebrated Abbé Olier, a priest of remarkable virtue, and well-known in France for the many great works he effected for the glory of God. We were informed of this prediction by the person who acted as tutor to the abbé in his youth. The tutor stated that the family of Olier held Francis in singular veneration, as indeed was often proved both during his life and after his death. Madame Olier was his spiritual daughter for a long time, and being at Lyons with her husband, at the time that the Saint passed through in the suite of the Prince of Savoy, she went to visit him, taking with her the abbé her son, then a mere child. In the course of conversation with the holy prelate she expressed her apprehensions about her son, saying that he was talented, but so lively and impetuous that she feared he would turn out ill. The Saint comforted her, bade her pray for him, as he would likewise do, and promised to tell her something in a few days which would gratify her very much. In fact, he met her a few days after, and told her not to distress herself about her son, for that he would be a great servant of God, and a great source of consolation to her; and he repeated this, declaring that he was more than

persuaded of it. This son was afterwards the founder of the priests of S. Sulpice at Paris, and his memory is still revered as that of a man illustrious for sanctity and learning.

A parish priest belonging to the province of Lyons, having a great respect for the holy Bishop, went forth at the head of his parishioners to meet him as he passed through his parish, and so arranged the younger portion of his flock as to form a double line along the road. As Francis, accompanied by the curate, passed along, blessing the children on either side, he caught sight of a little girl whom he paused to look at; then, turning to the priest, he recommended her particularly to his care, telling him that in time she would become a great servant of God. Those who overheard the remark took notice of it. The girl married, and was left a widow, in which state she lived, in the practice of great virtue, till the year 1680, when she died in the odour of sanctity. She was known in the country by the name of Mother Mary Meraude.

The Saint foresaw many things relating to the Order of the Visitation. He wrote once to the Mother de Chantal: "I promise myself that our Lord will set this plant, will water it with the dew of His benedictions, and will make it fructify unto sanctification." Still more remarkable were his words to a noble young lady called Gasparde d'Avise. She went from Chambéry to Annecy, to ask admission into the new Order. The Saint already knew this by revelation, and had even announced it to Madame de Chantal. No sooner had she preferred her request than he said to her:

“You are welcome, dear daughter: I have long known that you would belong to us; even when you were an infant in arms God gave me a special zeal for your salvation; however, I would not have you attach yourself to me, but to Him.” The lady was astonished at his words, never having so much as hinted her intention to him; neither could the Saint have suspected it from her behaviour, for she was particularly addicted to vanity and secular pursuits. Her surprise was still greater when the Mother de Chantal told her that the Saint had assured her that a lady of rank would enter the convent on the festival of the Epiphany, of whom he had foretold at her baptism that she would be a nun and one of his spiritual daughters.

Although it may seem foreign to our purpose, the reader will perhaps be glad to know the manner in which she was called to religion. She beheld in her sleep a broad road, extending from Annecy up to heaven. At the entrance of this road were three very brilliant stars. At the same time she seemed to hear a voice telling her that she would never reach heaven unless she united herself to these three stars. She was unable to interpret her dream, though the strong impression it made on her convinced her that there was some mystery in it, till she heard of the foundation of the new order by three pious ladies. An interior impulse convinced her that this was the road by which she was to ascend to heaven. During her noviciate she was tempted in every possible way by the devil; and, from the remembrance of the flesh-pots of Egypt, she almost longed to return to the world. The good prelate was informed of her interior trials, and after recom-

mending her to God, went to hear her confession ; being satisfied that the failing, instead of proceeding from inconstancy of character, was solely attributable to the malice and stratagem of the devil. After his Mass, in which she communicated, he sent for her, and recited over her the prayer "Respice, quæsumus Domine," which occurs in the service of Holy Week. This was sufficient ; for at that moment he felt an assurance of her perseverance. He therefore told her in case the temptation again returned, to say the following words with fervour : "Depart, Satan ; my dear father has assured me that my vocation is from God." Thenceforth she herself felt fortified by the right hand of the Most High, and persevered in the exercise of religious virtue until her death.

When there was an idea of founding a house of his Order in Paris, some persons wished that, instead of a new foundation, his nuns should be entrusted with that of the penitents of S. Mary Magdalen, then just beginning. When a personage of importance told him that the Cardinal de Retz would not agree to this, he was silent for a little while, and then said that the establishment of S. Mary Magdalen, which was as it were struggling into existence, would prosper well, and far better than was expected ; nevertheless the care of it would not as yet be given to his daughters. And so it turned out ; for after the convent of the Visitation had been founded some time, a few of the nuns were sent by the Archbishop's orders to take charge of the penitents. This house continued to give such edification that the Saint was highly commended on its account, and his own institute thus gained considerable assist-

ance. The Visitation nuns governed this house for forty years, and did not resign the charge of it until the most perfect order was established.

As he was one day leaving the chapel of the convent at Belley, he met a lady, leading her little daughter, about five or six years of age, by the hand. The Saint stopped to caress her, called her by her name, though he had never heard it before, made the sign of the cross on her forehead, and kissed her, saying that he had marked her as one of our Blessed Lady's daughters, and that she was to be good and dutiful to her. The event proved that his words were prophetic, for she became a nun of his order.

Whilst the process for the Saint's canonization was going on, a heretic came forward of his own accord to be examined. The offer could not be accepted, his evidence on oath being inadmissible in a case of this nature; but he publicly declared that he had long been acquainted with Mgr. de Sales, and had watched him narrowly, yet could never detect anything in him unworthy of a great prelate, and of an apostolic man. He repeated the same thing several times, adding, "I never heard him say but one thing that I disapproved of, and that is, that I shall be converted to the Catholic faith before I die; so far, at all events, his prediction has not been verified." Although the man may not have intended it at the time he thus spoke, he soon afterwards abjured heresy, thus completely verifying it, and adding strength to his own testimony.

At Paris he met with Madame de Chamoussé, then near her confinement. He foretold her that she would give birth to a daughter, who would

become a nun. The first part of the prediction was soon verified; but as the young lady grew up she was so completely immersed in the vanities of the world that there seemed but little probability of her ever being a nun; but at last, being miraculously delivered from the power of a gentleman who had carried her off, and who out of revenge for her disregard of his affection broke two of her fingers, she entered the Visitation Order. She was afterwards sent to assist in founding a convent at Aosta, and governed the house as superior for a considerable time.

It would be endless to attempt to narrate all the cases of this nature. Not to weary the reader, we will conclude this chapter with the epitaph of one of the Saint's spiritual daughters, who after governing the house at Modena died in the odour of sanctity. "There lie in this urn one body and many hearts. The Venerable Mother Mary Margaret de Balland, born of noble parents at Chambéry, a living relic of the holy Founder, who caressed her in her infancy, and foretold that she would one day be his daughter, is buried here. She was the first, and perchance the last in her order, who at the early age of twenty-one was raised to the rank of superior. Later, she was the first stone of this foundation, the delight of afflicted souls, the mirror of every virtue; wise in counsel, strict in discipline, gentle in government, rich in talent, great in the esteem of others, little in her own. She reached the age of ninety-five, a long period according to the measure of time, but far too short for the common wish of all. She took her flight to heaven in the track of the Dove of Carmel, on the fifteenth day of October, 1707."



## CHAPTER XXXVI.

## FRANCIS PENETRATES HIDDEN THINGS.

God having destined the holy prelate to stand in the Church as a sun which gives light and dazzles the eyes of the people, who can only admire such things as are rare, conferred on him the power of doing things which are beyond the ordinary course of nature.

Having spoken of other gifts bestowed upon him, we will now show that he was enabled to penetrate hearts, a power usually reserved to God alone, but occasionally imparted to a few of His faithful servants. It is well attested that many who had occasion to converse with our Saint, were astonished to find him already aware of their most secret thoughts and desires, which could only be known to God and themselves. We will merely select a few cases from the many which have come to our knowledge.

One evening, René de la Valbon, son of the President Favre, and himself Governor of the territory of Geneva, called upon Francis to impart to him some subject of distress, which weighed heavily on his mind. No sooner did he make his appearance than the Saint, taking him by the hand, led him to his own room, and read to him some chapters from the treatise on the love of God, which he was then composing. They were selected so much to the purpose that the Governor withdrew quite comforted; for though he had not said a word about

his distress, those chapters had completely solved the doubts he intended to propose, and he inferred that the Saint had penetrated his mind, without any declaration being needed on his part.

Madame de Beauséjour found no consolation in the midst of her tribulations equal to that of visiting our Saint, who (she was convinced) frequently penetrated intuitively the secrets of her heart. She sometimes went to him expressly with this hope, and one evening in particular, when her anguish was unusually deep, she repaired to a church in which she knew he was to give Benediction. Perceiving her in the church, he accosted her (a thing which he seldom did) in these words: "Daughter, how is your heart? I pray God to bless it, and I feel assured that He will do so." Short as was the sentence, it completely restored peace to her heart.

A Savoyard nobleman (brother to him who had so shamefully molested the Saint, and who likewise bore him great ill-will) was at enmity with another nobleman, and their mutual rancour was daily on the increase. The latter entered Annecy at the head of twelve horsemen, resolved to provoke his adversary to a duel. As he was passing the windows of the Bishop's palace, he was accidentally seen and saluted by the Saint, who made a sign that he wished to speak to him; he therefore dismounted, and Francis went out to meet him. In the course of conversation the Saint told him all that he had planned to do, to the utter astonishment of the gentleman, who had not hinted his design to any one. Francis then exhorted him most earnestly to peace, and pleaded so successfully that both parties selected

him as arbitrator. In a few days matters were so well adjusted that the two gentlemen, who previously had sworn enmity to the death, became good friends.

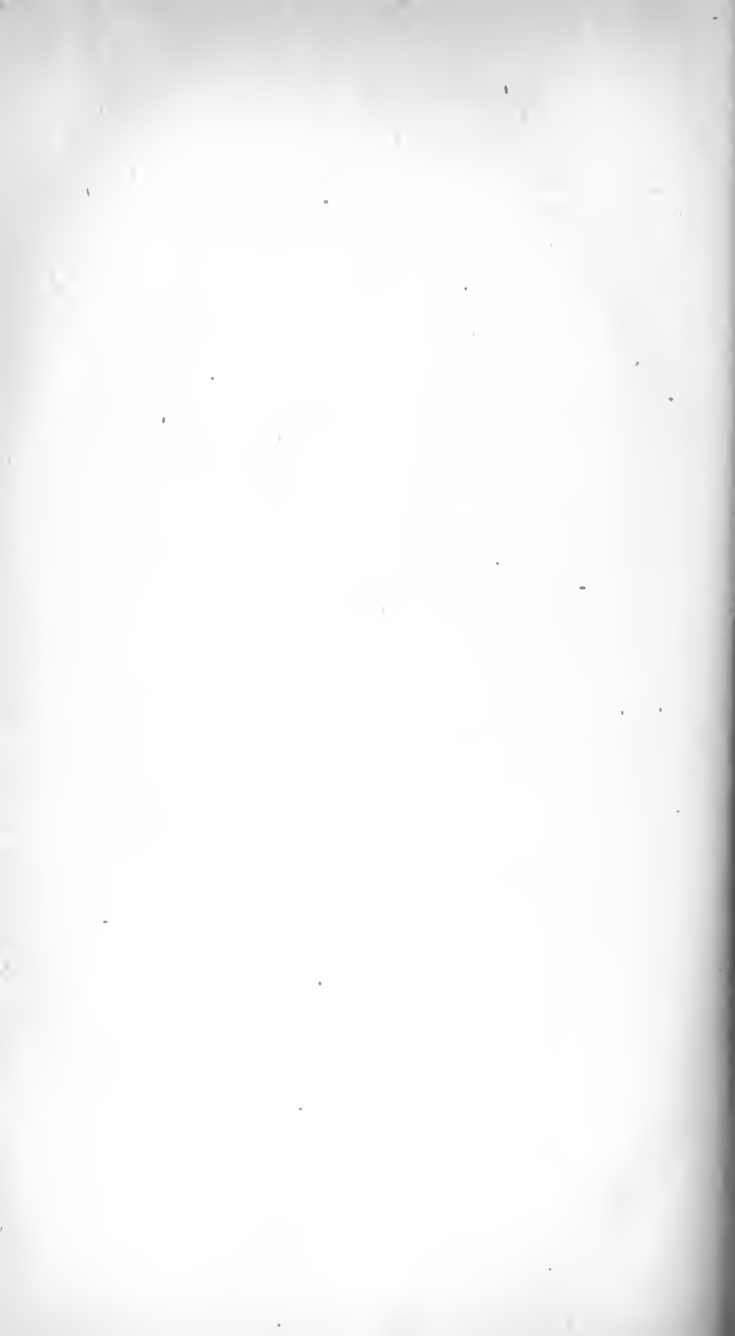
By means of those lights which enabled him to penetrate the secrets of consciences, he saved several novices from proving faithless to the grace of religious vocation, and others who had no vocation from embracing that state. In one convent, when the nuns were on the point of giving the habit to a young lady, he exhorted her not to put it on, privately telling the community that she had no true vocation, but that she applied for it with the full intention of laying it aside as soon as she had overcome a secret attachment.

But above all, the Saint excelled in the great art of leading each soul in the path best suited to it. Generally speaking, when he advised persons, either by word of mouth or writing, to enter the religious state, they interiorly felt themselves so strongly impelled to follow the advice, that they could not for a moment doubt but that the Spirit of God directed that of the Saint. Such was the case with the Mother Helen Angelica l'Uiller, one of the most distinguished members of the house at Paris, who in spite of her great natural repugnance, and of the opposition of her family, entered the Visitation Order, in consequence of a letter from the holy man, who assured her that such was the will of God. If on this occasion a letter gained him one daughter, he retained another in a far more extraordinary manner. At Nevers, a very pious young lady took the habit, but having entered as a lay-sister she was obliged to renounce her own will perpetually, so

that by degrees the yoke of religion became irksome, and she resolved to quit the Order, under the specious pretext of want of health and strength. Being endowed with excellent qualities, the nuns were unwilling to lose her, but as they would never detain those who wished to go away, it was decided that she should leave at the expiration of three days. That same night the Saint appeared to her in a dream, in his pontifical robes, and in his usually gentle manner desired her not to leave the convent from the fear of being overworked, because as his Institute recommended the practice of sweetness and charity, charity neither imposes nor feels any insupportable weight; but she was so resolutely bent on leaving the convent that she paid no attention to this warning. The night following the Saint again appeared to her; his countenance and manner were more severe than before, and he said to her: "Why do you persist in the idea of going away? Did I not tell you that you are to remain, and that our Lord will be with you, and help you to carry the yoke of your state?" Hereupon the damsel replied that she would willingly embrace the yoke, since he assured her that God would assist her to carry it, promising him never to quit it. In fact, she went next morning to the superior, prostrated herself at her feet, with many tears entreated to be allowed to remain, and related what had happened, to the great surprise and delight of the mother, who felt convinced that the holy founder, though absent, still watched over the welfare of the infant establishment.

A young Parisian lady was very anxious to consult him, but his incessant occupations always pre-

vented it. One day he said to her: "Daughter, I know you before God. Go on as you have begun, and be assured that you shall be present to me in prayer, as one of the dearest of my Philotheas." From these words she knew that he understood her heart, and conceiving a due esteem of him, she requested admission into his order, where she was known as Sister Marie Denise de Martignat.



## BOOK IV.

THE LAST LABOURS, DEATH, MIRACLES, AND  
CANONIZATION OF ST. FRANCIS DE SALES.





## BOOK IV.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### THE SAINT ACCOMPANIES THE CARDINAL OF SAVOY TO PARIS.

PEACE was concluded between the Duke of Savoy, the Spaniards, and the Duke of Mantua, at the beginning of the year 1618. As Louis XIII. of France had taken a lively interest in the affair, the Duke was anxious to strengthen the cause of the Prince of Piedmont, his son, by marrying him to a French princess. He sent the Baron de Marcieux to Paris, on the pretext of returning thanks for the assistance afforded him during the war, and for the good offices of His Majesty in effecting an honourable and advantageous peace. But besides this commission, he was also to ascertain whether the king would be willing to bestow his sister the Princess Christina in marriage on the Prince of Piedmont. The court seemed disposed in favour of the match. Henry IV. aware of the merits of the prince, as well as of the importance of being on friendly terms with Savoy, had already had the same idea, and amongst his papers was found a note, desiring that if such a thing were demanded it should be granted. De Marcieux, ascertaining this

circumstance, informed the Duke of it, and he, considering that the baron was not a person of sufficient importance to make the formal demand, decided on sending for this purpose his son the Prince-Cardinal, appointing the Bishop of Geneva to act as his companion and counsellor. The Duke knew that this arrangement would please the Prince, who highly esteemed and loved Francis, to whom he accordingly wrote, desiring him to prepare for the journey, and expressing his delight at being accompanied by him. The Saint thought himself justified in seconding the wishes of his sovereign, and committed the care of his diocese during his absence to men of acknowledged piety and worth. Dear as his diocese was to him, he considered it his duty to promote the interests of the States of Savoy, and not to oppose Providence, which had selected him for this important task. He also remembered that S. Ambrose and other holy bishops had acted as ambassadors in order to serve the state. He had besides another motive for undertaking the journey, namely, that as part of his diocese was now in the territory of France, he could not accomplish all that he deemed necessary for the restoration of religion in that part of it without the consent of the king, which he had a better chance of obtaining at court than at a distance; and it was probably with this view that he promised the Rector of S. Andrew's at Paris to preach the Advent and Lent in his church, his journey with the Prince Cardinal giving him an excellent opportunity of redeeming his promise.

He therefore answered his Highness that he considered himself honoured by his choice, and that he

would hold himself in readiness to join the Cardinal as he passed through Annecy. Having arranged the affairs of the diocese, and commended it to the care of suitable officials, he set out in the retinue of the Prince-Cardinal, who was accompanied by Philibert Gerard Scalia, Count of Verrua, and Anthony Favre. This is as good as saying that the Duke surrounded his son by the most distinguished personages of his dominions; but the direction and guidance of the young Prince was left in the hands of the holy Bishop, the others being merely to act as councillors. Above all, the Duke, considering that these three personages were intimate friends, was satisfied that they would all do their best for the welfare of the Prince, and would shun whatever could prejudice his interests.

They were received in Paris and by the court with all the demonstrations of respect due to the rank of the Prince and to the worth of the others. Francis met with several of his old friends and easily acquired new ones, the works which he had published having gained him the reputation of being a learned as well as a holy prelate. No affair of importance was decided without first asking his advice, and no pious meeting took place to which he was not invited. People flocked in crowds to consult him on their doubts and cases of conscience, or to place themselves under his direction, everybody expressing astonishment that one man could suffice for so many and such different occupations. In the midst of them all, however, he contrived to preach the Lent at S. Andrew's, and the whole of Paris assisted at his sermons, so that it was with difficulty that even bishops and cardinals could secure seats.

As usual, he preached on solid topics, not seeking to obtain the reputation of an eloquent preacher, but to gain souls to God. His example put the finishing stroke to what his sermons began, and he converted numbers of sinners, heretics, and atheists. His sermons soon became in request; he was asked to preach in many of the churches of Paris, the Oratoire, the College of the Jesuits, and several monasteries, as well as before the king and the court. These requests for his sermons were so multiplied that he has been known to preach two and three times in the same day, scarcely allowing himself an interval of rest. He himself thus wrote to a confidential friend: "So many people come to me to learn how they are to serve our Lord, that I can scarcely satisfy them all. Assist me with your prayers, for my desire to serve them is great beyond expression; but I give nourishment to so many children that I should faint myself unless God sustained me." His frequent visits to hospitals, to the sick (even those afflicted by pestilence,) his incessant labours, sermons, and private conferences, threw him into a serious illness. Then it was that the respect and affection of the Parisians were most signally displayed. The Palais Ancre, where he resided, was besieged by personages of the highest rank, and indeed of every rank, all eagerly enquiring after his health, whilst all who could visit him strove to do so. As during these visits spiritual topics or business of importance were often discussed, his attendants exhorted him to refuse them as they were really prejudicial to his health, but he answered that he knew not how to refuse his neighbour this slight satisfaction when it was asked;

that ten years more or less of life mattered but little, but that it becomes us to labour whilst we live, because we are children begotten by the labours and death of our Redeemer.

As soon as his health was somewhat re-established, he resumed his usual occupations with renewed fervour, and it has been positively affirmed that during his sojourn in Paris, the number of his sermons surpassed that of the days of the year. Many were astonished how he could get through so much.

We must not omit his answer to Father Stephen Binet, S.J., who, remonstrating with him as a friend, respectfully told him that if he thus undertook to preach whenever he was asked, his health would soon be destroyed. Francis answered: "My dear father, what can I do? I have a heart that can refuse nothing to my neighbour. It costs me less to preach a sermon than to give a refusal: I prefer preaching to saying No." This answer plainly shows to what a point he carried his condescension. Father Binet was so delighted with it that he declared that it was worth more than a dozen miracles.

In Paris Francis converted a very brave man, but a most obstinate heretic, the Governor of La Fère in Picardy, who was ill. Perceiving the holy prelate entering his room, together with some of his friends who had often extolled the Saint to him, he cried out, "Ah! ah! my lord bishop, what brings you here? You expect to make a convert of me to your faith; if you succeed you will work a greater miracle than S. Peter ever did." The Saint smiled, saying that he did not know what God intended him

to do, and from this remark took occasion to speak unreservedly to him. The consequence was that the Saint completely convinced him of the truth, but he asked for a week's delay, that he might consult Du Moulin, a celebrated Huguenot minister. As this man was unable to solve his doubts, and declined to meet the Saint in his presence, the governor was convinced that his cause was a bad one. He therefore requested Francis to instruct him, abjured his errors, and, thanks to the Saint's prayers, recovered his health. Returning to the government of his district, he persevered in his religion, and had the satisfaction of seeing his whole family embrace the Catholic faith.

At the request of Madame de Montigny, Francis had a discussion with another heretical gentleman, who told him that if he could only prove the existence of such a place as purgatory he would become a Catholic. The Saint quietly opened the Holy Scriptures, which his attendant always carried for him wherever he went, and selecting various texts, satisfied the enquirer. The argument was a long one, but it sufficed to convert him. Another, who went to argue with him out of curiosity, merely to see whether he was as learned as he was said to be, was caught in the net of his own curiosity, and converted to the faith. By the force of mere natural reason he also succeeded in convincing a personage of high rank, already advanced in years, who had hitherto been a confirmed atheist. With bitter tears did this man deplore his errors, and do penance for his sins.

There was a priest condemned to death for great excesses, who shewed not the slightest sign of

repentance. Francis visited, exhorted, and encouraged him, and had the satisfaction of seeing him die contrite; having persuaded him to accept of death in penance for his sins, and having restored hope to his heart, which before had been filled with despair on account of his crimes. When a bishop told Francis that he was losing his time in visiting this unfortunate priest, and that he had much better go to court, where he was expected, the man of God replied, "Ah, brother, I am making my court to the heart of this prodigal son, and happy indeed shall I deem myself if I can but reconduct him to his father."

But we should weary the reader were we to enumerate all the conversions which he effected during his year's residence at Paris. We will however relate the means he employed to prevent a convert from relapsing into heresy. Among the many persons who were anxious to converse with our Saint, being attracted by the fame of his sanctity and learning, was Philip Jacobs, a German, formerly acting as a minister in the Palatinate, but who had recently abjured heresy. He was a harsh, rough man, full of self-conceit, the usual effect of moderate learning joined to a high notion of one's own wisdom. Besides his naturally extravagant fancies, he cherished the Calvinist prejudices against bishops and their order, so that it seemed very doubtful whether he would persevere in the Catholic faith, or return to his heresy. He called at the Saint's lodgings, and imperiously demanded a private interview. Francis received him courteously, and desired the servants to give him a chair, whereupon Philip entered upon a string of interrogations which clearly

shewed the real tendency of his mind. In the first place, he inquired what had brought him to Paris, whether the apostles rode about in coaches, as he had seen him do, and whether it was lawful to spend ecclesiastical revenues in pompous displays like his? The Saint replied with his usual meekness, that he came to Paris to consolidate the peace agreed upon between the two crowns. That as for himself he had neither carriage nor splendid retinue; that when the Genevese usurped the revenues of his see, they took care to provide against anything of the sort, so that if he had the will he had not the means of making a display; but that the loss of his revenues was a mere trifle to him, compared to the loss of their souls. That whenever he had been seen in a coach, it was either that of the Prince Cardinal of Savoy, or of His Majesty, who frequently honoured him in this way out of respect to his episcopal rank. That, as for the apostles, they seem to have made use of carriages when occasion offered, since we read that S. Philip entered the chariot of the eunuch of the Queen of Ethiopia. The Saint, in relating this discussion, added: "I knew that this Philip was not the apostle; but we must not be too particular: moreover, as he was certainly an apostolic man, the argument was equally conclusive."

Philip continuing his interrogatory, said: "But how is your flock going on, now that you are at a distance? Is not residence the duty of the episcopate? Are bishops now-a-days like those of the primitive church? Are they the successors of the apostles? Have they the gift of miracles?" The Saint answered that previous to quitting his diocese,



he had entrusted his flock to the care of men more learned than himself, therefore he had no fear that it would suffer from his absence. That generally speaking he considered residence a divine law, and that he was well aware of its importance; nevertheless he conceived that the interests of the state and of his diocese would be best promoted by his personal appearance at court, and therefore he conceived this a sufficiently lawful dispensation for temporary non-residence. That the bishops of the present day were like those of the primitive Church, had the same power and dignity, and were the true successors of the apostles; but even if they were only their shadows, it was well known that the shadow of S. Peter worked miracles. That the apostle himself had decided the question, when he wrote that miracles were for unbelievers, and not for the faithful; nevertheless, if it were necessary for the establishment of the Church, God as its Author would (in order to induce the people to embrace it,) now renew the power of working miracles, according to His own pleasure, because this gift was nowhere promised exclusively to the apostles; but as the faith is now spread throughout the world, miracles being no longer necessary, are become more rare.

The minister continued his cross-questioning for two full hours, with undiminished insolence, till at length, raising his hand, he said, "If I gave you a blow on one cheek, would you offer me the other, as the gospel prescribes?" Francis replied, "I know not whether I should, but I very well know that I ought." This meekness touched Philip's heart, and completely satisfied him. Thanking the holy prelate, he told him that he was but recently converted,

and that these doubts had been perpetually haunting him. That he considered Almighty God had highly favoured him, by allowing him to meet with a man of such virtue and learning; declaring that if Francis had not treated him with such gentleness and moderation, he should undoubtedly have returned to Calvinism the very next day. He everywhere spoke of Francis as a Saint, saying that humility and meekness are so essential to sanctity, that had he found them wanting in the Bishop of Geneva, he should at once have set him down as a hypocrite and an impostor.

This same man was received by our Saint the following year at Annecy. Philip had been to Italy, and as his finances were at a low ebb, Francis with his usual charity, defrayed all the expenses of the residence of himself and his wife at Annecy for six weeks. When the Saint went to Lyons he was again visited by Philip, and procured him abundant alms by his influence with the inhabitants of that city.

No doubt the same Providence which has occasionally led holy solitaries to the courts of princes, when the interests of God were to be promoted, regulated the journeys of our Saint to the court of France, where he wrought so many conversions and benefited so many souls. He made his appearance there with so much modesty, humility, and devotion, that his mere presence inspired piety, even in persons accustomed to think but little of Almighty God; and so highly was he esteemed that people were eager to look at him, to touch his garments, or to have some trifle belonging to him to keep as a relic. Many went so far as to prevail on his servants to put their handkerchiefs in his pocket,

that he might use them to remove the perspiration from his brow, after which these handkerchiefs were carefully preserved, and, when applied to the sick, effected innumerable cures, as did likewise locks of his hair. The Grand Prior of France, Alexander de Vendôme, told the Princess Christina that she ought to look on the mountains (whither God was conducting her) as a beautiful shell, in which our Lord had enclosed the most precious pearl of the Church, namely, the Bishop of Geneva. On another occasion he styled him a jewel in which the Divinity was set. A nobleman of great worth also said that after having long observed the life and conduct of Francis, he was compelled to believe that God had sent this visible angel into the world in order to carry out the plan which He had formed from all eternity, of an exalted but wholly secular virtue, adapted to people living in the world. The venerable servant of God, Vincent of Paul, said that whenever he wanted to figure to himself Jesus conversing amongst men, he could find no more life-like representation of Him than the holy Bishop of Geneva, especially in point of gentleness, sweetness, prudence, and humility, and of the zeal with which he could win over souls either to the faith or to a life of piety. So general was the opinion of his sanctity that he was requested by Henry of Savoy, Duke of Nemours, to baptize his eldest son, to whom was given the Saint's name, as an inducement to Francis to pray for him.

It must not be supposed that he sought for vain applause, or that he affected any singularity in order to gain the esteem of men. He was the enemy of all display; but who can hide the city

that is built upon a mountain? He even studied to render himself despised, though this only turned out to his praise, as was particularly the case on one occasion when he had to preach before the king and court. His audience was most illustrious, comprising the king, two queens, several cardinals, bishops, dukes, and other nobles, besides which the church was so crowded that the Saint could only find ingress through one of the windows. He began his sermon in a strain of fervid eloquence, which enchanted his eager listeners, but after this magnificent preface he gave with studied simplicity an epitome of the life of S. Martin (whose festival it was), doing this expressly to draw contempt upon himself, on an occasion when any other man would have endeavoured to win applause. When one of his penitents remonstrated with him upon such a line of conduct, telling him that that was not the time and place to seek his own abjection, Francis answered with a smile, "Do you forget what country I come from? How can you expect delicate fruit from a rough tree of the mountain?" And yet it was said that in him was verified the axiom, "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted," for even the simplest and most unadorned of his discourses were listened to with veneration, and produced amendment of life. On the feast of S. Geneviève he preached so admirably in her honour at the church of the Sulpicians, that his audience declared that S. Germain must have returned on earth to teach the Parisians by his mouth how they were to honour their holy patroness.

Generally speaking, his sermons were much admired. Madame de Montpensier used to say that

he had irreparably injured her, for that now no other preacher could satisfy her, their discourses merely flying through the air, whereas he, the orator of divine love, pounced at once upon his prey, and made himself master of one's heart. Preaching on the 14th of January in the church of S. Mary Magdalen, he took for his text these words of the apostle, "Christ became obedient for us even unto death." After the sermon a heretic reproved him for selecting a text which was out of season, to which Francis answered with a smile, that he chose it as a reproach to himself, for his disobedience to the Church. The man was so startled by the remark that, lowering his haughty tone to one of docility, he begged the Saint to instruct him, and was soon converted to the faith.

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## CHAPTER II.

### INSTANCES OF HIS DETACHMENT FROM RICHES.

FRANCIS wrote in confidence to a religious that he learnt to be more simple and less worldly when at court, and this was well seen during his sojourn at the court of France. After preaching the Lent at S. Andrew's, a present of silver plate was forwarded to him for acceptance, but he refused it, as he had often done before, for he desired no other reward for his apostolic labours than the conversion of souls.

On his recovery from the illness before mentioned, he went to court to thank their majesties,

who had often sent to enquire after him. He was advised to ask for the abbey of S. Geneviève, then vacant. The king in all probability would have granted it, although it is one of the richest in France, and would even have felt a pleasure in bestowing it upon him. His friends reminded him that its revenues would enable him to support his dignity, and also to succour the poor more abundantly; but Francis declared that he had no personal wants, and that as for the poor, God would not fail to provide for them; and he positively refused to make any such request, saying, "I will take good care to ask no such thing. How could I ask for an abbey, when I would actually refuse it if it were offered to me?" And to a friend, who pressed him to accept a donation, on the plea of being able to succour Christ in His poor, he gave this beautiful answer: "Your lordship tries to tempt me, knowing my weakness on the point of compassion to the necessities of my neighbour; you must know, however, that in imitation of the apostle, it is my maxim to content myself with having decent food and raiment; the honour of discharging the ministry confided to me by God is sufficient; I seek no interest of my own, nor ought I under the pretext of giving alms, to seek honours, or think of increasing my own revenues." His conduct proved that he spoke from his heart.

The king and court repairing to Fontainebleau, Francis was obliged to follow the Prince Cardinal thither. As he was walking one day in the garden, he met the Cardinal de Retz, Archbishop of Paris, who told him that he was glad to meet him alone, as he had long been wishing to speak to him; and

without further preface, he described his position at court, and in the king's council, which involved him in affairs of state so much that he found but little time to attend to the government of the vast diocese of Paris; that the latter charge would suffice of itself to claim his whole attention, whereas he could give it little or none; that he felt alarmed at the account he should have to give to God, and therefore was anxious to put his conscience at rest, for which purpose he appealed to Francis for advice.

The Saint was incapable of flattery or of smoothing over the defects of the great. He answered at once that the Cardinal conferred too great an honour on him in thus consulting him on a point of such importance; that his Eminence was right in attending to the reproofs of his conscience, and that he saw no means of appeasing it, otherwise than by resigning his ministerial appointment or his bishopric. Hereupon the Cardinal stated that he had found another expedient, which he had proposed to the king, and which had met with the royal approbation, "and this is," continued the Cardinal, "to take you for my coadjutor, and then leave you to rule the diocese instead of me. You must perceive how much the people love you, and how much good you are doing here. The see of Geneva can be resigned to your brother, the king undertaking to arrange all this with His Highness. The king, moreover, offers you a pension of twenty thousand *livres*, and will defray all the expenses for the bulls; in fine, he will spare nothing for an object which is so important for the glory of God. Paris needs a bishop like you. You possess the esteem and affection of everyone, and from the good you have already

done here it is clear that you would not be able to do as much in the diocese of Geneva. This is the king's wish ; I entreat it of you, and I shall deem myself obliged by your acceptance of the offer." Francis, who had not the slightest idea of such a proposal, was exceedingly surprised, but answered at once that he felt bound to thank His Majesty and His Eminence for such offers ; that he felt it his duty candidly to disclose what he really was, and then His Eminence would readily change his purpose. That he felt himself so incapable of governing his own diocese as to be compelled to look out for a coadjutor, and that therefore to accept the government of the more extensive see of Paris would be the extreme of rashness. That God wished him to be Bishop of Geneva, and as that church had been given him for his spouse, he would on no account forsake her. That he was already advanced in years, and liable to frequent infirmities ; that he stood more in need of repose than of labour, and, to open his heart fully to him, he was actually thinking of retiring into solitude for the rest of his days, in order to prepare for death, if he could but resign his pastoral charge. He concluded by beseeching His Eminence to assist him in accomplishing this project, laying aside all thought of preventing it by pressing upon him a still heavier burthen, and one so far beyond his strength.

These words penetrated the Cardinal to the heart, and, admiring the detachment of Francis, he remarked how different the maxims of the Saints are from those of worldlings, who though devoid of merit, strive to obtain those dignities of which the former deem themselves unworthy. He reiterated his en-



treaties, but the Saint firmly yet modestly declined the offers.

The next day, when speaking to the President Favre of these proposals, Francis told him in confidence that his heart had pleased him very much the day before, when, so far from exulting in those offers, it had despised them, making no more account of them than it would had he been at the point of death, when all appears like smoke.

To those who advised him to accept a richer bishopric or a pension, on account of the poverty of his see, he used to say that he considered himself as rich as any of the bishops in France, because his revenues, which appeared so slender to others, were quite sufficient for his wants; that they who had more only spent more, and so at the end of the year were no richer than himself; hence he could say with the apostle, "things that were gain to me, the same have I counted loss for Christ." (Phil. iii. 7.) That these temporal advantages, if he had them, would hinder rather than aid him in the service of the Lord. He wrote these and similar sentiments to his confidential friends. In a letter to a nun of his Order he says, "I assure you that the sight of all this worldly grandeur seems to enhance the greatness of Christian virtue, and leads me to despise the former. What a difference between an assemblage of these pretenders (for the court is such an assemblage and nothing else) and an assemblage of religious who have no other pretensions but heaven! Oh, if we did but know in what true happiness consists! Do not fear that any court favour could attract me: it is far better to be poor in the house of God than to dwell in the

palaces of kings. I am now making my noviciate at court, but, God willing, I shall never make my profession there. On Christmas Eve I preached before the Queen, in the church belonging to the Capuchin nuns, where Her Majesty communicated; but I assure you, I neither preached better, nor with better heart, before all these princes and princesses, than I do in our poor little Visitation Convent at Annecy."

He thus writes to the nuns at Annecy: "I am now in a somewhat larger world than when I am in my ordinary home near you; and the more I see of this miserable world the less do I like it. I do not think I could remain in it, if the power of serving some good souls in their progress to perfection did not afford me some relief."

But the projects for his aggrandisement did not stop here; for in the following year the Mother de Chantal wrote to ask him his real opinion with regard to the rumoured promotion. He answered her as follows: "I can have no idea that anything will be done in the matter you allude to, unless God absolutely wills it so. For in the first place I at once told the Lord Cardinal (de Retz) that if I did forsake my spouse, it should only be to have none at all. I go on quietly, though laboriously, submitting to the occupations of my own church, where-in I have grown old, but what could I do with one entirely new? Nothing but the glory of God, manifested to me by my superior, the Pope, can make me change my purpose. In the second place, you will say that my brother the bishop does not enrich me. This is true: but he relieves me, and gives me the hope that I may be able to withdraw

altogether from business, which would be far more gratifying to me than a cardinal's hat. Thirdly, you say that my nephews will be poor. To this I answer, they are not as poor as they were when they were born, for they were born with nothing; besides, two or three thousand crowns, or at the most four, would enable me to succour them without diminishing the credit of a pontificate in which so many alms, pious works, and expenses are indispensably necessary." In another letter he says: "People talk of my promotion coming from two quarters, namely, Rome and Paris. This gives me some uncasiness, because the former would seem to come with the authority of the greater glory of God, without which I assure you nothing shall change me. If I resign my see, it will not be to accept another, as I am far more anxious to live without this charge, that I may breathe the atmosphere of my Saviour's cross. How can we ever love this momentary splendour, when we have once considered the beauty, the goodness, and the duration of the eternity of God? How unbecoming it is to attach oneself to anything save the will of God, which fills me with contempt for all earthly things, and gives me grace to know that I am made for Him, by Him, and in Him; therefore I neither am, nor ever will be, the child of fortune. So long as heaven enlightens me, I am resolved never to oppose it in anything that concerns the service of our Lord."

In one of his letters to a lady, he tells her that they are fortunate who are disengaged from the court, and from the compliments which abound in it, and who live in peace at the foot of the cross. That

he never had much opinion of worldly vanity, but that he found it still more vain amidst the feeble grandeurs of a court.

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### CHAPTER III.

HE IS APPOINTED CHIEF ALMONER TO THE PRINCESS CHRISTINA—FOUNDS A HOUSE OF HIS ORDER—REFORMS AND PERFECTS SOME OTHER CONVENTS.

WHILST Francis was thus indefatigably applying himself to various works of piety, the negotiations for the marriage of the Prince of Piedmont with the King's sister were going on actively. No one contributed more to this desirable result than our Saint himself; and Favre stated in writing that it was mainly due to the prayers of the holy Bishop. In fact, at one time the alliance seemed so effectually broken off that the ambassador was preparing to return home; but Francis, after celebrating holy Mass, bade him wait a little longer, for that God would dispose matters according to their wishes: and so it turned out. An agreement having been made to the satisfaction of all parties, the holy Bishop gave the formal benediction to the bride on the 10th February, 1619. He addressed her in a brief discourse, reminding her that, having received the nuptial benediction on the anniversary of her birthday, God intended to show her that she was sent into this world to be a mother to His people; and that as a queen she was to rule according to the laws of Christ. The Princess appointed him to be her chief almoner, intending to attach him to her suite, and

to place herself under his direction; for she had already conceived the highest respect and affection for him. But Francis excused himself, adducing the obligation he was under of residing in his diocese. The Princess still insisted on his acceptance, to which he at last consented on two conditions, first, that residence in his diocese should be conceded to him, and second, that so long as he did not discharge the office, he was not to receive the revenues and emoluments of it. The Princess remarking that the latter condition appeared to her to be a mere scruple, Francis replied that he loved poverty and dreaded riches, which had led to the perdition of so many, and made him fear lest they might occasion his own; moreover, that it was unreasonable to accept remuneration for a service which was not performed. The Princess yielded to his terms, so that he only served her in France, and on one other occasion. She presented him with a beautiful diamond, valued at five hundred crowns, requesting him to keep it for her sake; the Saint promised to do so, adding, "unless the poor stand in need of it." The Princess told him that in this case he might be satisfied with pledging it, and that she would ransom it for him; but Francis replied that he feared he should abuse her goodness by pawning it too often, and in fact it was at the service of all the poor. The next year when he went to Turin, the Princess asked him what had become of his ring. He told her that she might easily guess. Whereupon she told him that she would give him another of still greater value, as perhaps the other had not been to his liking, but that positively he must not give it away. Francis replied that he was so unfit to be trusted with any-

thing of value that he really had not courage to make such a promise. The Princess however did not fail to give it him. After his return to Annecy, the Princess enquired of a gentleman from Savoy whether he had seen this diamond. He told her that he had, but that instead of belonging to the Bishop of Geneva it belonged to all the poor of Annecy, for that it was continually in pawn. This very ring once led to a display of beautiful detachment and disinterestedness on the part of the holy Bishop. In the course of the journey his servants had mislaid it, and were deeply grieved at its supposed loss, but he consoled them, saying that the loss was of little consequence, provided the ring had fallen into the hands of some poor person. When the servants recovered it they were highly delighted, but he very composedly told them to take better care of it in future, because the poor might want it. This was the only value he attached to it.

Being anxious to restore religious discipline, and to promote perfection in monasteries, he frequently visited religious communities, especially that of Port Royal, of the Order of S. Bernard, since become so famous through the Abbé de S. Cyr, who thence disseminated Jansenism, that of Vallombrosa, and that of Maubuisson. In the last named, he spent several days most profitably, introducing a reform, and giving instructions both in words and writing. The abbess had so high an opinion of him, that she kept for herself the remnants of his meals, and preserved as precious relics the linen, the bed, and the chair, of which he had made use. After his return to Annecy he corresponded with her, and

continued to exhort her and her community to persevere in the path of perfection.

But nothing gave him greater consolation during his stay in Paris than the foundation of a house of the Visitation Order, which he accomplished after surmounting the innumerable obstacles, which are never wanting when good is to be effected. He summoned for this purpose the Mother de Chantal, and a few other nuns from Bourges, who had the satisfaction of establishing one of the most illustrious houses of the Institute, the only one (besides that at Annecy) which had the advantage of being planted by the two Founders. On the first of May, 1619, the Saint exposed the Blessed Sacrament and celebrated Mass, gave the habit to some novices, and received the profession of the others who had accompanied the Mother de Chantal.

He frequently visited this new establishment, which was at a considerable distance from his lodgings, and usually went on foot, though he had a carriage at his disposal. One day he happened to go in very unfavourable weather, when the streets, which were then unpaved, were full of mud, and a priest who accompanied him losing all patience, exclaimed against the absurdity of refusing the use of a carriage when it was offered, just to tramp through the filthy streets like a set of beggars. The Saint was displeased at the remark, and turning to his followers, calmly said, "Observe, his lordship still has a little vanity:" words which confounded the priest, and made him enter into himself, so that he made no further objection to humble or inconvenience himself when accompanying the holy prelate. Francis placed his new foundation under the care of S. Vincent of

Paul, Founder and first Superior-General of the Congregation of the Missions, who directed it as spiritual father for many years, to the great profit and consolation of the nuns.

In his former visit to Paris, whilst he was still coadjutor, he contracted a friendship with M. Duval, Doctor of the Sorbonne, which was renewed and confirmed on the present occasion, the two confessing to one another, and mutually giving and receiving advice. Each used to say of the other, that he was not worthy to loosen the other's shoes, and when, as not unfrequently happened, the two conjointly converted some heretic, each strove to give the honour to his companion, which led the Venerable Servant of God Vincent of Paul to say, "Behold the disputes of the saints, who humble themselves in order to exalt their brethren."

At the beginning of the year 1620 he quitted Paris with the royal bride and the Prince Cardinal, to the great regret of the courtiers and citizens. In his journey through France he called at the different houses of his Order, already established at Bourges, Moulins, Lyons, and Grenoble, deriving the utmost gratification from these visits. The superior of the house at Grenoble intreated him to use his influence in behalf of one of her friends, which he promised to do, adding, "But you know, I shall be doing violence to myself, seeing that I look at the world with the eye of a stranger. God has given me grace to become more simple and less worldly every day, even amidst all the artificiality of a court." These words clearly show that Francis not only remained devout at court, where so many others lose their virtue, but even progressed in per-



fection, although walking along a path which withdraws others from it.

On reaching Savoy he extricated himself from the court by pleading the spiritual necessities of his diocese, and thus obtained permission to return to his beloved Annecy, where he was received with the most respectful and affectionate welcome.

We must not omit to narrate a circumstance which occurred on his passage through Lyons. One day, when he was particularly busy, he received a note containing only the following words, "Unless you come as soon as possible to hear my confession, you will have to answer for my soul to God." Being unable to obey the summons at the moment, he bade the messenger tell the writer of the note that he would be with him soon, and that he was to go and wait for him in the parlour of the Visitation Convent, his friends insisting that the meeting should take place there and nowhere else, for they suspected that the unknown might be a heretic, or some evil-minded person, who wanted to insult the holy man. He reached the convent at the hour appointed, and found a servant in charge of two horses. On entering the parlour he was followed by an elderly looking man, dressed as a cavalier, and enveloped in a large cloak, which partially concealed his features. No sooner were the two in the parlour than the stranger deliberately locked the doors, closed and fastened the windows, and cut the bell rope, effectually to guard against intrusion; then, bowing to the Saint, he unceremoniously bade him be seated. Whilst Francis was wondering what would be the issue of this singular interview, the stranger threw himself on his knees, and entered upon a general

confession, which lasted fully four hours. He began by stating that he was the general of a religious order, who for a long time had led a most irregular life, and had in a thousand ways scandalized his religious; that he had never corrected their failings because his own conduct was infinitely worse than theirs. That God had had pity on him, and had touched his heart, but that the dread of meeting with austere confessors, and the shame of acknowledging so many flagrant crimes had hitherto deterred him from confession. That, having heard of his charity and gentleness towards penitents, and having read his "Philothea," he had come a distance of a hundred and twenty leagues expressly to make his confession to him, and to submit himself to his advice. Then he proceeded with his confession amidst a deluge of tears, and with every other sign of true contrition, insomuch that the Saint was deeply affected, and treated him with his usual tender kindness, though we may suppose that he imposed penances proportioned to his excesses, and prescribed such a rule of conduct as perfected the great work of his conversion. A correspondence by letter began, and continued to the end of the Saint's life, who had the satisfaction of knowing that his penitent was changed into another man, and by his exemplary conduct had quite retrieved his former scandals. Having ended his confession he mounted his horse, so that no one but Francis knew who he was or whence he came.

If this one came to the Saint in order to mend his life, another, more curious, came from a considerable distance to Lyons for no other purpose than to look at him; having fully satisfied his wish in this

respect, without more ado he mounted his horse and rode home quite content.

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## CHAPTER IV.

FRANCIS AFTER HIS RETURN FROM PARIS—A NEW CALUMNY—HIS PATIENCE UNDER IT—HIS DESIRE TO GO TO ENGLAND—DEFECTION OF AN ECCLESIASTIC.

AFTER his return from Paris the Saint resumed his pastoral functions with his accustomed zeal and fervour, entirely devoting himself to the welfare of his diocese. He found that during his absence in France his officials had gained an important suit, which he had been obliged to enter upon against certain gentlemen belonging to the diocese, and as the Senate of Chambéry had condemned the latter to defray all the expenses of the cause, his steward was exacting them in full rigour. Francis would on no account allow this. He said that he had undertaken the suit, not for his own private interests, but for those of his church, whose rights he could not, with a safe conscience, forego; nor would he have his expenses reimbursed, saying that he would never take such an advantage of any one, and still less of members of his own diocese, towards whom it was his duty to act as a good father. His steward remonstrated, telling him that the expenses amounted to a considerable sum, to which the Saint replied, "By remitting the costs we may effect a great gain, and purchase the friendship of those whom the law-suit may have made our enemies." In fact, the gentlemen were astonished at

such extraordinary and unlooked for courtesy. The Saint knew the value of a heart, and never thought he purchased it at too high a price. He could not bear to have a single enemy, whilst he never thought he could have too many friends. This was one of his maxims.

With equal generosity he settled a difference which arose between his officials and certain persons of the diocese on account of the death of a curate, to whom according to the laws of the country, the Bishop succeeded as heir. This right of his see was a burthen to the holy man, and though he could not forego it, he never enforced it with rigour, always treating his subjects with paternal love, for his heart was in truth superior to all self-interest, as the following incident will show. During his absence his revenues had accumulated, as he had lived at the expense of the Prince Cardinal. When the rents of the bishopric were presented to him he declined to accept them, saying that he had not earned them, and insisted on their being spent upon the cathedral. Accordingly, six candlesticks and three lamps, all of silver, were purchased for it. He dearly loved to see his spouse, the church, well adorned and furnished.

These three instances are worthy of the imitation of every ecclesiastic, and teach us that a noble heart can be generous without being rich. Francis loved to give far better than to receive. The following was one of his maxims: "If you have much, give much; if a little, give a little, but give it as if desirous of giving more." He likewise said, "We may suppose that whoever is reduced so far as to beg must be in great need; therefore it is shameful

to refuse succour, or to appear to think much of what we give;" a point on which he was so extremely delicate, that he strove as much as possible to leave the recipients of his bounty in ignorance of their benefactor.

About this time he had to suffer from the malevolence of slanderers, who strove to undermine the high reputation which he had acquired in Paris, by calumniously affirming that he had interfered in a certain match which had occasioned some scandal to the world. He bore this calumny with great patience, contenting himself with telling one of his friends in a letter, "I hear from Paris that some people there have been clipping my beard as short as they can; but God can make it grow again thicker than ever, whenever His providence sees fitting." Nevertheless from a respect for truth, and the due edification of his neighbour, he wrote to the personage who deemed himself the most offended, and who was the most deeply interested in the affair, expressing a wish to relieve his mind, and sympathising with him, although he did not believe that he had in any way occasioned his grief; that he had in no way promoted this connection, beyond recommending it in his prayers if it were to the glory of God, and by once speaking in favour of the gentleman and of his piety; and that whatever was alleged beyond this was mere exaggeration. It was moreover true that the parties, who were mutually attached, had pledged themselves to each other in his absence, and had afterwards reiterated the promise in his presence. To this he had been a mere accidental listener, and had not uttered a word. That he could not refuse his services to persons of such con-

sideration, and that he had never been given to understand that the individual to whom he was writing was averse to the match.

He wrote to another friend, that he gave vent to his feelings a little, not because he cared for the censures which were levelled against him, for he knew that on this point he was blameless before God; but because it grieved him to see so much passion about an affair with which he had so little to do; those who knew him, knew that he used but little violence in anything, and that his faults proceeded mostly from ignorance; he was most anxious to regain the good will of those persons, as being advantageous to his ministry; that if he could not realize this desire, he would still go on through evil repute and good repute; as a seducer, and yet true; and he concluded as follows: "I only care for life or for reputation according to the will of God, and I shall always have more of both than I deserve."

It was on this occasion that he wrote to the Mother de Chantal in the manner before related, with regard to the calumnies which assailed him. If I have been somewhat diffuse on this point, it was because I thought it necessary to show how saints conduct themselves in circumstances where the world is so particular. It is certain that the saint's reputation suffered much on account of this affair; and those in Paris, who had once been the loudest in his praise, were now foremost in blaming him; but what most deeply afflicted him, was that his nuns had much to suffer in consequence of the calumny.

In the midst of all these troubles, Francis pursued

his ordinary course of piety and pastoral duties ; he preached the Advent of the year in his own cathedral, devoting himself to an exposition of the ten commandments, which, as he preached with all his heart, was listened to most attentively. He next made a review of his conscience, to renew himself in spirit, if we may use such an expression of him. Then he returned to one of his old practices, and began to teach the mysteries of faith in a plain, familiar style, and to catechise the children, to the great advantage of all.

About this time Francis was informed that King James of Great Britain, having read his "Introduction to a Devout life," had expressed a wish to see the author, saying that so admirable a work could only have proceeded from an illustrious pen ; he was, moreover, assured that his majesty had reproached his own bishops with being unable to write in a way breathing only of heaven, and with the spirit of an angel, even challenging them to make the attempt. As the Saint listened to this recital, he exclaimed, "Oh, who will give me the wings of the dove that I may fly to this king, and set foot in that island, covered with the dark clouds of error ! Beautiful isle ! once called the land of saints ! *Vive Dieu !* If His Highness will but permit me, I will arise and go to Nineve, and I will speak to its king, even at the risk of my life." It is affirmed that King James, disgusted with the inconstancy of the English, who had forsaken the religion of their ancestors, and were daily inventing new sects, which he was unable to repress, had conceived a favourable opinion of the Catholic faith, ever so uniform in its belief ; and had even held out some hopes of conversion, if he

could but discuss the matter with some distinguished prelate. All this made our Saint most anxious to undertake this journey, and attempt this important task; but motives of policy prevented his quitting the states of Savoy; moreover, the time of God's mercy towards that kingdom was not yet come, and it is not for us to forestall the times and the moments which He reserves to Himself. Often did the Saint weep over the blindness of this king and his people, whom he could only help by his prayers; he used to say that he felt a peculiar stimulus, causing him to sigh for their salvation; and, as he enumerated the native saints of the island, his tears testified how heavily its heresy and schism weighed upon his heart.

Had it been then possible to attempt the conversion of the king and kingdom, no prelate in Europe would have been more likely to succeed than St. Francis of Sales; besides his consummate skill in controversy, his elegant, engaging manners were calculated to win hearts and to work upon the mind; moreover, he had the great advantage of being already respected by the monarch.

The consolation which he had experienced in recovering the relics of St. Pontius, abbot and founder of the abbey of Sixt, and in having restored good order in that monastery, was about this time materially embittered by the apostasy of an ecclesiastic of his acquaintance, whom he had on many occasions benefited, but who had fled to England, that he might there abandon himself to the gratification of his passions. The holy prelate was deeply afflicted when he heard of it; nor could he comprehend how any man could submit to the



spiritual rule of a secular king. "If he used to fancy," writes the Saint to his brother, "that the Pope exceeds the limits of his authority, because he sometimes interferes in the temporal concerns of princes, how can he not perceive that the king under whom he has gone to live exceeds the limits of his power, by interfering with and over-ruling spiritual concerns? Strange that what sufficed to keep S. Augustine within the Church, should not suffice to retain this man. Strange that the respect due to antiquity, and the contempt of novelty, have not been able to bind him to the Catholic Church." But he consoled himself a little with the hope that God might derive glory from this fall, which so sorely grieved himself. Looking on the unfortunate man as cut off from the rest of the world by the sea, and from the Church by schism, he adds, "I feel a special inclination for that noble island and its sovereign, whose conversion I incessantly recommend to God, hoping that I shall be heard, since I pray in concert with so many holy souls, who sigh for the same thing. And now it seems to me that I shall pray with redoubled ardour, for the sake of this poor soul. If you write to him, assure him that all the waters which encompass England will not be able to extinguish the warmth of my affection, so long as there is the slightest hope of his return to the Church." He expresses his affliction on this subject in equally moving terms, in a letter to the Mother de Chantal, shewing that this apostacy was owing to license, sensuality, inconstancy, and the presumption of his intellect, springing from a natural talent of speaking fluently and well. "In fine," concludes the Saint, "judgment is a rare qualifica-

tion, and is always accompanied by humility and maturity."

Although we have often alluded elsewhere to the delight of Francis at the conversion of any one, we cannot here omit the expression of his sentiments, conveyed in a letter, on one of these occasions: "Four days ago I admitted into the Church, and heard the confession of a gentleman, as noble as the day, and as brave as his own sword. O Saviour of my soul! how did I rejoice in hearing him confess his sins so piously, and relate the special providence whereby he had been gained, God using means so excellent and admirable, though His stratagems were hidden from human eyes. All this transported me out of myself. Oh, how often did I give him the kiss of peace!"

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## CHAPTER V.

### THE SAINT'S BROTHER IS APPOINTED HIS COADJUTOR.

DIVINE Providence was pleased to give S. Francis of Sales an associate in the government of his diocese, who, if he did not relieve him from his pastoral toils—for he continued to labour indefatigably—at least, being formed by his hand, proved a blessing to his flock. This assistant was John Francis of Sales, the holy prelate's brother, a man of eminent virtue, of whom we will briefly narrate a few particulars.

He was the fourth son of Francis Count of Sales, and may be called the Benjamin of his mother, who nursed him herself. In disposition he was quite

unlike his brothers; indeed the Saint used to say jocosely that Louis, John Francis, and himself, would make a good salad; the first by his prudence serving for salt, the second for vinegar, and himself for oil. John Francis shewed his natural disposition to austerity by entering the Capuchin Order, in which he spent ten months, and to which he would have devoted his life, if his superiors had not persuaded him that his delicate constitution and continual infirmities were incompatible with their austerities, and might be taken as an indication that Almighty God (satisfied with his good will) did not require him to embrace that rigid form of life. He quitted the convent with great regret, became a priest, and in that state gave himself wholly up to penance, was made a Canon of the Cathedral of Geneva, and was a model of piety. As vicar-general under his saintly brother, he shewed himself strictly just, but with a strong propensity to rigour. He was more feared than the Bishop, and many appealed from his severity to the benignity of the Saint. He himself used to own that he was inexorable with regard to vicious ecclesiastics, and those who were negligent in celebrating Mass and in the public offices of the Church. Unless absolutely hindered by necessity, he never failed to assist in choir, saying that the sound of the bells was the invitation of obedience to the canons, and that it ought to be as exactly responded to as the similar call in cloistered communities.

When Francis obtained the Princess of Piedmont's consent to his residence in his diocese, it was on condition that John Francis should attend the court and discharge the office of her chief almoner,

the princess wishing at least to secure the brother, since she could not have the Bishop himself, the latter saying pleasantly that the canon was by far the best adapted to the post, that his brother would increase, whereas he would decrease. Accordingly John Francis passed over into Piedmont, to discharge his appointed duties, in which he succeeded so well, and gave such satisfaction to his royal patrons, that the following year, in acknowledgment of his merit, and to shew their affection to the holy prelate, they solicited his nomination as coadjutor, with future succession. The Pope gave his approbation to the Duke's nominee, who received the title of Bishop of Chalcedon, and was consecrated at Turin, on S. Antony's day, 1621.

The Saint himself thus wrote concerning the appointment to the Mother de Chantal: "You will believe me, my beloved daughter, when I tell you with all simplicity that my brother's nomination to the coadjutorship is clearly the work of God. I neither said nor wrote a word, nor did I beg or procure the slightest recommendation to this effect. The favour is entirely due to their Serene Highnesses, and to the will of the Princess Royal. This it is which consoles me; there is nothing human, nothing of my own in the affair."

In another letter he states that the coadjutorship had been conferred on his brother without his having asked it, or caused it in any way to be asked for; a circumstance of the utmost comfort to him, because having had no share in the transaction beyond giving his consent, he hoped Almighty God would be all the more satisfied with it.

It is true that the appointment was highly grati-

fyng to the Saint, not for the sake of flesh and blood, but for the sake of his diocese, and because he felt that he was provided with a successor, who possessed all the qualifications which S. Paul requires in a bishop. Moreover, he thought that he and his brother might divide the offices of Martha and Magdalen between themselves. John Francis, as the younger and the more robust, was to take the active part, whilst he, retiring from the great world, might prepare himself for death, and write various works, of which he had already traced the outlines in his mind. But being informed that the royal family of Savoy insisted on having one or other of the two brothers attached to the court, he was much distressed, saying that though the pastoral charge is dangerous, residence at court is unsafe.

After his consecration, John Francis left Turin for Annecy, the Saint making all necessary arrangements to receive him with honour, and being anxious to teach by example the respect which is due to prelates. He went out beyond the city to meet him, although his arrival took place at a late hour of the night, and for the three first days gave him the post of honour on all occasions. He would not allow his brother to show the same consideration for him that he had done for his predecessor: he willingly shared the authority with him, (indeed he was in hopes of surrendering the whole of it), and with this view had caused him to be consecrated, which he would on no account admit in his own case till after the death of Mgr. Granier. On numberless occasions the humility of the Saint was conspicuous; he made the Bishop of Chalcedon celebrate pontifi-

cally in his presence, received communion from his hands, ceded to him the functions of conferring orders, consecrating altars, and, generally speaking, all the honours, reserving for himself the toils of the episcopate. The two brothers were far superior to any feeling of jealousy, susceptibility, or rivalry; there was humility on the one side, and deference on the other, whilst elevated virtue in both formed a link of cordiality which nothing could sever; solely intent on promoting the glory of God and the good of souls, they aimed in unison at these grand objects. This beauteous spirit of concord was evidently the effect of virtue in both, conformity of character and taste having nothing whatever to do with it; the holy prelate was a compound of sweetness and gentleness, and every one could approach him with confidence and freedom; his tender and affectionate piety led him to compassionate all, and to excuse and pardon their failings; the Bishop of Chalcedon, on the contrary, was grave, spoke little and sternly, and could not easily be induced to pardon certain faults; and if he did forgive a first offence, he invariably punished a relapse. This was particularly apparent in the general visitation of the diocese, which he undertook by the Saint's order, who wished to reform conjointly with him some abuses which had crept into the diocese. The Bishop of Chalcedon adhered to the rules given him by his brother; but, besides this, he made minute inquiries into the life and conduct of the clergy. Where he found culprits whom either the Saint or himself had pardoned before, they were peremptorily sent into penitentiaries, and this fell to the lot of many. Though Francis could not blame his brother's severity, he

could not help compassionating the objects of it; they were so well aware of this, that they used to watch for his passing the prison windows on his way to say Mass, and would cry out to him, begging pardon and promising amendment; this so deeply affected Francis, that on returning after his Mass, reflecting on the infinite goodness of God, Who is never weary of forgiving sinners, and easily allows Himself to be moved to pity, he would order the prison doors to be set open, and, giving a gentle correction to the offenders, send them away, contenting himself with their promise of leading better lives in future. The coadjutor, well aware of the zeal which burned in the Saint's heart, and of his ardent desire to banish disorders from the diocese, admired the benevolence of his brother, and his sensitiveness to the sufferings of his neighbour; nevertheless, he disapproved of his conduct, telling him that God, Who knows the hearts of men, pardons only those who are truly contrite; but that we, who have not this advantage, must be more circumspect in forgiving, and should pardon with judgment, because it may happen that many, finding amendment no necessary condition towards pardon, only abuse the goodness which too easily grants it, and become incorrigible. The Saint listened to his remonstrances, made his apologies, and promised to be more severe in future, resolved to conform himself to his opinion; but, in spite of it all, on the very first occasion his resolutions were forgotten, and the prison doors were again thrown open. The Bishop of Chalcedon perceiving that many abused his leniency, asked leave to resign, telling him that he could not bear to contest thus

with him every day: he spoke thus, sure that then he would gain his point, namely, get possession of the keys of the penitentiary; the Saint consented without difficulty, but finding that it was no longer in his power to set the captives at liberty, he was obliged to choose another road to the church, so unable was he to control his compassion when it came in contact with the sufferings of others. The Bishop of Chalcedon was now at ease on this point.

Although the holy prelate relied much on his brother's zeal, he still took an active part in the direction of the diocese; one of his daily occupations at this time was to confer with him on the best means of governing it, communicating what long experience had taught him, the way in which he had corrected his clergy, according to each one's temper and disposition, the precautions he had taken for their amendment, without causing scandal to the people, and how carefully he had endeavoured to prevent their disorders from becoming public, in order that heretics might not adduce them as motives for despising the faith. Above all things, he recommended to him the Exercises of St. Ignatius, assuring him that he had found them amongst the most efficient means of advancing in perfection.

His Lordship of Chalcedon, who frequently spoke of these conferences with his holy brother, admired his meekness, his lights, and more especially his benevolence in listening to all, consoling all, and making himself all to all. Well did he profit by his example and instructions, insomuch that one could not easily have found a bishop more devoted to his duties, more zealous in his visitations, more exact in the smallest details of the ministry.



Formed, as we may say, by the hand of the Saint, he gained the respect and esteem of his Princes, who, after his brother's death, confirmed him in the dignity of first almoner to the Princess Royal, made him a councillor of state, and a knight and chancellor of the great order of the Santissima Annunziata. He preached to his people in the most affectionate manner; and his charities made him admired throughout Savoy.

When a contagious distemper ravaged the city of Annecy, the canons of his cathedral went away in search of safety, but he, like a good pastor, would not forsake his flock, exposing his life and serving the plague-stricken, like another St. Charles, administering the sacraments, assisting them with alms, selling all his plate, and even his pastoral ring, for this purpose. The loss of the greater part of his associates in this work of charity, including that of his nephew, who had embraced the ecclesiastical state, could not deter him from his noble purpose. It was on this occasion that the Mother de Chantal passed this eulogium on him: "Mgr. John Francis accomplishes that which the holy Founder of the Visitation had purposed doing, when, at an earlier date, the province was threatened with similar desolation. I can only say, that if Francis was a holy confessor, John Francis has chosen the road to become a holy martyr."

His indefatigable labours during this season of trial occasioned maladies which gave full scope to the exercise of his patience during the five or six years of his remaining life; to these sufferings were added trials of mind such as Almighty God frequently employs for the purification of His servants. He had

serious thoughts of returning to the Capuchins, and even applied to Rome for the necessary faculties to renounce his bishopric: he wished to be treated as a novice by the father-guardian of the house at Annecy, and besides often retiring thither to pray in company with the fathers, he would accuse himself of his faults in chapter, and practice many of their austerities. When he was seized with his last illness, before receiving communion, he was clothed in his pontifical robes, and summoning to his room all those with whom he might have had some contention in maintaining the rights of his see, he prostrated himself before them, implored their forgiveness, and protested that he had never engaged in such contests, but from a conscientious sense of duty. He died like a saint, on the 8th of June, 1635, and was buried at the feet of his holy brother, as he had desired, as if to show to the whole world that he was unworthy to kiss the footprints of that man of God; for although he had occasionally opposed his mildness, he had from childhood looked upon him as a saint.

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## CHAPTER VI.

FRANCIS VISITS THE HERMITAGE OF TALLOIRE.—

TRANSLATES THE RELICS OF ST. GERMAIN.

LIVING saints are ever anxious for the honour of those saints who no longer dwell on earth; St. Francis of Sales showed this on several occasions. He had advised the Prior of Talloire to prepare the high altar at the hermitage of St. Germain in a

suitable manner in order that the relics of the Saint might be deposited there, and this had been done. The prior entreated the holy prelate to come and celebrate the translation, and he, who could never refuse anything connected with the glory of God, repaired to the hermitage, accompanied by the Bishop of Chalcedon. He left the honours of the ceremony to his coadjutor, remaining with his eyes immovably fixed upon the tomb, as if in an extasy, until it was time to open the urn, and this he did himself, exposing the precious relics to the spectators, and touching the relics with the beads, &c., of those who wished it. He then deposited the bones and ashes in a new shrine which had been prepared for the purpose, and, placing it on his shoulders, assisted by his brother, carried it in procession round the church and hermitage, watering the ground as he went along with tears of tender devotion. The sky suddenly became charged with dark clouds, which made the inhabitants of the mountain predict a fall of rain, and, in fact, a few drops were felt; but the Saint, raising his eyes to heaven, said, "No! God will favour us; it will not rain, and we shall be able to go through our ceremony." No sooner did he bring forward the uncovered shrine, than, to the astonishment of every one, the sky became serene and clear.

The Saint was delighted with the beauty of the hermitage, and whilst praising it, disclosed the feelings of his heart. "One thing is settled," said he, "now that I have a coadjutor, if I can but obtain the consent of my sovereign, I will come to this place; it shall be my resting-place. Here will I abide, for I have chosen it." And opening a window

to the north, from whence the Lake of Annecy was visible, he added: "O God! how delightful to dwell here! Surely it is fair that I should leave the heat and burden of the day to my brother, whilst I, with rosary and pen in hand, serve our Lord and His Church. Be assured, ideas would flock into my mind abundantly here, like flakes of snow falling in winter."

After dinner he walked down to the village at the foot of the mountain, and without allowing himself a moment's rest, entered the pulpit of the parish church, and delivered a discourse in honour of S. Germain, expatiating on the honour due to saints, on the manner of canonization in the primitive Church, on the later decrees made by the Supreme Pontiffs, and he demonstrated how just and reasonable they are, passing on to the special veneration due to S. Germain, who had once inhabited that country.

From this time Francis was mainly intent on settling the affairs of his diocese, and preparing his brother for the whole charge of it, hoping soon to resign it to him. He announced his intention by letter to several of his friends; as he was apprehensive that His Highness would detain him for some time at court. He thus wrote to an ecclesiastic: "Unless God interferes, I perceive that half my freedom will be taken up by the court, where I never had the slightest notion of abiding. I trust however that I shall yet be able to sing, even in this life, Thou hast broken my chains, O Lord, I will offer Thee the sacrifice of praise. You must assist me to obtain this blessing, that I may be able

to add, more boldly than at present, I will invoke the name of the Lord."

He likewise wrote to the Mother de Chantal as follows: "Her Highness and the Prince have made me accept the charge of high almoner to the former, and you will easily believe me when I tell you that neither directly nor indirectly have I sought this post. I have no ambition save that of employing more usefully the remnant of my life in the service of our Lord. Most certainly, I utterly despise the court, because the delights of the world abound there, and these I abhor more than ever. I abhor its maxims, its spirit, and all its follies." But it was not necessary that our Saint should retire to some deserted spot, in order to live out of the world; he knew how to bury his mind in the desert, even when dwelling in the heart of a city. In this sense he wrote to one of his penitents, that he would more willingly go and visit her, if he could only be certain that she would not make him lose his time in the ceremonies and compliments which persons in the world usually inflict on their guests, because he detested all this, for many reasons.

In his intercourse with so many persons of every rank, he made no more enquiries as to what was passing in the world, than the most recollected hermit would have done. With his usual candour he wrote to the President Chrestin, telling him not to give him any news of the world; "for," said he, "I am almost as solitary as a hermit, and indeed I am more remote from the world than many hermits, knowing nothing more of it, than that which I am unable to ignore."

## CHAPTER VII.

FRANCIS IS PRESENT AT THE GENERAL CHAPTER OF  
THE FEUILLANS AT PIGNEROL—GOES TO TURIN.

IF Francis sighed for retirement, his good Master, who had chosen a laborious and painful life on earth, would have this His faithful disciple await his repose in heaven. Whilst the Saint was planning solitude, he received orders from Pope Gregory XV., then recently elected to S. Peter's chair, to repair to Pignerol, and assist at the general chapter of the Reformed Fathers of S. Bernard, called Feuillans. He was then in an unusually bad state of health, liable to fainting fits, and excessive pain and weakness in his legs, so that he could scarcely stand, and was quite an object of pity to his friends. But he never uttered a complaint under the most excruciating pain, although he told the Barouess of Sales that he felt himself so ill that he did not think he could live long. However, such was his respect for the Holy See that he decided on setting out at once. The affair entrusted to him was of the most delicate nature, namely, the appearance in the community of disunion, the usual forerunner of decline. Nothing less than the tact of our holy prelate could prevent a schism and its fatal consequences. The fathers and inhabitants of Pignerol received him as an angel from heaven, so angelic was his comportment. He displayed the most consummate prudence on this occasion, and shewed how perfectly he possessed the secret of guiding spirits. His

prudence, patience, and gentleness won all hearts, whilst his reasons triumphed over all minds, and the unanimous election of a most worthy general preserved order and tranquillity in that holy Congregation. He listened to the requests and complaints of all who wished to consult him, never appearing weary or annoyed, and decided every case with the strictest attention to justice. He gave his decisions with so much learning and clearness, and they were so solid and so judicious, that every one admired the talents, both of nature and grace, with which he was endowed. He listened to the most minute, as well as to the most important details, and was so perpetually in action that one would have supposed him insensible to fatigue, had it not been for his evidently increasing infirmities. Assailed by violent spasms, he was obliged to break up the assembly; but, as if unmindful of himself, no sooner did the pain subside a little, than he resumed his occupation. As the chapter did not hold its sittings on festivals, he spent those days in the discharge of pastoral functions, hearing confessions and administering Holy Orders and Confirmation, as he had been requested to do by the Abbot of Santa Maria, who was the Vicar of Cardinal Borghese, at Pignerol. The excessive heat of the atmosphere, aggravated by the crowds who flocked round him, quite overcame him one day, and he fainted, to the terror of the religious, who expected every moment to be his last. Although this attack was entirely owing to the crowd of people, he merely took a little air in the choir belonging to the fathers, and then continued his functions till night.

Many important arrangements were made during

this chapter ; some of the most intricate affairs of the Order were cleared up, and peace and unanimity were restored to the whole Congregation ; hence he was particularly revered by the religious, who in return were cordially esteemed by him ; more especially Father John of S. Francis, a man of great piety and learning, well versed in the Hebrew, Arabic, Chaldaic, Latin, Greek, French and Italian languages. He was elected Superior-General of the Order in this very chapter, and we may say that thus the best amongst many good was chosen. It is worth remarking that this great man, who had given several very learned works to the public, afterwards wrote the life of our Saint, one of the first published ; it was written in French, in the year 1625.

The esteem he gained at Pignerol was never forgotten. After his death a convent of the Visitation Order was founded there, and munificently patronized by the Count de Toulonjon, son-in-law to Madame de Chantal. This monastery was no less remarkable for sanctity and exact regularity, than for the distinguished rank of its members. We must not forget to state, that when the magnificent church was built, the chapel in it, dedicated to our Saint, was placed precisely on the site where formerly had stood the church of the Holy Cross, in which on one occasion the holy Bishop had administered confirmation. The coincidence is the more remarkable as the nuns were not aware of the circumstance when the arrangement was made.

At the termination of the chapter, Francis proceeded to Turin at the request of his Prince, who received him with all possible esteem and affection. The Princess Christina had engaged a



splendid lodging for him, proportioned to her rank and his worth, but modestly excusing himself, he preferred a poor narrow chamber in the monastery of the Feuillans Fathers, where he had much to suffer from the heat of the season. The religious were much grieved at their inability to afford him better accommodation, as they were then building their new convent; but nothing could induce him to accept more comfortable quarters in the neighbourhood. He told them he wished to be treated like one of themselves, and implored them not to turn him out of their monastery, seeing that he was a son of the Order.

Although he considered this journey as one of mere deference and civility, it afterwards appeared that our Lord had led him thither to justify a distinguished personage, who had incurred the Duke's displeasure, and been exiled. One of the courtiers, much dreaded on account of his influence with the sovereign, had accused the gentleman in question, and the calumny had been so artfully concocted that the accused was banished, without even being allowed time to justify himself. No one at court dared to plead for the injured man, even the most high-minded standing in awe of the accuser. Francis conceived it to be his duty to trample on all such human respect. After carefully investigating the whole matter, he spoke so efficaciously to His Highness on behalf of the accused, that the Prince was convinced of his innocence, recalled him from banishment, and restored him to favour. This act, which was worthy of that nobility of mind which ought to characterise the prelacy, was highly extolled, but it alarmed the Saint's friends, who well knew the

haughty and vindictive spirit of the calumniator, who, they feared, would turn his indignation against Francis, as soon as he became aware that he had forfeited his influence with the Duke. Francis was advised to be on his guard, but answered that his life was in the hands of God, and that no one could touch it but by His permission ; besides, that he had done nothing but his duty, adding, "Who will speak in defence of the innocent and the oppressed, if bishops do not?" The fears of the holy prelate's friends were not groundless. The enraged courtier vowed vengeance, and was on the watch for Francis for several days, but without meeting him. At last, hearing one morning that he was celebrating Mass (tradition says in the church of the Conventual Fathers of S. Francis,) he hastened thither, resolved to kill him as he was coming out. God, however, touched his heart at this very moment ; he was so penetrated by the majesty and devotion with which the Saint said Mass that he changed his purpose, and soon afterwards sent to solicit his friendship, protesting that for the rest of his life he should entertain due veneration for his worth and merits, and that he should ever be ready to defend the Bishop's honour and interests even at the risk of his life.

About this time he visited Chieri, and lodged at a house of the Dominicanesses, S. Margaret's, who to this day preserve the table at which he ate, as well as some meditations and instructions which he wrote for one of the religious, at that time only a novice. They are nearly the same as the meditations which have been printed, being intended for the exercises of ten days, previous to

taking the habit, making solemn profession, and the renovation of vows.

His indispositions were daily on the increase, but nevertheless he continued to employ himself in various acts of piety, till he fell seriously ill at Turin, and was confined to his bed for several weeks. On his recovery, he entreated their Highnesses to consent to his return to his diocese, which they agreed to, though to the universal regret of the city. One chief motive for his anxiety to return was occasioned by a report that much misery prevailed in Savoy, in consequence of a scarcity of provisions. All that he received from the liberality of the Princess Christina was immediately appropriated to the poor. As he was quitting Turin, he met a priest belonging to the Holy House at Thonon, from whom he heard deplorable details of the distress in the Chablais, whereupon he made up his mind to sell his mitre, pastoral staff, pontifical garments, and in a word, whatever he possessed, in order to relieve the poor. In the course of this journey he passed through Giaveno, to pay a visit to the Prince Cardinal, who was then engaged in the foundation of a collegiate church, and in building his castle. Whilst there he preached and did other good works. Illness detained him on the road, and he was compelled to interrupt his journey for some days. We ought not to pass over in silence a beautiful instance of his meekness at one of the inns. The host had turned the luggage and effects of Michael Favre, the Saint's chaplain, out of the room at first assigned him, and had transferred them to another much less convenient. Favre, who was absent at the moment, fell into a passion, when on his return

he saw what had been done; but whilst he was in the act of disputing the matter with the host the Saint passed by, and no sooner heard the case than, instead of reproaching the landlord, as the chaplain desired, he quietly told the latter that he ought to suffer such trifles patiently, remembering the maxim of our Lord, "to him who takes away thy coat, give thy cloak." These few words completely settled the disturbance.

On his arrival at Annecy he applied himself to the arrangement of the materials for his projected works, and to the instruction of his brother; loving him in God, and loving his flock (which he was convinced that he was soon to leave) in the heart of his dear Saviour, he was most anxious that his brother should be well trained to the pastoral office, and accordingly devoted three hours daily to this important task. As the Bishop of Chalcedon reminded him that this assiduous application might injure his already impaired health, the Saint, whose labour was only measured by his zeal, replied, "On the contrary, we must hasten, for day is on the wane, and night approaches:" words which drew tears from his brother's heart and eyes, as he feared lest they were prophetic of approaching death, as indeed was the case. But the holy prelate, embracing him affectionately, said, "Repress these tears, which are unworthy of a Christian, and much more so of a bishop; let infidels afflict themselves at the loss of life, because knowing no better, they expect no better." Then leading him into his cabinet, he instructed him in theology, in the art of preaching and instructing the people in the manner most becoming to bishops, explained some of the most intricate passages of Holy Scrip-

ture, and never ceased giving him advice suited to his office. He desired even to see and hear him in the pulpit, vested in his pontifical robes, and after the sermon he said to the canons and others who accompanied him, in the words of S. John Baptist, "He must increase but I must decrease," (S. John iii. 30,) meaning to imply that his death was not far off.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### HE FORESEES AND FORETELLS HIS DEATH—HIS LAST WILL.

SINCE the life of the saints is but a preparation for its end, death could not find otherwise than ready one who had lived so holily, that some of his actions are subjects of admiration rather than imitation. After his return from Turin he seemed to think of nothing but preparing himself for death, so that in his letters as well as in his conversation, he continually dwelt on detachment from the world, desire of heaven, and the happiness of the Blessed. His servants noticed that frequently on leaving his oratory he looked pensive, and his eyes were moist with tears, and when asked the cause of this, he answered that, thanks to God, he had no subject of distress, but that he felt himself called to redoubled watchfulness over self, because the end of his life was drawing nigh.

Although he did not on this account shun toil, he was anxious for a little more retirement, in order to treat with God alone on the grand affair of eternity ;

for though he was not advanced in years, the diminution of his strength, occasioned by his indefatigable application and labours, convinced him that his end was nigh. His frequent allusions to his death, and to the time of it, lead us to conclude that he foresaw it by supernatural and prophetic light, and that our Lord had granted him that which David prayed for, viz., "to know his end and the number of his days." The following facts go far to confirm this conjecture.

On returning from Talloire, he visited Jane de Menthon, Baroness de Querun, to console her in her old age; and whilst discoursing with her on the vanities of the world, he said to her, "Madame, we are growing old, it is time for us to think of the next life." The lady replied that this was true, as far as she was concerned, because, having reached her seventy-second year, she had little or nothing else to do but to prepare for death; not so with him, for being still of middle age, and, thanks to God, enjoying tolerable health, she hoped the Lord would spare him to the Church for many years to come. "No," rejoined the Saint, "no such thing; I shall go first, and you will follow." And so it happened. He said as much to some of his friends at Thonon, whither he went about this time on business of importance.

To this foreknowledge of approaching death, was ascribed his refusal to renew his wardrobe; his under-clothing was so old and worn that he suffered much from cold during the last winter of his life, but he bore it most cheerfully from his love of holy poverty, and because whatever he denied himself he expended on the poor.

In the meantime, circumstances required that the Duke of Savoy, with his suite, should repair to Avignon, to have an interview with the King of France, who, victorious over heresy, had taken Montpellier, and was thence going on to Avignon. Francis had orders from his sovereign to accompany the Princess Christina in quality of her almoner. It was then the month of October, so that the journey must necessarily take place in the winter; every one dreaded this for him, as his health was in a most unsatisfactory state, and they endeavoured to dissuade him from the journey, saying that His Highness would undoubtedly excuse him when informed of his suffering condition, and the Bishop of Chalcedon offered to write to this effect; but the Saint decided on going, and said that it was his duty to go wherever God called him. He grounded his decision on these two reasons; in the first place, being the almoner of the princess, he ought occasionally to discharge the duties of the office; and secondly, he hoped that the meeting between the two sovereigns would enable him to obtain certain advantages for the Catholic religion in that portion of his diocese which was dependent on the crown of France, more especially as he had not been able to obtain all he wished at the time of his sojourn in Paris.

Having therefore determined on complying with the desires of the Prince, he made the necessary arrangements for the journey, preparing himself for it as well as for his death, by making his last will and testament, conjointly with his brother. In it, he commended his soul to God, to our Blessed Lady, and his holy patrons, and desired that if the One,

Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Church were restored in the city of Geneva, his body should be deposited in his cathedral there; if not, in the middle of the nave of the church belonging to the Visitation convent at Annecy. In conformity with the pious ceremonies of the Church, he enjoined that thirteen wax tapers be placed round his corpse, but no other ornament, save the holy name of Jesus, in testimony that he embraced with his whole heart the faith taught by the apostles; detesting all the superfluous vanities which the spirit of the world has introduced even into the sacred ceremonies, he expressly forbade the use of a greater number of lights, beseeching his relatives and friends, and enjoining his heirs, to allow of no more, but to show their piety in prayers, alms, and masses instead.

He left divers legacies to his brother the knight of Malta, to his sisters, nephews, nieces, and servants. He appointed the Bishop of Chalcedon his universal heir, transferring the entail to Louis of Sales, (likewise his brother), and his issue male. We must here remark, that this disposal of property merely referred to the patrimony of his family, which, as the eldest, he had inherited from his father; for though he had renounced it in favour of his brother Bernard, it had again reverted to Francis, through Bernard's widow Maria Amadea, who, surviving her only son, constituted the holy prelate her heir. As for his ecclesiastical revenues, he was but the faithful administrator of them, and willed not away so much as a farthing of them; hence, in this sense, we may say of him what we read of St. Augustine, namely, that he made no will, for,



being one of Christ's poor, he had nothing to bequeath.

But to return to the signs of his approaching death. Frank and distinct were his prophetic words to Peter Critan, parish priest of Thone. Francis spoke to him of the works he had been planning to write, and at last said, "We have begun them, but some one else must finish them, for it behoves us to go to the Lord." His words struck the good priest, who knelt to ask his blessing. The Saint gave it, and then with great tenderness recommended him to be very careful of the souls of his parishioners, affectionately asking him when he should return? The priest replied, that, God willing, he hoped to return within three months; to this Francis rejoined, "Then pray to God for me, for we shall see each other no more." Critan expressed a hope that they might meet again, considering his age and strength. But the Saint whispered in his ear, "Go along, sir, you do not know all."

He told Father Anselm Marchaud, who occasionally heard his confession, that this journey would cost him his life, and that they would not see each other again until they met in Paradise. He said as much to another of the Minor Observantine Fathers. He playfully told one of his servants in confidence, that he did not march like the light cavalry, but would depart without sound of trumpet; therefore, whenever he should hear that he was ill, he might likewise make up his mind to believe that he was dead. He said the same to his brother the Bishop, and to many others, deeply to their regret. He was visited by all the canons of the cathedral, who came to wish him a pleasant journey; to show

that he had loved them all as his brethren, he embraced each one of them separately, and entreated them to pray for him, foretelling his death and saying that he was going away, never more to return.

On his arrival at Lyons, a gentleman called upon him, whose extravagance had reduced him to poverty; having been acquainted with the Saint's brother, the Baron of Sales, who died in Piedmont, as already related, the stranger had much to say in praise of his heroic virtue, and concluded with an appeal to the charity of the holy prelate. Francis, deeply affected by this tale of distress, bestowed such an abundant alms upon him, that the gentleman, in astonishment, returned unmeasured thanks, assuring him that he would beseech Almighty God to repay him a hundred-fold; to this the Saint replied, "You give me pleasure, but be quick in obtaining this great blessing for me, because, in a short time, neither you nor I will stand in need of anything." Francis did not see the end of the month, and the gentleman did not long survive him.

In the meantime, the fact of the holy man having made his will, as well as these predictions, and his approaching journey, had excited the alarm of the whole city and diocese; and now it appeared how truly he was beloved by his people, since the idea of his death awakened general consternation. Whenever he went out, people crowded round him, and workmen interrupted their labour to ask his blessing; the good Bishop not only gave it, but stopped almost at every step to say a kind word, or afford consolation and advice, to recommend patience, or give some instruction, as the case might be. He gave alms to all who asked, and exhorted every one to

love and serve the Lord according to their state of life.

He went to take leave of his dear daughters of the Visitation of our Lady, said Mass in their church, gave them communion, blessed them, made them a present of a splendid cope, valued at two hundred crowns, and recommended obedience and charity, telling them in conclusion, that nothing remained for him but heaven, and that he had but one wish, namely, that they should make progress in virtue.

It would be impossible to convey an idea of the affliction of the nuns at the prospect of losing this incomparable father, whose solicitude, tenderness, and affection, had not only regenerated them, but had likewise espoused them to Jesus Christ. Nor was the grief of the people less manifest, when, on the morning of his departure, after delivering a fervent discourse, in which he exhorted his hearers to peace and union, saying that having but one and the same God, and the same hope, all ought to be of one and the same heart, he entreated them to allow him a share in their prayers, adding, that they would see and hear him no more; hereupon his audience burst forth in sighs and tears, renewing the scene of lamentation which we read of at Miletus, when St. Paul bade the Milesians farewell, telling them that they should see his face no more.

## CHAPTER IX. |

HIS JOURNEY TO AVIGNON—HE IS WELL RECEIVED BY  
THE KING, AND RETURNS TO LYONS.

THE ninth of November was a memorable day to the people of Annecy, for on that day they lost their beloved father and pastor. After his sermon he retired to his room to take a short repose, but when the hour of departure came, he sallied forth to mount his horse. The Bishop of Chalcedon, who was awaiting him on the steps, threw himself at his feet, unable to say a word for sighs and tears. The Saint attempted to console him, as well as to appease the sorrow of those who had assembled to see him depart. The most distinguished of the clergy and the citizens accompanied him as far as Seyssel; amongst others, his brother the knight. On reaching Seyssel, where they were to separate, he thanked them all very affectionately; then kneeling down, and raising his hands and eyes to heaven, he besought the Lord to preserve and protect the flock confided to his care, to be Himself their Pastor, and by His abundant graces to repair his own deficiencies, concluding his prayer in our Saviour's own words: "Holy Father, I pray to Thee for those whom Thou hast given me, for they are Thine; preserve them for the glory of Thy holy Name." Lastly, he gave them his blessing, and beseeching the Lord to bless them, recommended himself to their prayers.

He embarked on the Rhone in a small boat, under a sharp north wind, which caused him much suffering;

and as his servants had forgotten to give him his cloak, he did not so much as ask for it, being glad to have the opportunity of suffering unperceived by others, and of being entirely dependent on the care of those who accompanied him, never thinking or caring about himself. As he passed through Belley, he visited the thirteenth house of his Order, the last that was founded during his life-time. In this convent was a religious, simple alike in name and nature (she was called Sister Claudia Simpliciana,) who, although only a lay-sister, was one of the first to hurry to the parlour, as soon as she heard of the Saint's arrival. She was received by him with his usual affability, for he never rejected any one who wished to speak to him. Whilst conversing with her good pastor, she could not help weeping bitterly. When questioned as to the cause of her tears, she answered that they sprung from her conviction that the Saint would die before the end of the year; and she besought him to pray to our Lord and to Holy Mary that this might not happen, but that he might still be spared a few years longer, for the consolation of his daughters, for the more perfect consolidation of the Institute, and for the advantage of the Church; adding that she herself would pray most earnestly for this: the Saint interrupting her, said, "Oh, what good news! Take care how you do any such thing, my dear daughter Simpliciana; offer no such prayer to God, I entreat you. Why would you not have me go to the place of my repose, now that I have scarcely strength to stand? Besides, let not my death afflict you; you will do very well without me. You have your constitutions, by which everything is well regulated, and I leave you

the Mother de Chantal, who will suffice for all. Moreover, my child, you know that we must not place our hopes in men, but in the Living God, Who gives abundantly to each one. We must not ascribe the growth of the plant to him who sows, or to him who waters, but to God Who gives the blessing to our labours."

He was here visited by a lady of great piety, and though the Saint was extremely ill, he conversed with her for three or four hours, though he was obliged to exert himself to the utmost, and almost to shout in order to make himself heard, for the lady was deaf; she however was highly gratified in having met with a person who understood her. She was in fact a highly favoured soul, and Francis affirmed that she was one of our Lord's special favourites, while she on her side said that she had been directed by an angel rather than by a man.

On reaching Lyons he gave a fresh proof of his meekness and patience; for on going down to the banks of the Rhone to make an arrangement with the boatmen who were to convey him to Avignon, and not having the necessary passport, he had to wait a full hour exposed to a strong north wind, whilst Roland his servant went to Villeroi, Governor of Lyons. So far from complaining, he calmly said to the Canon de la Roche, that they must be content to will whatever God willed; and yet delay was extremely inconvenient to him, as it was of importance that he should reach Avignon before the royal family of Savoy.

The esteem in which he was held by the world was evidenced in the course of this journey. The magistrates and inhabitants of Bourg, situated about

two leagues from Avignon, went out in a body to meet him, receiving him as they would a Saint from heaven; they conducted him to the church, where a solemn *Te Deum* was sung, and after making him many presents, they escorted him with the same honour to his boat the next morning. His humility rendered these honours a torture to him, and he endeavoured to conceal the marks of his dignity, strictly forbidding his attendants to mention his name. He reached Avignon one day before the King, and was welcomed with every demonstration of respect, people flocking in crowds to look at him, and kiss his hand or his garments, filling the air with their cheers, and crying out, "Here is the great Bishop of Geneva, the author of *Philothea*, the just one, dear to God and man; he who has so divinely written on the love of God, the Angel of God, the Founder of the Visitation Order, &c." No small martyrdom was this to the heart of the holy prelate, who retired as speedily as he could, in order to escape these acclamations.

Those who accompanied him had secured a lodging from whence the entry of the King could be conveniently seen, but Francis turned even this into a subject of mortification, for instead of gratifying a curiosity innocent in itself, and surveying so magnificent a spectacle, he shut himself up in his room, and spent the time in prayer. The report of the cannons suggested to his mind the following salutary reflections. "God gives a beautiful lesson of humility to princes, in the midst of their highest honours; the roar of artillery, which lasts so few moments, and ends in smoke, teaches them that the

glory of this world is but of short duration, and evaporates like smoke."

He was visited by the Vice-Legate, who knew him by reputation, and shewed him marked honour, as did the court of France, for, perceiving the respect with which the King treated him, the courtiers vied with each other in their attentions to him. In the meantime the Prince Cardinal of Savoy arrived, bringing word that the Duke and his suite had been stopped by the weather in their passage across the Alps, and assuring His Majesty that the Prince and Princess would pay their respects to him on his arrival at Lyons, whither he proceeded in a few days, followed by the Prince Cardinal and our Saint.

During his sojourn at Avignon Francis exerted himself to procure the restitution of the college of S. Nicholas, originally founded by John Cardinal of Ostia, Bishop of Geneva, who stipulated that of the twenty-four scholars (for which number the endowment was made) eight should belong to the diocese of Geneva, a material consideration with our Saint in the actual position of his diocese. Although he did not at the time attain his object (the Vice-Legate being too much engaged to attend to it), it was carried into effect a little later. We must not here omit a striking act of humility on the part of our Saint. They halted for the night at a small village, and though the cold was intense, he took his rest on a bundle of straw, dressed as he was, in order to give up his comfortable bed to two Jesuit fathers.

As he passed through Valence, he called on the Visitation nuns, and found them about to engage in a lawsuit to compel a certain man to sell them his,



garden, without which they could not build their convent. He highly disapproved of this measure as being unjust, telling them that they ought to wait till their neighbour was willing to sell his ground, instead of compelling him to do so; adding that he had as much right to keep it as they had to keep their money, and that he ought not to be forced to sell it, even if they paid double price for it; in a word, he advised them to change their abode, and they did so. He was truly a foe to litigation. He shewed this again at an hotel, by resigning his comfortable room to a lady who arrived after himself, but who seemed to wish for it. The hostess strongly objected to the proposal, because she had only a small close room to offer him instead, but he insisted on transferring himself and his trifling effects into it, and then said, "I am more comfortable here than I could possibly describe."

He went again to visit Sister Mary, a holy nun at Valence, who was ill. The out-portress of the convent reconducted him to his lodging, but ran on with such speed that he, exhausted by weakness and the fatigue of travelling, could not keep pace with her; he therefore requested her to moderate her speed a little. She did so for a few minutes, but other affairs pressing, she soon forgot herself, and hurried on as before, whereupon the Saint said to his companions, "You see that people who are being led must contrive to follow their leader." On reaching the lodging the good portress knelt down and asked his blessing. In giving it he predicted that she would soon put on the veil of the Order, as in fact she did a few months later. On the point of departure, as he was mounting his horse, he sent

for his hostess, to salute and take leave of her; as she was engaged at the moment, his attendants said it was not worth while waiting there for her, but he sent her word not to hurry herself, for that he would await her convenience. As his followers grumbled a good deal, he endeavoured to appease them, saying that having paid her for what she had given them, it was only right to repay her great civility with an act of courtesy. On making her appearance the hostess was confounded at finding the holy prelate in the middle of the road, waiting for her. She made a thousand excuses, asked his blessing and a few words of good advice, both of which he most kindly gave, and he then rode off quite content.

On the 29th of November he reached Lyons, where several of the inhabitants were most anxious to receive him as their guest, especially Monsieur Olier, His Majesty's *Intendant*, and the Jesuit Fathers, but excusing himself, he declined all these offers, and said that, foreseeing the difficulty of finding a lodging, the city being filled with the two courts of France and Savoy, he had taken care to secure one, which he was sure would not be otherwise engaged. His friends were utterly astonished when they found that he had taken up his quarters in the house of the gardener belonging to the Visitation convent, which was contiguous to the residence of the nuns' confessor. The gardener's cottage was exposed to every wind, and liable to smoke, nevertheless his love of poverty led him to prefer it: besides, he was here close to his beloved daughters, and neither his companions nor his servants would experience much inconvenience on his account, the

place being too small to permit the reception of many visitors, whilst those who really needed him could go to him without formality. The worst of it was, the lodging was shared between him and a surgeon, an inconvenience to which he submitted till the surgeon, who perceived how much he was straightened for room as well as comfort, and who had a great respect for him, exerted himself so much that at last he procured for himself another lodging. Here the Saint lived at the expense of the Mother de Blonay, who, like Magdalen and Martha, deemed herself most happy in affording corporal sustenance to her master, from whom she and her community received the spiritual food of the divine word. Every one who visited him, pitied him, imprisoned as he was in this poor inconvenient place; but he assured them all that he had never been more comfortable, and that he was only too well off; and yet his servants were far better lodged than he was. It had always been his aim to choose the worst of everything for himself, and when his friends remonstrated on the score of his health, he used to answer that, being strong and accustomed to inconvenience, comforts would only weaken his constitution, whereas the privation of them would tend to invigorate him. With such specious pretexts as these he contrived to cover his spirit of mortification. Caring only to please God, he desired that the motives on which he acted should be known to God alone. The commendations which usually accompany virtue are apt to destroy it, therefore it becomes us to shun them in order the more safely to maintain it, and this is precisely what our Saint did.

At Lyons he again paid his respects to the King, who received him in such a manner as to shew that he had inherited from Henry the Great his respect and affection for the Saint. The Queen Mother and the Queen Consort testified extraordinary regard for him; the Prince and Princess of Piedmont did the same, so that there seemed to be a sort of rivalry in the two courts to do honour to the sanctity of the servant of God, rendered perhaps all the more conspicuous by the very humility which made him strive to shun the distinction. Instead of attaching him to the world, it only increased his aversion to it. He stole away whenever he could, to hide himself, either in his little room, where he was always accessible to any one who sought his advice, or else in the parlour of his dear convent, where his daughters endeavoured to profit by his counsels, knowing well that but little time now remained to them for receiving them. Here he met the Mother de Chantal on her return from the foundation of the monasteries of Dijon and Paris, and gave her divers instructions with regard to the management of the Congregation. Amongst other regulations now decided, one was that the Order should never be subjected to any other superior than the Holy See and the Ordinary of the place in which the respective houses should be established: he said that the daughters of Holy Mary should be the spiritual daughters of the clergy, and he strongly recommended this point to the Mother de Blonay, then superior of the house at Lyons. Madame de Chantal proceeded on her journey into Dauphiné, and therefore was not present at the Saint's death.

## CHAPTER X.

## OCCUPATIONS OF FRANCIS IN LYONS.

VAST numbers of people of every rank had recourse to him, and great was the advantage they thus derived, whilst every one admitted that he taught nothing but what he practised himself. There were a few Germans connected with the King's court, who could never think they saw enough of him. They declared that in Germany he was looked upon as a S. Jerome, a S. Ambrose, or a S. Augustine, and that in point of learning and piety he was compared to the ancient Fathers of the Church. Nor was this the opinion only of the common people, who easily give credit to report: he was equally esteemed by men distinguished for learning and position. After conversing with him, and consulting him on various topics, a doctor of the Sorbonne expressed his gratification and his thanks by saying, "My Lord, every one looks upon you as a saint, and with good reason; my own experience tells me it is true." The humble Francis replied, "O Sir! may God preserve you from such a sanctity. I assure you that you are as much mistaken as everybody else: I own that I have a good and strong will to serve our Lord henceforth and for ever: assist me with your prayers that I may become a saint, for thus you will contribute greatly to my sanctification."

To a lady, who told him that if he were clad in scarlet, he would be taken for S. Charles, he said,

“I assure you, madam, the second point is far more desirable than the first: unquestionably I would much rather be S. Charles, than wear his red robes.” Another time, when S. Francis Xavier was mentioned in his presence, a priest said, “God be praised, we have now three canonized saints of the name of Francis, of Paula, of Assisi, and Xavier: Saint Francis of Sales will be the fourth.” The good Bishop replied with a smile, “Would to God that I were a saint!”

That he practised what he taught, is shewn by the following circumstance. Having to preach on the second Sunday of Advent at the Jesuits' church, he persisted in refusing the use of a coach which was offered him, and which the weakness of his legs seemed to render necessary: he said that it would be disgraceful to ride in a carriage, and then go and preach the penance and mortification of S. John Baptist and the poverty of the gospel: he therefore went on foot, and spoke with so much energy, that the fervour of his spirit was evidently not impaired by the debility of his body. On the festivals of the Immaculate Conception and of S. Thomas, he preached to his dear nuns, but with the sentiments of a man who is shortly to rank among the Seraphim. At the request of the Queen Mother, he went on Christmas Eve to erect the cross for the Observantine Fathers of S. Francis, on which occasion he had much to suffer from the cold: after taking a little rest he celebrated midnight mass for the nuns, and having given them communion, made a fervent discourse in honour of the Babe of Bethlehem. Our Lord favoured him with extraordinary consolations in the course of the night; for when the Mother

Superior entreated him to give her an idea of some of the delights which he had enjoyed, he told her that he saw the Archangel Gabriel at the moment he was intoning the Gloria in excelsis: adding that his heart was hardened against inspirations, and therefore it was necessary that the angel should address himself to his bodily ears, and thus touch his feelings. This was not enough to satisfy the innocent and holy curiosity of the Mother de Blonay, who repeated her enquiries; whereupon the Saint smiled, and told her he had never experienced such consolation at the altar, for that the divine Child had descended both visibly and invisibly, and therefore it was no wonder that angels had likewise been present; but that this was all he could tell her because there were so many people present. At break of day he went to hear the confessions of the Prince and Princess of Piedmont, said his second mass and gave them communion; and, fearful of not being able to reach the convent again in time to say the Community mass, he requested a priest to hold himself in readiness there, and, in case of his not arriving in good time, to say the mass. He arrived, however, at the very moment; but finding the priest vested, he would not allow him to unvest, but kneeling down, he devoutly heard the three masses of the priest, and then said his own third mass, which was not over till nearly mid-day. After dinner, he gave the habit to two young ladies who had lately entered the monastery, and preached on the mystery of the day, expounding the words of the apostle: "That renouncing impiety and worldly desires, we should live soberly and justly and piously in this world." (Titus ii. 12.) Finally, towards evening, he went to

the palace of the Queen-Mother, who was to take her departure on the following day: here he remained for some hours at great inconvenience to himself, and did not reach his lodgings till the night was far advanced. On S. Stephen's day, after saying mass for his nuns, and communicating them, he went to dine with Canon Menard, the Archbishop's Vicar-General, whom he consulted on several important affairs: he then attended to those who wished to see him; and at five o'clock, entered the parlour of the Visitation convent, where he spent a considerable time, discoursing on the things of God.

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## CHAPTER XI.

### THE LAST CONFERENCE OF S. FRANCIS OF SALES WITH HIS SPIRITUAL DAUGHTERS.

THE last sayings of illustrious men are usually imbued with extraordinary efficacy, and are carefully cherished by the fortunate hearers. This was the case with regard to the last conference of our Saint with his spiritual daughters, which was preserved through the care of the Mother de Blonay.

On entering the parlour he saluted the nuns, telling them he was come to bid them a last adieu, and to spend with them the little remnant of time which the world and the court had left at his disposal; adding, "In fine, my dear daughters, the hour of departure is at hand, and I am come to end with you the consolation which, up to the present day, I have received from you. Nothing more remains to be said; but in truth, women are seldom at a



loss for words: how much better would it be to speak to God than to men." The Superior here observed, that, if they wished to speak to him, it was in order to learn from him, how best to speak to God. The Saint answered, "Just so! Self-love suggests this pretext: however, without further preface, let me hear what you have to say."

He answered all their questions, and gave them many most important instructions on the manner Superiors were to treat their subjects, and subjects their Superiors; how they were to act with regard to desiring or refusing the offices of religion, and insisted much on his great maxim of asking nothing and refusing nothing; exhorting them to be ever ready to obey. Here one of the nuns asked him to explain this maxim more fully, as it seemed to contradict the words of our Saviour, "Ask and ye shall receive." "Oh, my daughter," said the Saint, "it refers only to earthly things; as for virtues, they must be perpetually asked for; and if we beg for the love of God, that will comprise all the rest, since they cannot be separated from one another." His next instruction was on confession and communion, and on discriminating between venial sins and imperfections; on this latter point, he said, "It is well to distinguish, as far as can be, between venial sin and imperfection, but scarcely one in a hundred knows how to do this, and hence the most holy souls are often in perplexity." He then related what had occurred in the case of Sister Mary of the Incarnation, (as mentioned previously,) adding, "You may imagine how difficult it must be, since this enlightened soul, after treating with very famous men, knew not how to do it: we ought not, however, to distress

ourselves in endeavouring to acquire this discernment, when we have it not; for this great servant of God was a saint, although she had it not." He then explained the difference, telling them that venial sin depends upon the will; and that where there is no will there is no sin, though there may be imperfection; as for example in first emotions, and involuntary distractions. He told them that he had remarked in all the convents he was acquainted with, how the nuns made no distinction between God and the feeling of God. "It seems to them," said he, "that they are not in the presence of God when they do not *feel* God, that is to say, when they have no sensible feeling of God; and this is a great error. Take an example: a person suffers martyrdom for the love of God, though perhaps at the moment he is not thinking of God, but of his own pain; now, though he may not have a sensible feeling of faith, he does not on this account cease to merit in virtue of his original resolution, or to perform a great act of love. What we have to do, is to desire that our souls may be united to God. As for you, how happy I esteem you, since your rules, constitutions and everything else, lead you to this! You have only to act, and do not lose your time in fruitless wishes." The attendants of the Saint now arrived with torches to escort him to his lodgings, for it was growing late. When he saw them, he said, "What are you come for? I should have remained here all night, without thinking what I was about. But I must go, obedience calls me; farewell, my dear daughters!" They pressed him to say a little more of that which was most important to be remembered; whereupon he replied, "What would you have me say? I have

already told you these two things, ask nothing, refuse nothing; I know not what else to say. Look at the little Jesus in the crib; He accepts all the injuries of cold and poverty, and whatever else the Eternal Father permits; nor does He refuse the comforts and solace which His Mother gives: we do not read that He ever stretched forth His hand to reach His Mother's breast; He left all to her care and tenderness. Like Him, then, let us ask nothing and refuse nothing; but let us accept whatever God sends."

However, as the spirit of indifference, taught and practised by S. Francis of Sales, has been misunderstood and misinterpreted, it will not be amiss to offer a few remarks upon the subject.

1. The Saint did indeed endeavour to instil this spirit of indifference into the hearts of those whom he directed; and this by example, as well as by instruction; carrying it so far as to be indifferent with regard to health or sickness, honour or contempt, labour or repose, life or death, purgatory or heaven. Once he was asked whether he would rather go to purgatory or heaven? He answered, that it was not for him to choose; and that he would rather, much rather, go wheresoever the Will of God decided; because this Will would convert purgatory into Paradise, whereas without this Will, Paradise would be a purgatory. When he was reminded that he would praise God more perfectly in Paradise, he said, "I shall praise Him perfectly enough, whenever I praise Him according to His own wise appointment." In the same way, whenever he was ill, he declared it was the same to him, whether he was in health or in sickness—he had no choice: it was for

God to decide in what condition He would have his service; adding, "I will serve Him whether I am well or whether I am ill. In not serving Him, I shall serve Him, because in whatever state I may be, I shall accomplish His divine Will."

2. The indifference inculcated by our Saint does not extend to spiritual things and the salvation of souls: he insisted that we ought to ask for virtues, and aspire to eternal life, because such is the Will of God. If on some occasions he advises us to leave our salvation to the good pleasure of Almighty God, he does it in order to pacify some troubled heart; but nowhere does he recommend that abandonment which is taught by the new mysticism, and which creates neglect and omissions of the duties of Christianity, even of those which are the most essential. The indifference of our Saint was widely different from this more than stoical insensibility, which could see all mankind ill, dead, or even lost, without concern.

3. All those impossible suppositions—such as, that the soul which possesses this indifference would rather be in hell with the Will of God, than in heaven without it:—that pure souls prefer deformity to beauty, if equally agreeable to their celestial spouse, &c., &c., signify nothing more than that the Will of God is to be loved above all other things; not that we are to desist from wishing and asking for other things, provided our desires are reasonable and calm. Certainly the Saint's object was, in the first place, to appease troubled minds, by teaching them to make acts of pure disinterested love, in which he himself excelled, even from early life; and in the second, to recommend acts of humility and patience.

Let us conclude, therefore, that our Saint, in counselling this indifference, intended that it should apply to the things of this life, as riches or poverty, honour or contempt, life or death, consolations or desolations, lights or dryness in prayer; but not to the gifts of grace and glory. Whoever pretends to find in his writings anything that can be construed into indifference about salvation, or the means of attaining it, only abuses his authority, and distorts his meaning.

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## CHAPTER XII.

### LAST ILLNESS AND DEATH OF THE SAINT.

THE just man never dies an unprovided death, because he sufficiently provides for death who perseveres in justice to the end, even though perchance he die suddenly. Such was the case with St. Francis of Sales, from whom the above words are quoted. His last illness was but of a few hours duration, but his death was most precious. The day selected for his departure from Lyons, (the festival of the beloved disciple), was the day fixed by Providence for the beginning of his journey towards eternity. He made his confession, celebrated his last mass for his beloved daughters, and gave communion to them. In the morning, as he was washing his hands and face, he remarked to his attendants that his sight was failing, and that this warned him of his approaching end, adding, "The corruptible body is a load upon the soul, (Wisdom, ix. 15), but we must live as long as God pleases." After Mass, he heard the confession of the Mother de Blonay, who thus

had the honour of being his last penitent, and of receiving the last rays of a sun, now on the point of setting; she was one of his oldest spiritual children, having been a child in the Chablais at the time of the Saint's mission. After her confession, he had a long conversation with her, and, when giving her his blessing, he said, "Good bye, dear daughter, I leave you my spirit and my heart," words which were verified; his spirit surviving in her holy life, whilst his heart was actually consigned to her convent.

On quitting the church about midday, he happened to meet the Duke de Bellegarde, with whom he remained conversing bareheaded for a considerable time in a dense fog, the season also being extremely cold; they were joined by Villeroy, governor of Lyons, who detained him yet longer in the cold. Then, to lose no opportunity of benefiting his neighbour, he called on the Duke of Nemours, to take leave of him, and also to use his influence in favour of some officers belonging to the duchy of Geneva. In consequence of some sinister reports, the Duke had determined to dismiss them all, but the Saint spoke so strongly of their zeal for his interests, and of their integrity, that they were confirmed in their posts. He next visited the Prince of Piedmont, and, on reaching home, found his strength fast waning. One of his servants proposed that he should put on his boots to be in readiness for the moment of departure; "Let us put them on then," said the Saint, "but we shall not go far." He could scarcely take any food, and leaned for some time thoughtfully on the table; reviving a little, he wrote a letter in favour of the Minor Observan-

tine Fathers, another to an abbess who was one of his spiritual children, and began a third to a nun, which was interrupted by the arrival of visitors. His friends were surprised to perceive that, contrary to his usual custom, he did not accompany his visitors as they retired; in fact, he did not even rise to return their salute, a clear proof that he felt ill. Roland suggested that as it was getting late, they had perhaps better postpone their departure till the following day, and the Saint said, "Do you think that I am ill, then?" Going into another room, he asked an attendant whether he had heard Father Seguiraud preach? The man answered affirmatively, adding that the father had recommended the queen to love her servants: "And you," interposed Francis, "do you love me very much?" Tears prevented the faithful servant from answering this question, whereupon the Saint said, "And I, too, love you all very much, but we must love God, our great Master, above all things." In uttering these words, it would seem that Divine Love was eager to give him the kiss of everlasting union, for he fainted away, as if love made him languish; this fainting-fit was but the forerunner of apoplexy, which soon attacked him. He was promptly surrounded by his attendants, who drew off his boots, and assisted him to walk about his room for a little while, after which they put him into bed at about two o'clock in the afternoon. In about half an hour apoplexy came on, followed by lethargy; he was unable to move, and could only be roused a little from time to time; in these intervals, his remarks were most beautiful. Roland, half dead with grief at this sad and unforeseen occurrence, knew not what to do, but at last sent to inform the Father

Rector of the Jesuits, who, accompanied by a lay-brother, hastened to the Saint's lodgings, and left no means untried to relieve the sufferer until the arrival of the doctor, who, happening to be from home, did not see Francis till some hours after the attack.

It would be impossible to describe the pious sentiments of the dying Saint; he answered Father Rector's questions by making acts of faith, hope, love, humility, and contrition, so fervently as to show that they were habitual with him. On returning to the college, the Rector sent two other fathers to remain with him, one of whom accosting him, said; "How is this, my Lord? a short time ago you came to take leave of us, and now we see you in this state!" The sufferer answered, "Father, I await the mercies of the Lord;" then he added these words of the psalmist, "With expectation have I waited for the Lord; and He was attentive to me." The father asking whether he conformed his will to the Will of God, and would accept of death with patience if God should so appoint, he replied, "It is well to await the coming of the Lord, as well at this hour as at any other: God is Master; may that be accomplished which is pleasing in His divine sight; let Him dispose of me as He pleases, I will suffer all with patience." He requested the father to hear him make his profession of faith, at the end of which he declared that if there were a thousand religions in the world, he would believe none to be true but the Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman Church, "in which," said he, "I will live and die; this I swear and protest, whatever my enemies may suggest to the contrary; and now, whilst we have time, I beseech of you to administer the sacrament of Extreme



Uction." The Vicar General and the parish priest were informed of his desire, but the doctors were of opinion that it might be deferred, and he obeyed them exactly, refusing nothing that they prescribed, and telling them that they might do whatever they pleased with him, so that they and all who surrounded him were in admiration, and more edified than we can describe.

Continuing his exhortations, the father tried whether he would say these words of our Saviour: "Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me;" but, instead of this, the Saint sighed, and said the concluding words of the passage, "My God! Thy will be done, not mine!" On the father asking him to dedicate his soul to the most Blessed Trinity, he pronounced the following offering with great energy: "I offer and consecrate to Thee, my God, One God in three Persons, all that belongs to me; my memory and my thoughts to Thee, O God the Father; my intellect and my words to Thee, O God the Son; my will and all my actions to Thee, O Holy Ghost; my heart, my body, my tongue, and all my senses, to Thy most Sacred Humanity, O Jesus Christ my Saviour, Who for me didst not refuse to be betrayed, given into the hands of Thine enemies, and to suffer the torments of the cross."

At this moment the Vicar General Menard arrived, and asked him whether he would like to have the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament made for him, but he answered, that he did not deserve it. Menard enquired whether he should pray for him. "Oh, yes," he replied. Being asked whether he remembered our Blessed Lady, and had recourse to her in all his necessities, he said that he had done so all

the days of his life. After this, he fell into a slumber, and in order to rouse him, a priest who was present asked him what he thought of the Catholic faith, and whether he was not perchance a Huguenot? At these words, not only did he awake, but cried out in a very loud tone, "Oh, God preserve me from such a thing! I never was a heretic!" then, making a large sign of the cross, he added, "that would indeed be too great a treachery." He was asked whether he was afraid of death, since some even of the greatest saints have trembled at its approach; and he answered, that he had great reason to fear it; but when some one said, "O death, how bitter is the thought of thee," he added, "to a man who hath peace in his possessions." As the night was now far advanced, the doctors wished him to be left to rest, notwithstanding which several religious remained to watch by him and assist him.

After four o'clock in the afternoon the report of his illness was spread through the city; and it would be impossible to describe the grief of the people, or the prayers which were offered for his recovery; with this view the Vicar General gave orders to have the Blessed Sacrament exposed in all the churches, to obtain from God, if possible, the prolongation of the Saint's life. But he was a fruit mature for heaven, and his complaint baffled medical skill; he grew worse in the middle of the night, and Extreme Unction was accordingly administered; his presence of mind was wonderful, and he answered all the prayers of the Church with tender devotion. As the apoplexy was slowly progressing, there was some thought of administering the Viaticum, especially as his intellect seemed to strengthen, instead of

to diminish, as might naturally have been expected ; however, as he had said mass in the morning, and as the vomiting continued, it was judged better to defer it. He desired that his rosary (to which were appended some medals which he brought from Rome and Loreto) might be wound round his arm. At day-break he was visited by Robert Bertolet, Bishop of Damascus, who, on entering his room, said, " My dear brother Francis, what a change of the right hand of the Most High ! On Christmas Eve you came to visit me and to bid me adieu, and now I have to come and bid you adieu." The dying man, who had a great regard for him, looked at him, and, in testimony of affection, held out his hand towards him, whereupon the Bishop told him that he had come to assist him, using the words of the Wise Man : " The brother that is helped by a brother, is as a well fortified city," to which the Saint rejoined, " May the Lord save us both." " Place all your confidence in the Lord," said the Bishop, " and He will nourish you ;" to which the Saint answered, " My meat is to do my Father's will."

The dying man had requested one of his friends to repeat often to him these words, " My heart and my flesh have exulted in the living God," to which it was observed that he frequently added, " I will sing the mercies of the Lord eternally ; my soul refuses to be comforted ; when shall I come and appear before the face of the Lord ? I remembered the Lord, and I was consoled. Show me, O Lord, where Thou feedest, where Thou reposest in the midday."

The provincial of the Jesuits next arrived, and said to him, " My Lord, do you not remember me ?

do you not know me?" He replied, "May my own soul be forgotten if I forget you." Then, perceiving that the Jesuit lay-brother was most assiduous in serving him, he said to him, "Brother, you are exerting yourself, and suffering a good deal on my account; what shall I be able to do for you?" Brother Arnaud answered that he hoped he would remember him in the kingdom of God; the Saint cast down his eyes, and promised him to do so. The provincial suggested that he should use the prayer of St. Martin, "Lord, if I am still necessary to Thy people, I refuse not to labour." But Francis could not allow himself to be compared to so great a man; therefore, instead of that prayer, he said, "I am a useless, useless, useless servant, of whom neither God nor the people can have any need." When the words, "Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus, Dominus Deus Sabaoth," were said, he repeated them several times, and then went through the whole hymn. He seemed penetrated with the idea of the greatness of God, and recited the whole of the fiftieth psalm, several times repeating the verse, "Wash me still more," &c.

The physicians now declared his case hopeless, and one of the senators of Geneva went to convey the sad news to the Duke of Nemours. Although His Highness was confined to his bed with the gout, he was resolved to pay him a visit, and accordingly ordered his carriage, even condescending to enter the poor little room in which the Saint was dying; he did yet more, for, after saluting him, he knelt down, and leaning on the bed, took the Saint's hand, kissed it, and bathed it with his tears, saying that he

could not help weeping for the loss which all Europe would sustain by the death of such a man.

The Duke had quite laid aside all his former feelings against the Saint, whose eminent sanctity had gained universal respect; from having been his enemy, he became his friend and admirer, of which he now gave a public demonstration, by paying a visit which must have occasioned considerable inconvenience to himself. Some of his attendants, fancying that violence of pain prevented Francis from noticing the Duke's conduct, asked him if he knew that prince? He replied, "It is His Highness the Duke of Nemours, whose vassal I was born, and whose faithful servant I have ever been." The Duke asked him to bless him and his son, the young prince whom Francis had baptised at Paris. The Saint answered that he besought the Lord to bless him and all his family, and, as he said this, he raised his hand and gave his blessing. Perceiving one of his servants weeping, he said to him, "Do not weep, my son, it is fitting that the divine Will should be accomplished." Roland, whose grief was unbounded, entreated him to bequeath some word of advice to his family, and the man of God answered, "Live in peace and in the fear of God."

The Archbishop of Embrun came to visit him, but he was so drowsy that he could with difficulty be kept awake; opening his eyes, however, he looked at the Archbishop, and was heard to say in a subdued tone, "Lord, all my desires are before Thee, and my groans are not hidden from Thee;" then he added, "My God and my All! all my desire is the desire of the eternal hills." These sentiments, so tender and so worthy of a saint, whose amiability had gained

even the hearts of his foes, increased the grief of all those who surrounded him. The doctors insisted much on his being kept awake, and seeing him extremely lethargic, one of the Feuillant Fathers tried to rouse him, by telling him to be of good heart, for the day might yet come when he would take his seat on the throne of Geneva; but the Saint, who had ever disliked pomp, humbly rejoined, "I have never wished for the throne of Geneva, but only the salvation of its people; this have I asked, and still ask of God." Another reminded him of his spiritual daughters of the Visitation, and asked whether he was not sorry to leave them orphans, or whether he had any message to send them? "God," he said, "Who is all goodness, omnipotence, and mercy, will perfect the work He has begun;" and he repeated these words three times.

The malady increasing, the doctors now had recourse to extreme remedies; a blister was put on his head, and two hot irons were applied to the nape of his neck; wishing to try a third on his head, the blister was removed, carrying the skin with it, so that his head was flayed from the nape of the neck to the forehead; and on applying the heated iron to the head, the flesh was so much burnt as actually to smoke. Under these violent operations, which one cannot think of without horror, the Saint, who still retained both speech and consciousness, uttered not a word of complaint; a few faint sighs escaped him, and tears trickled down his cheeks; he raised his shoulders now and then, and invoked the holy names of Jesus and Mary, the sole solace of his sufferings, which he accepted as the penalty due to his sins, and as a satisfaction due to Divine Justice, which can leave

nothing uncanceled; his pious sentiments seemed to increase, and he exclaimed, "What am I doing here, O my God, at a distance from Thee, and separated from Thee? Either come to me, or call me to Thee: withdraw me from this valley of tears, and I will run in the odour of Thy perfumes."

The portress of the Visitation convent now entered, and hoped to give him pleasure by telling him that the Bishop of Chalcedon and the Mother de Chantal would soon be there to see him. "No, no, sister," he said, "we must never tell an untruth, no matter what the motive may be."

Madame Olier (wife of the governor) came with her daughters to receive his blessing. Afterwards he took his friend Monsieur Pernet by the hand, saying, "Evening advances, day is on the wane." To a Feuillant Father, who asked him whether he did not dread the assaults of the devil in his last moments, he replied that he placed all his trust in the Lord, who would know how to deliver him from all his enemies, and he repeated this with great energy several times. When some one remarked that even amongst the apostles one had fallen by the temptation of the devil, he repeated the same words, adding, that God would perfect in him what He had deigned to begin; and then, pronouncing the holy Name of Jesus, he fell into his agony and spoke no more. We may here remark that, as the first use he made of his tongue was to pronounce the words, "my God," so did he last use it to utter the holy Name of Jesus; recognising Him in the former, as the Author of his being, and in the latter, as his last End. He answered all the questions put to him in a manner worthy of his great sanctity; it would seem as if his

love, which was to endure throughout eternity, felt not the symptoms of approaching death, nor the influences which were actually destroying his body; on the contrary, every object seemed to awaken and occasion demonstrations of more ardent affection for his Creator, to redouble his confidence in Him, and his desire of self-annihilation, that he might render honour to the greatness of God, and to make him more and more eager to submerge himself in His immensity.

After he lost his speech, Father Malabaila, provincial of the Reformed Monks of St. Bernard in Piedmont, suggested many pious little aspirations, to which he responded by signs and by raising his eyes to heaven. Seeing him sinking fast, the provincial recited the commendation of the soul, and the litany for those in their agony; as they were in the act of invoking the Holy Innocents, whose festival it was, they thrice said *Omnes Sancti Innocentes*, at which moment he raised his eyes to heaven, and surrendered his pure and innocent soul to God, with the tranquillity which had distinguished him through life, on a day befitting the passage of an innocent soul. He died at eight o'clock in the evening, on the twenty-eighth of December, 1622, in the fifty-sixth year of his age, and the twentieth of his pontificate. Father Malabaila closed his eyes, and Brother Arnaud washed his body, which they both bathed with their tears.

Thus ended the mortal career of St. Francis of Sales, Bishop and Prince of Geneva, the apostle of the Chablais, a martyr in patient suffering, and in purity of life a virgin without stain. His last sentiments lead us to conclude that he desired death more



than he feared it; and, certainly, as in life he had the charity of the great apostle, he could not but have his desires in death; as St. Paul could say that Jesus Christ was his life, and that he looked on death as gain, sighing for the dissolution of his body, that he might be with Christ; so did our apostolic Saint prove on many occasions that he had but very little love for life, and less fear of death, whilst most vehement were his desires of being united to the source of all blessings, to that Lord whom he had loved with so much ardour, and had served with so much fidelity.

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## CHAPTER XIII.

RESPECT SHOWN AFTER HIS DEATH—HIS BODY IS EMBALMED—HIS FUNERAL AND TRANSLATION TO ANNEY.

No sooner was the news of the holy man's death known in Lyons, than the whole city was in commotion, people vying with each other in their eagerness to go and revere a body in which so pure a soul had dwelt. Now more than ever was manifested the esteem in which he was universally held, every one applying to him the epithet Saint or Blessed, titles bestowed on him by those who were the first to write his life. So great was the concourse of people to kiss his feet, that the physicians and surgeons could with difficulty exclude them whilst the body was embalmed.

When this was done, the body was clad in pontifical

vestments, lent for the occasion by the Lord Bishop of Damascus, and was then carried to the church of the Visitation, where the funeral offices were celebrated, and an appropriate sermon delivered by Father Peter of St. Bernard, the Feuillant. As the people continued to visit the church in crowds, the body was left exposed till night, when the vestments were taken off, and it was put into a coffin. The confessor of the monastery, the Abbé Pernet, and Rolaud, had been most diligent in arranging means for transporting it into Savoy, but the governor of the province, M. Olier, opposed it, in the name of the people of Lyons, who would on no account consent to the loss of such a treasure. His immediate friends and dependants were deeply distressed, but were obliged to yield to circumstances; the body was therefore deposited in the inner choir of the Visitation convent, and Roland set off to inform the Bishop of Chalcedon of what had taken place.

On the twenty-ninth of December, an express had reached Annecy conveying the news of the Saint's alarming illness; and this, coupled with the remembrance of his predictions, filled the city with indescribable grief. By order of the Bishop, the Blessed Sacrament was exposed in all the churches of the town, and in several others in different parts of the diocese, in which public prayers and masses were offered for the preservation of the life of this beloved pastor. But his prophecy was already verified, and the Bishop of Chalcedon felt convinced of it before the news of his death reached Annecy. The affliction of the people was redoubled, when Roland arrived and gave information of the opposition of the people of Lyons to the translation of the body; to set aside

this opposition, his last will and testament was appealed to; a copy of it was sent to the Prince of Piedmont, together with supplicatory letters from the chapter, the magistracy, the nuns, the city of Annecy, and the family of Sales, entreating His Highness to interfere and obtain the execution of the last will of the deceased, in the restitution of the remains, to be preserved as one of the richest ornaments of Savoy, and the consolation of the diocese. The prince gave orders to the Count di Verva, his ambassador at Paris, to speak to the king upon the subject; however, nothing less than the intercession of a relation of His Majesty, and the Saint's own will, forwarded to Paris in an authentic form, could have induced His Majesty to deprive his kingdom of such a treasure. After much demur he issued formal orders for the transmission of the body, and the order was carried to Lyons by the Chevalier de Sales and two canons, sent by the Bishop. Monsieur Olier consented, though he expressed his apprehensions of a popular tumult, (so highly was the Saint revered by the people of Lyons), to prevent which he strove to gain over some of the most influential of the citizens. The Mother de Chantal contributed much towards the translation, by desiring the Mother de Blonay to use her utmost endeavours to have the Saint's last will carried into effect; she did this so fully, as to draw on herself the blame of a prelate, to whom she replied, that at the voice of her foundress she would not only deprive herself of the dead body of her Blessed Father, but even of the living body of her Redeemer, supposing it were in her possession, adding, that true obedience requires total spoliation, and that our Lord Himself

had said, "Unless I go away, the Paraclete will not come."

At length, on the day appointed, the curate of St. Michael's, having repeated the funeral solemnities, remitted the holy body to the canons of St. Nizier, one of whom, transported with zeal, paid the wages of the bearers, and, addressing his brethren, exhorted them to do themselves honour by bearing the precious burden; whereupon he, and several other priests, raising the holy body, carried it to a carriage drawn by six horses. During all this time a sweet perfume proceeded from the holy body, as if to reward, in some degree, the pious respect of his friends; it was conveyed in this manner to the old church of the Observantine Fathers, before which the cortege halted, and the Vicar General Menard, who had accompanied it so far, delivered a funeral oration, after which the body was placed on a bier and conveyed to Savoy.

It was met on its passage through the hamlets and villages by all the inhabitants, and, without being invited, the clergy accompanied it processionally from one parish to another, remaining by it during the night. The Marquis d'Ure travelled post expressly to meet the procession, and was not ashamed to kneel down in the mud to kiss the coffin and water it with his tears, recommending himself at the same time to the prayers and patronage of the Saint. The inhabitants of Seyssel, most of them dressed in mourning, accompanied the body, with a hundred and twenty torches, all the way to Annecy. The magistrates in a body, and the most distinguished of the citizens, in mourning habiliments, went forth on horseback to meet the precious deposit, accom-

panying it to the church of the Holy Sepulchre, where it was placed on the tomb of the Blessed Andrew of Antioch, until the necessary arrangements were completed for its interment, which ceremony took place on the 24th of January.

Here let us observe how God deigns to distinguish after death those who most strive to shun honours during life. Francis made his appearance at Lyons attended by a single servant, and yet we see the whole city following his coffin; and as at Annecy he had used his best endeavours to conceal his virtues, they became all the more manifest after his death. A regiment of soldiers from Lorraine happening to be then quartered at Annecy, they rivalled each other in tearing up the ornaments and cords belonging to the bier, that they might preserve the pieces as relics. During the three days that the body remained exposed in the church, the concourse of people was such as had never before been witnessed there, and several sick persons were restored to health. In passing through one parish, a certain John Fabri expressed dissatisfaction at the honours shown to the sacred body, and at that moment was struck blind and dumb. On his acknowledging the cause of his punishment, begging pardon of the Saint, and recommending himself to his prayers, he was freed from his double infirmity, the chastisement of his evil speaking.

## CHAPTER XIV.

REVELATIONS OF THE GLORY OF ST. FRANCIS OF  
SALES.

It is indisputable that whoever shares in the sufferings of Christ during life, will likewise participate in His glory after death; hence we may reasonably infer, that after such works, such sufferings, and such humility as were displayed in life by the holy prelate, he must have entered Paradise after his death. Almighty God was pleased to certify as much by visions to several persons, who were destined by His Providence to bear witness to it. One of these was Charles Augustus of Sales, his nephew, then in the sixteenth year of his age.

When the Saint set out on his last journey, this youth took it so deeply to heart, that he fell dangerously ill; he received the last sacraments, and, on the day of the death of St. Francis, was actually holding the blessed candle in his hand during the recital of the commendation of the soul, when he fell all at once into a gentle slumber, during which he dreamt that his uncle, in quitting this valley of tears, came expressly from Lyons to give him his blessing and cure him, before he departed this life. In fact, he awoke in perfect health, and, bursting into tears, exclaimed, "I am convinced that my uncle is dead." The persons present imagined him to be delirious, but, at all events, his recovery was real, and in two days news arrived of the Saint's death; on compar-

ing notes, it was ascertained that the nephew was cured at the very time of the uncle's decease.

John Baptist Gard, canon of the collegiate church at Annecy, when saying mass for the deceased, according to the orders of the Bishop of Chalcedon, beheld Francis, whose face was resplendent with rays of light, wherefore, after his mass he unhesitatingly affirmed that the holy prelate was in glory.

The Prior of Talloire went to offer mass for him at the hermitage of St. Germain, and after the Preface, as he was praying for the recovery of his beloved prelate, he perceived the altar to be enveloped in light, and, in place of the picture, he saw as it were a sun, in the centre of which was the Saint, surrounded by rays of light; his rochet was of snowy whiteness, whilst a splendid stole hung from his neck; his golden locks formed a crown, his countenance was radiant in the extreme, and his eyes, which shone like stars, were sometimes raised towards heaven, and sometimes cast down upon the altar. The sight so delighted the good prior, that, bathed in tears, he fainted, and remained resting with his elbows on the altar, to the astonishment of the spectators; on recovering himself, he felt impelled no longer to pray for him, but to invoke him with the Antiphon, "Sacerdos et Pontifex, &c." Then the vision disappeared, and at the end of his mass he recounted it to his religious, in the full conviction that the Saint had gone to a better life, although no account of his death had as yet been received.

Hugh Pergorel, doctor of laws, was one morning at about seven o'clock lying between sleeping and waking, when he perceived a white dove flying round him, and at the same time heard these words, "I

am no longer at liberty to touch the earth;" the dove then disappeared, and Pergorel, rousing himself, exclaimed, "The Bishop of Geneva is dead, but we may console ourselves, for he is among the blessed." The doctor was a worthy man, and a penitent of our Saint, to whom he had bequeathed by will a valuable emerald ring, but whom he survived several months, as Father de la Rivière informs us.

When the Saint went to take leave of his nuns at Annecy, Sister Anne J. Costa, who acted as portress, was seen to weep abundantly, in the deep conviction of his approaching death: she told him that her heart forewarned her that she should never see him again. This sister was, on account of her many virtues, particularly dear to the good prelate, and he answered her with a smile, "My dear daughter, my heart likewise tells me the same thing, and that I shall not return from this journey; nevertheless, we shall meet again sooner than you expect. In the meanwhile, keep yourself in peace, close to our Lord; pray frequently for me, and take care to send me your good angel every day." He then gave her his blessing, and a little picture of our Blessed Lady. The prediction was soon verified; Francis died in about a month, and the sister in the following August. But Almighty God was pleased to give her a clear sign of the Saint's death, at the very time of its occurrence; for on the 28th of December, as she was in prayer between nine and ten o'clock in the evening, requesting her good angel to go and visit him in her name, the room was suddenly filled with a bright light. In great alarm, she thought the house was on fire; but this fear was instantly dispelled,



and her mind being restored to a state of calm, she heard these words: "We are conducting the soul of thy father: praise God." The light disappeared, leaving, however, a most delicious fragrance; but she could not close her eyes to sleep, so entirely was her mind engrossed with what had occurred, and with the loss which his death would occasion to herself, the order, the diocese, and the whole Church. On the following day she recounted the event of the previous night to her superior, before the news of the Saint's death arrived.

A nun of great virtue, of the order of St. Clare, being in prayer at the time of the holy man's decease, beheld a throne of surpassing splendour, and was given to understand that it was for the holy Bishop of Geneva; soon afterwards he himself appeared at the right hand of another holy bishop, canonized a few years before. She was astonished at the sight, and argued within herself as to the propriety of the Bishop of Geneva's standing at the right hand of a saint, canonized by apostolical authority, before he had even been declared to be Blessed; but he approached her, and said, "Daughter, bless and praise God in us." Then the nun asked him how he could condescend to visit such a miserable creature as herself, when perhaps he did not similarly favour his brother the Bishop, whom he no doubt loved with a special and tender affection? The Saint replied, "I have taken good care of him; as for you, obey your confessor, observe your rules, and be satisfied to be my daughter." The next morning she related her vision to her confessor, who, having heard nothing about the holy prelate, went to make enquiries from the Bishop of Chalcedon, who told him that he had received news

of his brother's illness, and was persuaded he was already dead. The priest then mentioned the revelation of the previous night, which consoled his Lordship whilst it deeply grieved him.

Almighty God made known the glory of His faithful servant in another way, to Peter Critain, Dean of Thone. Contrary to the advice of his friends, he insisted on saying a Requiem Mass for the Saint as soon as he heard of his death, which verified the prediction made to the Dean not long before, as the reader will remember ; during the Mass Critain was struck blind, the paten fell from his hands, and he stood before the altar for some time, unable to see anything. He became convinced of his fault, and determined to invoke Francis as a saint, and to implore the aid he needed ; at the same moment he recovered his sight and proceeded with the mass. As if more clearly to show that the favour came from Francis, a few days later, one of Critain's parishioners took to the Saint's tomb a blind child, who returned home with his sight perfectly restored.

The Saint appeared several times to the Mother de Chantal, as if he were continuing to direct her ; and she owned in confidence, that for many years she seemed always to have him, like a second angel, at her right hand, assisting, strengthening, or instructing her, as the case required. Amongst her papers was found the following memorandum : "Since the death of my blessed father, I have thrice heard him speak to me in a dream ; the first time he told me that God had sent him to let me know that He would have me to be profoundly humble ; the second, that God had desired him to make me a perfect dove ; the third, he told me never to complain

of any failing committed against myself, and not to be angry about those which occurred in the monastery, but only to say, the servants of God ought not to commit such and such faults; he likewise bade me do nothing in a hurry, but always act with composure." She beheld him on the anniversary of his death, in the year 1632. He was vested pontifically, seated on a magnificent throne, with a brilliant and majestic countenance; prostrating herself before him, she asked him what she was to do in order to attain the perfection to which she aspired, and he answered, "Do well what you have begun well." She next inquired what she should do in order to accomplish the Divine Will, to which she received this answer, "Dear daughter, God will have you perfected by love; pursue with courage that which love has made you undertake."

A singular circumstance occurred whilst the case containing his relics remained in the chapter-house of the community. Sister Simpliciana, mentioned elsewhere, found an ear of wheat lying on the case; and wondering how it had got there, she went and informed the superior, who repaired to the spot, accompanied by other nuns. On examining the ear, it was found to contain exactly as many grains as there were religious in the house; three of the grains being parched, but not totally withered, would probably have sprouted had they been put in the ground; but there was one grain completely empty, nothing but the husk remaining. The whole community marvelled at the singularity of the circumstance, not doubting for a moment that the ear of wheat was intended to signify in some way or other the state of the religious; they recalled to mind the

mysterious dreams of Joseph, and then, like the apostles on the night of the last supper, each one began to say to another, "Is it I? Am I the withered grain? for goodness' sake tell me if you think so." It is astonishing how much this little incident served to animate the fervour of the good nuns.

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## CHAPTER XV.

### MEASURES TAKEN FOR HIS CANONIZATION.

WHEN the body of the Saint was deposited in the tomb, it became, as it were, a pool of health, curing all maladies; another temple of Solomon, whither every one repaired to present an offering in testimony of favours received. Numbers of possessed persons were carried to it, when the father of lies was compelled to proclaim the praises of the Saint, by quitting the bodies he had long tormented. By the year 1625 the opinion of his sanctity had become so general, that the French prelates assembled at Paris, and wrote to the reigning Pope Urban VIII., entreating him to undertake the necessary informations with a view to his canonization. At the same time the Mother de Chantal, writing to a religious, affirmed that it was really marvellous to hear of the numerous favours which God granted by means of His faithful servant, in consequence of which his tomb was very much frequented, adding, that on that very day, an Abbot, accompanied by several priests and religious, had come over from a distant province of Switzerland, to return thanks for some

signal miracles granted through his intercession ; “which,” writes the Venerable Mother, “ought to make us his daughters all the more assiduous in practising what he taught us.” In another letter she gives details of the solemn procession made by the people of La Roche to his tomb.

The authorities of Annecy, perceiving the increasing crowds of these visitors, and the miracles wrought by the Saint, deputed Father Justus Guerino, and the Notary Du Crest, to visit the various scenes of the holy man’s labours, and to take informations of his saintly life and miracles ; when both were fully and satisfactorily proved, Father Guerino undertook a journey to Rome, to request the Pope to appoint a commission of bishops to form the process and receive the informations. For this purpose the Holy See nominated the Archbishop of Bourges, (Mother de Chantal’s brother,) and the Bishop of Belley, who, with his warm affection for the Saint, willingly undertook to work for his glory.

Whilst awaiting the arrival of the bishops, Father Justus and Canon Ramus, a Doctor of Louvain, began the task, but a pestilence which overran Savoy compelled them to desist from a labour which delighted them from the very abundance of the harvest.

In the year 1632 the scourge ceased, and the bishops reached Annecy, both in very bad health ; the Archbishop was just rallying from the effects of a long and dangerous illness, whilst the Bishop of Belley was in such a state of debility, that he could not ascend a single stair without the assistance of two attendants. But no sooner did they begin the work which they had to do, than they were restored

to perfect health; they themselves, to their own astonishment, feeling stronger than ever.

On the fourth of August they repaired to the conventual church to examine the condition of the Saint's body. On opening the coffin, the body was found entire, the face so natural as to be recognisable, the flesh incorrupt, and the vestments, though turning yellow from the dampness of the spot, neither mouldy nor decayed; the hands and arms were so pliable, that the Duke of Nemours, the Princess of Carignan, and one of her sons, travelled to Annecy expressly to see the body, and to have themselves blessed once more by so holy a hand. The body being replaced in the tomb, the next step was to examine the votive offerings with which the church was filled; they numbered upwards of two hundred, of which fifty were of gold and silver; the minor offerings could not be enumerated; the Mother de Chantal and the community asserted that, for all the functions of the church no wax was purchased by them, the offerings left at the tomb of their Blessed Father keeping them fully supplied. The visitors next examined the plate belonging to the sacristy, the greater part of which had likewise been given on his account.

This being done, they began to take the depositions, which were volunteered in great numbers; but when they had taken three hundred, they deemed them sufficient, and returned to their own dioceses, in order not to increase the expenses of the convent, which were necessarily heavy, although the Archbishop of Bourges entirely defrayed his own expenses. Father Justus and Father D. Maurice Marino were

left at Annecy, having been appointed by the Holy See to carry the informations to Rome.

After the death of Urban VIII., the clergy of France, in two general assemblies held at Paris, renewed their request to Innocent X. for the prosecution of the holy prelate's canonization. His Holiness therefore appointed fresh commissioners to receive informations and to visit the tomb. In 1656, Alexander VII. having now ascended the Pontifical throne, they arrived at Annecy, and found the miracles so numerous that they had full employment, although the Father de Chaugy had arranged them in excellent order, and had selected only the most signal favours, putting aside all those which did not belong either to the first or second class. On repairing to the tomb, some remarkable circumstances occurred which deserve recording; we will take them from a letter written by one of the nuns at Annecy, to the Mother de Lucinge, then superior of the house at Turin.

Whilst preparations were going on for opening the tomb, some persons of great piety were wondering within themselves whether our Lord had preserved the virginal body intact, and indeed expected that it would be found incorrupt; God, however, gave them at the time so deep a conviction of the contrary, that they could have sworn it, even before the coffin was opened. One of them, in particular, felt herself interiorly told by our Lord, that every one hoped for extraordinary signs at the tomb of His servant, but that nothing more would be seen than had been seen at the graves of St. Anne, of His Precursor, of the apostles, and of thousands of holy doctors and virgins, because the flesh was nothing in this

life, everything depending on the spirit. To another, who besought Almighty God to exempt His servant from the universal law of corruption, the answer was interiorly given, that such a request was contrary to the wish of Francis, whose innocent flesh had ever been submissive to a soul wholly subject to God, and therefore unwilling to resist the words of the Lord, "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return;" but that the Spirit of God would rest more than ever, with an admirable activity, upon those holy relics, now that they were to appear despoiled of their flesh; with several other things which we omit for the sake of brevity.

The bishops having entered the church with those witnesses only who were specified in the deputation, the doors were locked, and excommunication (reserved to the Pope) pronounced against whomsoever should apply rosaries or other devotional objects to the holy body, or purloin the smallest article from the tomb. The witnesses and nuns, the latter being assembled at the grate of the choir, were bound by oath to tell the truth in the various interrogations about to be made. Mgr. Dupuy asked whereabouts was the tomb of Francis of Sales? As soon as the masons began to remove the stones, he asked whether the body of Francis rested there? Heaven seemed to give the answer, for the church was instantly filled with such odoriferous fragrance, that the Bishop exclaimed, "Contrition, my friends, contrition, to dispose ourselves for the favours of Heaven." On opening the sepulchre, the holy body was found as described by the surgeon of His Highness, who was there present with the Marquis de Lullin: "I found," says he, "the body of the vener-



able servant of God, Francis of Sales, in a recumbent position on his back, the mitre on his head, and vested in a white cope; perfect as regards bones and muscles, excepting the face, where a little flesh remained on the jaw; the skull was formerly marked at the back; some flesh still adheres to the head, as well as some light coloured hair; there are thirty-two teeth, so firmly set that they cannot be moved; the ribs are bare, but the legs and thighs are covered with flesh; the perfume which issues from the relics is undoubtedly supernatural, no natural or artificial scent being in any respect similar to it. It is miraculous that in so damp a place there should be nothing corrupt or putrid to be perceived."

The sweet fragrance which then excited so much astonishment, was for many years perceptible wherever there was any relic of the Saint, even in other convents besides that of Annecy. On the anniversary of his death, as the nuns of Moulins were discussing the virtues of their Blessed Father, a sweet perfume insensibly pervaded the room, to their great consolation; by degrees, the odour penetrated throughout the monastery, with the exception of one single room, tenanted by a nun who, on the score of being a benefactress, claimed some few privileges; whenever she joined the rest the fragrance vanished, and returned when she withdrew. Somewhat later, this nun improved, went through her noviciate again with great fervour, and completely repaired the scandal she had previously given; at the expiration of a few months she died, an edifying example of penance. The records of the foundations of various earlier monasteries state that this exquisite perfume was perceptible in other places, and by ex-

terns as well as by the religious, as if God would by this fragrance invite men to imitate the virtues so assiduously practised by St. Francis.

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## CHAPTER XVI.

### BEATIFICATION AND CANONIZATION OF S. FRANCIS DE SALES.

THE holy life, devotional writings, precious death, and miracles wrought by S. Francis both in life and after death, clearly shewed that God had received him into glory, and therefore the people at once invoked him as Blessed, visited his tomb, and cherished his relics. The Order of the Visitation, more especially the house at Annecy, began in earnest to take the informations necessary to obtain his beatification. The Mother de Chantal, who was the life of the institute, as well as its foundation stone, spared no trouble or expense for this purpose: she it was who caused his last words to be recorded, collected his writings, took an account of his good works, and applied for commissioners to take informations in the various places, of which mention has already been made. She secured the concurrence of certain ecclesiastics and of the Barnabites, and after her death the task was renewed with great energy by the Mother Frances Magdalen de Chaugy, who had been trained to the religious life by the Mother de Chantal. In spite of the ridicule of the world, (which declared the expenses of the undertaking to be far too great for the Order,) this good religious persisted, God blessing her just desires; and

she had the satisfaction of seeing her holy Father first beatified, and then canonized. Indeed our Lord seemed as if He would reward her by anticipating the time; for she had the happiness of honouring him on the altar for sixteen years, as she died in 1681, at Turin, of which house she was the superior.

She was indeed well seconded by the clergy of France, who met in two general assemblies at Paris, and addressed themselves to Urban VIII., and afterwards to Innocent X., requesting that the pious wishes of the people might be gratified, and that apostolical authority might award due honours to the Venerable Servant of God, Francis of Sales; the sanctity of his life, the purity of his doctrine, and the continuous favours wrought by his means, justly demanding this. Notwithstanding all these solicitations, the cause had not much progressed when Innocent X. passed to a better life. He was succeeded by Fabio Chigi, under the title of Alexander VII., and then the Mother de Chaugy and the Order of the Visitation conceived fresh hopes. The devotion which Fabio Chigi was known to entertain for our Saint, led every one to presage that Alexander VII. would spare nothing for his canonization. The reader will perhaps be glad to know the cause of this great Pontiff's affection for the holy prelate; and as it has been differently represented by several writers, I will state what the Pope himself told in confidence to a distinguished personage.

When the youthful Chigi quitted Siena, his native place, to go to Rome, still irresolute as to what state of life he would embrace, he accidentally met Francis of Sales at an inn on the road; the latter resting there for the night, on his home-

ward journey from Rome. They met and saluted each other, as travellers often do, and the good prelate said he hoped for the pleasure of his company when he had taken a little rest after the fatigue of his journey. The engaging sweetness of his address, together with the far-spread fame of his sanctity, and the pleasing dignity of his countenance, made Chigi gladly accept the offer; they conversed on pious topics, and all the words of Francis seemed to penetrate the young man's heart. Amongst other things, he enquired the object of his journey to Rome; and was answered that he scarcely knew himself, but that on his arrival at Rome, he intended to ask the advice of his friends, and to enter upon that state for which he might be deemed best qualified. To this the Saint replied, "As you have not yet consulted God on the subject, I will do so for you, and will let you know the result before I set out." In the morning Chigi again visited him, when he plainly told him that he was to embrace the ecclesiastical state; adding, that on his arrival at Rome, he would do well to devote himself to the study of Holy Scripture and the Canons; which the youth readily promised to do. When taking leave of each other at the moment of departure, Francis took him aside, and said, "Since you have promised to embrace the ecclesiastical state, promise me another thing necessary to your salvation, which is, never to seek for any ecclesiastical benefice." Chigi gave him the promise; whereupon he embraced him affectionately, saying, "If you faithfully observe the promise which you have now made to God, I promise you in His name, that you shall one day hold the highest benefice in the Church."

Time rolled on, and young Chigi never forgot his pious conversation with the Saint, which, together with his incomparable demeanour, had completely won his heart. He went to Rome, pursued his studies, and discharged with ability the affairs which were entrusted to him; but he never forgot the Bishop of Geneva, and we all know how the prophecy to young Chigi was afterwards verified.

On his accession to the pontificate, the Mother de Chaugy wrote to him to express her congratulations, and besought him not to be unmindful of the cause of his former friend. The Mother de Montmorency, (formerly duchess, and a member of the princely family of the Orsini,) did the same; whereupon the Pope began to think seriously of the affair. He was still further urged by the solicitations of their most Christian Majesties, the Queen Mother declaring that, besides being indebted to Francis for the cure of the late King Louis XIII., the life of his son Louis XIV. was likewise due to him, he having been cured of the small-pox, and restored to France by his intercession. The request of their majesties was seconded by those of Henrietta Queen of England, the Duke of Savoy, the Duchess-Mother, the Electors of Trèves, Mayence, and Bavaria, besides innumerable others, including eight princes, ten dukes, seven duchesses, four marshals, seventy-eight cities, twenty-five parliaments, thirty-eight archbishops and bishops, twenty-nine collegiate establishments, seven generals of Religious Orders, twenty abbots, forty Religious Communities of different institutes, and seventy-nine convents of the Visitation Order.

A Pontiff so affectionately devoted to our Saint, could not resist these accumulated solicitations: but

the universal desire was opposed by the decree of Pope Urban VIII., which forbids the Congregation of Rites from proceeding to the cause of the Beatification and Canonization of Saints, until they have been dead full fifty years. His Holiness was, therefore, obliged to grant a dispensation of fourteen years from this decree in favour of Francis of Sales, empowering the Sacred Congregation to enter upon the necessary formularies before the expiration of the prescribed term, on account of the signal services which he had rendered to the Catholic religion, to which he had added seventy-two thousand souls, converted from heresy, and of his having restored to the Church, by his pastoral solicitude, whole villages, towns and provinces, bordering on Geneva. This decree was promulgated on the twentieth of June, 1659. In the secret Consistory of the Cardinals, His Holiness further stated, that when he was Nuncio at Munster, he was subjected to a dangerous surgical operation, under which he was at the point of death; but, recommending himself to Francis of Sales, the holy prelate appeared to him, gave him his blessing, and instantly cured him.

In the following years, renewed entreaties were addressed to the Pontiff by the Bishops of Soissons and Evreux, who were deputed by the king and clergy of France, to press for the beatification. The Friar Minim, Father Andrew de Chaugy, made several journeys to Rome for the same purpose: he acted as procurator in the cause, on behalf, of the Visitation Order. At length, all the usual ceremonies being completed, the Pope signed the brief of his Beatification on the anniversary of the Saint's death, in the year 1661, granting permission to say his Office

on the twenty-ninth of January, the day of the translation of his relics from Lyons to Annecy, with permission (for that year) to celebrate his Office on any day appointed by the Ordinaries of the different localities, in all the churches of the Visitation Order, in the cathedrals of France, Piedmont and Savoy, in the churches at Rome belonging to those countries, and in that of the Trinity belonging to the Friars Minims on the Pincian hill. On the eighth day of the following year, the function took place in the Church of S. Peter, over the great door of which was placed the Saint's picture, with this inscription in Latin: "The Blessed Francis of Sales, Bishop of Geneva, Founder of the Order of Nuns of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin." As soon as the servant of God was beatified, his body was again disinterred, and deposited by the Mother de Chaugy, then superior of the convent at Annecy, in the magnificent silver shrine given by Christina of France, Duchess of Savoy, which now rests on the high altar of the Church. Her Highness thus had the consolation of venerating her chief almoner on the altars of the Church, and of contributing to his honour, which was one of the most earnest of her desires: having realized it, she died a few months later. The devotion of the people, however, was not yet satisfied: petitions and supplications were renewed, fresh miracles were attested, and more princes came forward to promote his honour, until, at length, the usual consistories having been held, his canonization was determined on the second of October.

Two years elapsed before the final ceremonial, and in the meantime the Bishop of Evreux again returned to Rome to press the affair. On the

twenty-third of February, 1665, the Pope, after taking the opinion of the cardinals, appointed the second Sunday after Easter, which fell on the nineteenth of April, for the solemnity of his canonization, which took place accordingly in the Church of S. Peter. There were present on the occasion thirty-four cardinals, fifty-four bishops, besides innumerable prelates and princes, the Queen of Sweden, and the foreign ambassadors. Father de Chaugy, who had exerted himself so much in the cause, for his pious sister's sake, as well as to gratify his own devotion, carried the banner of the Saint; he was accompanied by all the French Minim Fathers residing at Rome. The Pope sang the mass, inserting in the second place the prayer of the Saint composed by His Holiness, and worthy both of himself and of the Saint. It seemed, as it were, a dispensation of Providence, that the gospel of the day should have been that of the Good Shepherd, of Whom the Saint was so true a portrait. The Pope experienced the protection of Francis that very day; for in the middle of the ceremony he was seized with a spasmodic attack, so violent, that the drops of perspiration rolled down his face, and it was doubtful whether it would not be necessary to suspend the function; but, recommending himself to the Saint, his pain ceased, and he recovered at the moment the name of Francis was invoked in the litanies.

Besides the Bull of Canonization, His Holiness sent a brief to the nuns of Annecy, setting forth his devotion to, as well as his esteem of, the Saint. Together with this brief, he sent one of the three magnificent banners, used on the day of his canonization, where the Saint is represented on one side in his



pontifical vestments, and on the other in the dress of a canon, as worn by him at the time that he was Provost of the Cathedral of Geneva. We may here remark, that, having commissioned the Bishop of Nice to convey this banner to Turin, to be thence forwarded to Annecy, His Holiness desired him to shew it to the Visitation nuns of Turin; not only to give them the consolation of beholding this proof of the Saint's canonization, but likewise to enable them to gain the plenary indulgence which he had granted on the occasion.

Besides the brief and the banner, the Pope also sent a large cross and six candlesticks, all of massive silver, as a mark of honour, to his tomb. Nor did the munificence of the Chigi family end here; for the Pope's nephew, the cardinal, bestowed on the Church of the Visitation nuns two immense silver lamps, as he passed through Annecy on his return from his embassy to France.

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