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OF  
SUPERIORS

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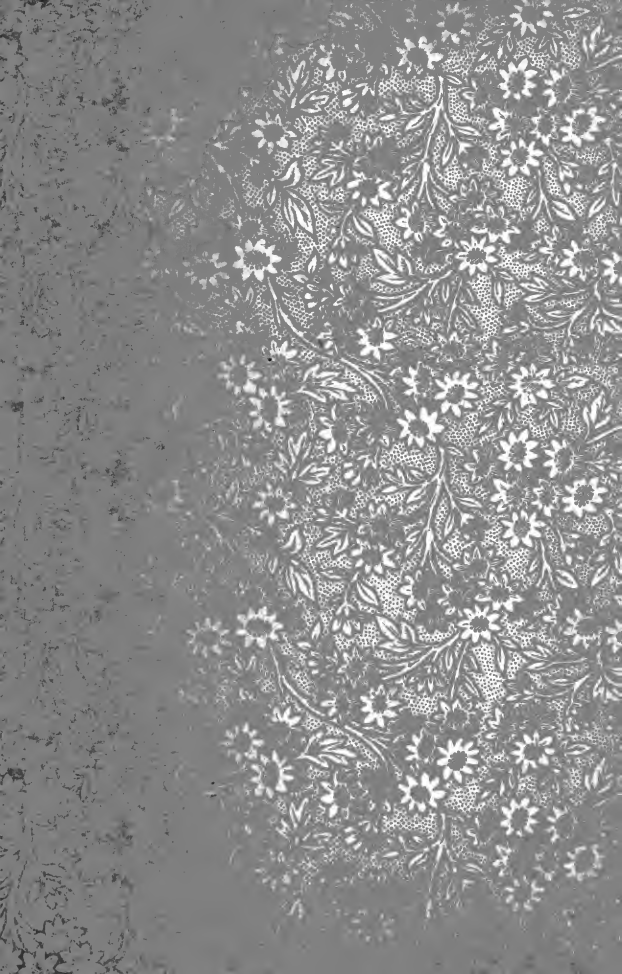
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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.















Einsiedeln, (Switzerland,) Beniger Brothers, Publishers.

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them  
and they follow me. ( S. John. X. 27.)

THE  
Little Book of Superiors.

BY THE  
Author of "Golden Sands."  
*L'abbé Ch. Sylvain.*

TRANSLATED FROM THE NINTH FRENCH EDITION

BY

MISS ELLA McMAHON.



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*"A superior's peril is all the greater because of the high office she holds."*—ST. FRANCIS DE SALES.

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NEW YORK, CINCINNATI, CHICAGO:  
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*Printers to the Holy Apostolic See.*

1889.

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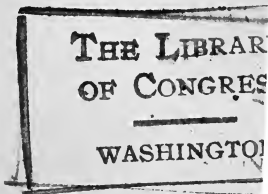
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H. A. BRANN, D.D.

Imprimatur.

✠ MICHAEL AUGUSTINE,  
*Archbishop of New York.*

NEW YORK, February 13, 1889.



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## Approbations.

FROM MGR. BILLIET, CARDINAL ARCHBISHOP  
OF CHAMBÉRY.

I have received the three little works you sent me: *The Young Girl's Book of Piety*, *Golden Sands*, *The Little Book of Superiors*. I submitted them for examination to a pious and learned Ecclesiastic who gave me a very favorable report of them, therefore I willingly recommend them to the institutions of this Diocese.

† ALEXIS

Cardinal Archbishop.  
Chambéry, November 6th, 1871.

---

FROM MGR. DUBREIL, ARCHBISHOP OF AVIGNON.

The work, bearing the title *The Little Book of Superiors*, has been examined by our commission, who have given us a favorable report thereon.

We recommend it to persons who are called to direct religious communities.

† LOUIS,

Archbishop of Avignon.

Avignon, March 29th, 1872.

---

FROM MGR. G.D.L.P. CHALANDON, ARCHBISHOP OF AIX, ARLES, AND ÉMBRUN.

Upon the very favorable report made us of the following works: *The Young Girl's Book of Piety*, *The Little Book of Superiors*, and *Golden Sands*, by the chaplain of a religious community in the diocese of Avignon, said works bearing, according to the laws of the Church, the *Imprimatur* of the Ordinary, we approve of them for this diocese of Aix, and recommend them particularly to persons in our communities charged with the education of youth.

Given at Aix, over the signature of our Vicar-General and marked with the seal of our arms, January 10th, 1872.

Conil, Vic.-Gen.

---

FROM MGR. MERMILLOD, BISHOP OF HÉBRON.

I congratulate you upon the publication of the



*Young Girl's Book of Piety* and the *Book of Superiors*.

I unite my approbation with that of your venerable Archbishop, and I am convinced that these volumes will greatly aid in developing solid piety in young souls and in removing from the path of superiors perils, which, as St. Francis de Sales says, are all the more serious because of the elevated charge they fill.

† GASPARD,

Bishop of Hébron,

*Auxil. of Geneva.*

Geneva, Oct. 18th, 1872.

FROM MGR. FORCADE, BISHOP OF NEVERS.

Having had *The Little Book of Superiors* examined by request of the editors, Messrs. Aubanel Frères, we have learned that the work, manifestly written by a man of experience and practical mind, is of a nature to strengthen superiors in the spirit of faith necessary for their own sanctification as well as in that spirit of prudence and of zeal with which they must be animated for the spiritual advancement of souls whom they govern.

We recommend it therefore to all religious su-

periors of our diocese, and particularly to superiors of our congregations of the Sisters of Charity and Christian Instruction.

Given at Nevers, the Feast of the Purification,  
Nov. 21, 1871.

† AUGUSTIN,

Bishop of Nevers.

---

FROM MGR. PIE, BISHOP OF POITIERS.

*The Little Book of Superiors*, in the opinion of men most familiar with such subjects, is a book written after long and mature experience. It cannot but be read with profit in religious communities.

† LOUIS FRANÇOIS,

Bishop of Poitiers.

Poitiers, Jan. 26th, 1872.

---

FROM MGR. PLANTIER, BISHOP OF NÎMES.

DEAR MONSIEUR L'AUMÔNIER :

I am indebted to Mgr. de Nîmes, among many other subjects of gratitude, for the pleasure of reading, in order to report upon them, your *Young*

*Girl's Book of Piety*, and your *Little Book of Superiors*.

You have obtained the result which you piously desired, this I do not hesitate to assure you.

The spiritual doctrine contained in your excellent works appears to me very safe. You present it in a simple, interesting, agreeable manner. At the same time you know how to make your lessons attractive and fruitful; you set forth good, but you manifest it in a true light, that is in permanent accord with prudence, good sense, and right reason. Continue, dear Sir, to instruct and edify us, and we will continue, according to the measure of our strength, to read, to study, and to praise you.

I am in Our Lord, yours, etc.

Rov. de Cabrière, ch. Vic. Gen'l.

Nimes, March 31st, 1872.

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FROM MGR. PICHENOT, BISHOP OF TARBES.

(Letter to the Author.)

You were kind enough to send me your two charming works, entitled *Little Book of Superiors* and *Vacation Days*. I feel very proud and very happy to be able to add my humble approba-

tion and my sincere commendation to the flattering letters sent you by so many of my eminent colleagues. These two publications, like all from your pen and your heart, appear to me eminently suited to spiritually benefit teachers and pupils.

It is easy to recognize in these books the wisdom and experience of a practical man and a priest according to the heart of God.

Accept, Sir, with my congratulations, the assurance of my perfect devotion.

† P. A.

Bishop of Tarbes.

Tarbes, October 22d, 1872.

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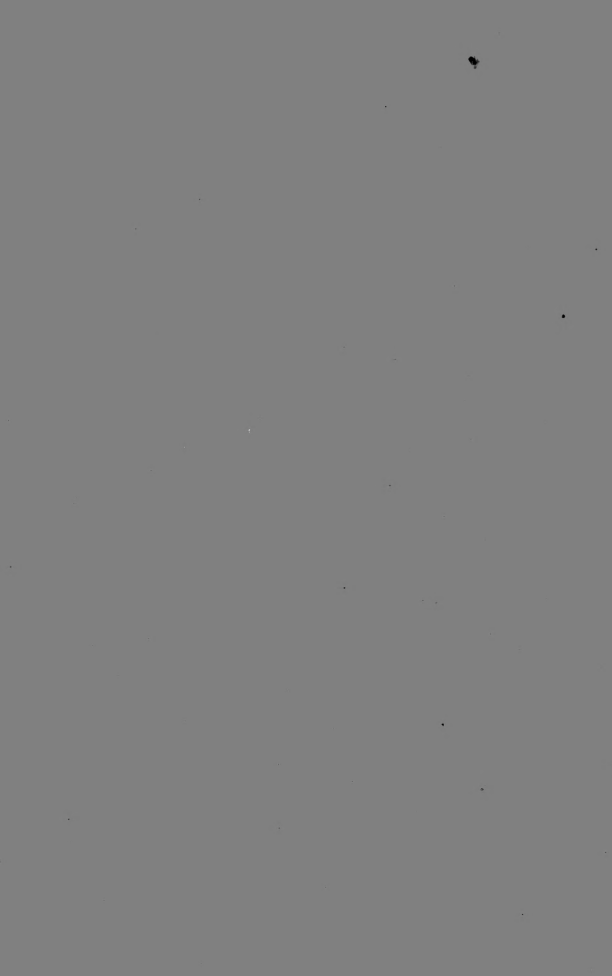
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## TO SUPERIORS.

These pages were written in the presence of God, and we humbly ask Him to make them a useful work. Our object is to assist you, upon whom the heavy burden of superiority has been imposed, and to help you in the very difficult labor of directing your House.

We cannot lighten your burden, but we can increase your strength by teaching you to sanctify yourselves. Sanctity is to the soul what a soft and mild atmosphere is to exhausted or delicate lungs.

Before printing these pages, submitted to the examination of those in authority over us, we placed them before the tabernacle, the dwelling of Jesus, as formerly, in the ages of faith, they placed the seed of the harvest upon the altar. The seed blessed by God was more fruitful, and so it will be with this little book.

If some thought taken out of the con-

text excite trouble in your soul, the one which follows will re-assure you and subdue the apparent severity of the first; moreover, let me repeat to you the words of a saint: *It is always the delicate souls, that is the most faithful, who tremble at sight of their obligations.*

We dedicate this little book to the Mother of Him who, being the Superior of superiors, willed to submit to a humble creature, and who, being the Master of masters, deigned to wash the feet of His Apostles, giving to them who were about to become the superiors of all the faithful this admirable precept: *As I, your Master and Lord, have done to you, do you also to one another . . . . I came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.*

August 15th, Feast of the Assumption.

## INTRODUCTION.

### I.

Superiorship is a weary office. But the religious who accepts it through obedience, and who hears from the lips of those in authority over him these sweet words of Our Saviour to Peter: "Feed my lambs," I confide them to thy care, does not bear the burden of his office alone.

And along the road which leads to eternity, during those sometimes very sorrowful stations of the first, second, third, tenth year, Jesus walks beside him, bearing a large part of his burden. And if he knows how to keep united to Jesus by means of prayer, purity of conscience, and almost daily Communion, his life, laborious doubtless like that of Jesus Christ, is nevertheless calm, resigned, even cheerful, and, above all, meritorious. How earnestly a good supe-

rior daily repeats the words *Our Father who art in heaven*. It is his prayer of predilection, and he feels that Jesus, who draws near to him in a special manner, answers this prayer by an increase of strength, resignation, confidence. How simply he asks for himself and his children the bread of each day!

How he loves to repeat at each hour of the divine Office the pious invocation, *Deus, in adiutorium meum intende. Domine, ad adjuvandum me festina!* — *O God, come to my assistance! O Lord, make haste to help me!* And he hears the ineffable answer of Jesus, *I am with thee*.

With what delight he goes before the Blessed Sacrament, where, filled with a holy boldness, he pours forth his complaints to his Master—he tells Him of his subjects who are a cause of grief to him—he asks counsel,—he humbles himself—he gives thanks—yes, above all, he gives thanks.

Yes, if at times the burden of his office weighs heavily upon him, there are hours also when his heart overflows with joy at being chosen to be the companion and coöperator of Jesus Christ. What greater mark of love can God give one than to

confide to him the care of religious, His most precious souls!

Happy the religious who regards his office only in this very elevating and consoling light!

## II.

Woe to the religious who aspires to a place to which God does not call him!

Woe to him who would resort to direct or indirect means to attain it!

Woe to him who, even when legitimately and canonically elected, gradually drives Jesus from him by praying less, by attributing to himself any success which he thinks he discovers, and fails to see that he is thus doing his own, not God's work.

It must be acknowledged that at present there are few religious who aspire to the office of superior.

The office is generally dreaded, and it is with true humility and a deep conviction of his own incapacity that every religious endeavors to escape the dignity.

Frequently it is accepted through obedience, with tears which are, no doubt, sin-

cere ; its duties at first are performed with fear and trembling, but after a time we gradually yield to a certain confidence in ourselves ; then we become attached to our position, with a tenacity which is astonishing. Ah ! how well the fatal consequences of this attachment to her position were understood by that superior who daily prayed :

“ My God, let me not become attached to my charge ; may I love it because Thou hast sent it to me, but let me feel no complacency in it ! ”

In a human point of view, everything should lead us to avoid the yoke of the superior's office. That it is a yoke and a burden we cannot doubt when we reflect upon the continual criticism to which the actions of a superior are subject ;—the dissatisfaction he inevitably excites in the majority of the community ;—the difficult characters to be guided ;—the temporal anxieties and annoyances of the office, which destroy one's peace of mind and hardly leave one a moment's leisure or repose. . . . Sometimes we so truly appreciate these difficulties that we speak of them to all comers, and upon all occasions.—But,

alas! in spite of these complaints, even while exaggerating our troubles, we hold as tenaciously to our position, and regret it so keenly, that for long years,—sometimes a life-time, we fail to conquer an aversion for our successor or those who, we think, may have caused our removal.

O egotism! O pride! O sensuality! how blinding ye are, whatever the veil 'neath which ye conceal yourselves! O poor, poor human nature!

### III.

Ah! my dear religious, at the beginning of these pages let me give you a rule to which I ask you, in the name of Jesus Christ, to be ever faithful.

Each year, during your retreat, seriously prepare yourself to be *deposed from your office, and to render an account of your administration.* In the silence of your soul, at the foot of your crucifix, calmly study and weigh the meaning of the following commentary. It may appear to you severe, but have the courage to read it to the end, and if it awaken in you an interior shrinking and fear, raise your soul to God

and, with all the sincerity of which you are capable, say to Him :

*My God, on the day of my deposition let my soul be without trouble, remorse, or regret.*

*Deposed*, that is losing all the authority over the religious whom you governed yesterday, and to whom you will henceforth be only a companion whom they will *respect* if you have known how to practise the virtues of a superior and parent, but whom they will *set aside* if you have made your authority too keenly felt—whom they will *humble* if you have been imperious—whom they will *criticise*, particularly if they perceive any trace of haughtiness in your manner, or hear from your lips any uncharitable criticism of your successor.

*Deposed*, that is, parting with all those *little comforts* with which you unconsciously surrounded yourself—those *facilities* for observing the Rule without too much inconvenience,—those thousand little indulgences which you permitted yourself—those attentions, sometimes hypocritical, or at least flattering, which you were wont to receive from your religious.

*Deposed*, that is, leaving suddenly a multitude of unfinished things, entangled



accounts perhaps, carelessly kept books, which will give the impression that you have no prudence, method, or order.

*Deposed*, that is, no longer able to direct the affairs of the house which you managed with ability, it must be acknowledged, but too much, perhaps, as if it were *personal* property.

Another is about to do your work—his undertakings will be praised at the expense of yours. Another will profit by your labor, your pains, your expedients, to brilliantly continue what you had begun,—it will be forgotten that the first idea came from you, that it was you who took the first steps, and overcame all the obstacles.

Another,—God may permit it, will refuse to consult you in anything, will purposely (so the Evil One will make you believe) obliterate all you have done, and pursue a course directly opposite to yours, until it will seem to you that he is seeking to efface every trace of you. Another, finally, will be vaunted even before you as the best superior ever elected. . . Ah! if you have not labored purely for God, how you will suffer!

## IV.

After *deposition* comes the rendering an *account of your administration*.—Imagine that the hour of death has come and that you are before your God !

Ah! if God is good, infinitely good, to a superior who has co-operated with Him in the sanctification of souls, who has lent Him his *hands* to serve and care for His children ;—who has lent Him his *intelligence* to direct them ;—his *heart* to love them ;—his *words* to teach them ;—if God has infinite mercies, infinite pardon, for such a superior, how terrible He will be to one who has suffered Him to lose one of His children !

Let us reflect upon the judgment to which you will be subjected upon this point alone, the *souls* of your religious. There are some of your subjects who have died while you were superior. God confided their souls to you to be sanctified. They were not possessed of *good dispositions*. God knew it and sent you grace to bear with them and help them to conquer their temptations. They had grave faults ; God

knew it and sent you grace to help them in their efforts to amend, efforts which their weakness never permitted them to continue. They were rebellious, obstinate, exacting, proud. . . God knew it, and it was for their correction and amendment that these unhappy souls were sent to you. What have you done for them? What was the extent of the assiduous care and devotion which you bestowed upon their souls? What were the prayers, the supplications, the mortifications you offered for them?—Let us not push this examination too far, it is too alarming. What are we to conclude? Must we be discouraged and fly from our responsibility, ask to be relieved of our charge? No, that is the resolution of a cowardly soul. Let us go before the Blessed Sacrament and meditate upon these words of Jesus Christ: “Without Me you can do nothing.”—John xv. 5. Comprehend it well, *nothing!* And upon these words of St. Paul: “I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me.”—Phil. iv. 13. Weigh them well, *all things!* The great watchwords of superiors should be *courage* and *confidence*.

A life of great peace, even in the midst

of the most terrible agitations, is always possible to a superior who, with no other desire than to live in humble submission and devotion, is chosen by God from among his companions, and placed at the head of a community, even as God took David from his flocks and placed him as king over the people of Israel. He can say to himself, in all truth : *God who wishes me to serve Him, is obliged to give me all that is necessary to succeed in a work which is His, not mine. He is the workman, I am the instrument. The only end of all my efforts must be never to separate myself from Him.* Behold the thought which must ever accompany him, the thought which will stimulate him to labor, to labor in spite of obstacles, to labor to the end of his strength, and to die exhausted with labor for his good Master, happy to be able to say to Him : “ I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course. . . . There is laid up for me a crown of justice.—II. Tim. iv. 7, 8. Then courage and confidence !

O religious superiors to whom, whether priests or nuns, the care of souls is in many respects confided, if God permits this book to reach you, read it attentively,—do not

let a month pass without glancing over a few of its pages.

It will prove to you a *trustworthy* and *faithful* friend, who will gently lead you back to God if you have wandered from Him, or cause you to feel more sensibly the support God lends you if you have had the happiness of keeping ever near Him.

*A true friend*, who will speak to you with simplicity, and, disguising nothing, reveal to you your faults and the means you must adopt to diminish them.

*A watchful friend*, who will show whither your trifling infractions of the rule and your little negligences may lead you.

*A prudent friend*, who will in no way exaggerate your obligations, and will beware of frightening or discouraging you.

*An affectionate friend*, finally, who will compassionate your weakness, whose heart will be ever open to you, whose arms will be ever extended to receive you, to help you, to restore you to the good Master of whom you have such great need, and who, in His turn, will say to you these consoling words: *My child, I have need of thee!*

The object of our little book is to show you in your position:

- 1st. The duties to be fulfilled.
- 2d. The virtues to be practised.
- 3d. The faults to be avoided.
- 4th. The means to be adopted.
- 5th. The rewards to be expected.

## CHAPTER FIRST.

### The Duties to be Fulfilled.

#### I.

Daily repeat to yourself at your morning meditation or during Mass the following thought :

“ All the souls whom God confides to me,—all without exception, are sent me that I may fill to them the duties of a *parent* and *guide*. My duty as *parent* is to spare them all the pain I can and to soften that from which I cannot save them.

“ My mission as *guide* is to form them to virtue.

“ If through any fault of mine a soul suffers or is left without consolation — if through my fault it practises no virtue,— God will punish me, because I shall not have fulfilled the duty He imposed upon me.”

Each evening, before going to rest, make it a duty to offer a decade of the beads or some special prayer for those among your

religious to whom you have given pain or whom you left in suffering—to ask pardon of God for the faults you have committed or allowed to be committed.—and see whether there is any reparation to be made the next day.

## II.

Your mission as parent and guide imposes upon you four principal duties toward your religious, whom we shall henceforth call your children.

You should :

- 1st. Love them.
- 2d. Edify them.
- 3d. Instruct them.
- 4th. Correct them.

### **First. To Love your Children.**

#### *I. The Motives and Qualities of this Love.*

1. You should love your religious because they have become your children, because you hold to them the place of those parents from whom they have parted, or whom God has taken from them,—because they come to the convent naturally hoping to find in you a parent. Ah ! those religious



so repugnant to you, how tenderly their mother loved them ! How tenderly they are still loved, those among them who still possess a mother ; ask them of her love, particularly the younger ones.

Their mother ! How her memory moves them ! That mother who, despite their failings, their faults, their bad dispositions, protected them, cared for them, esteemed them !

A mother's love is *strong* : nothing can destroy it, nothing can weaken it ; it is a *tender* love, ever finding new means of manifesting itself ; it is a *generous* love, which unceasingly labors with renewed devotion.

The difference between the love of a parent according to the flesh and yours, a parent in the order of grace, is that the first is instinctive, the latter is accepted, granted, and carefully preserved.

God puts it in the heart of every superior, if that heart be well disposed. If you possess it not, and you will recognize it in your treatment of your subjects, your heart has not attained the degree of sanctity God asks of you.

The foundress of the Capuchins of Aix, speaking to her sisters one day, said :

“When a mother gives her daughter in religion, she remits her into the hands of the superior as a sacred deposit, thus sacrificing her maternal solicitude and her own authority; therefore, my sisters, if I felt less tenderness for you, or was less eager than your mothers to supply your wants, my conscience would not be satisfied, and I should not feel I had attained the spirit of my mission.”

2. You should love your religious because you hold the place of Jesus Christ to them. They have left their families,—sacrificed perhaps a promising future to give themselves to Jesus. If Our Saviour lived upon earth, they would have joyously gone to enroll themselves among His followers, to live in subjection to Him, to serve Him, to follow Him everywhere.

Jesus is no longer visibly present with us, but He has said to each of your children, “My child, this superior holds My place to you; go to him; love him as you would Me.” And he has come, full of confidence, to abandon himself to your guidance as completely as he would to that of Jesus.

Imagine for a moment the affection Jesus would bear him!

My God, when I behold all that Thou didst for Thy apostles, for little children, and even for guilty souls! When I see Thee call them, draw near to them, slowly and patiently instructing and encouraging them! Have I not reason to picture to myself what Thou wouldst do for this subject, so full of good-will, and who has made so many sacrifices to come to Thee? If Thou hadst seen him weary and sorrowful, how tenderly Thou wouldst have consoled him!

If Thou hadst seen him weep, how kindly Thou wouldst have asked the cause of his tears!

If Thou hadst seen him ill and suffering, how carefully Thou wouldst have cared for him! If his trying disposition rendered him less amiable, how untiringly Thou wouldst have used every means to make him more gentle and affable!

## *II. The Practice of this Love.*

The object of all true love is to secure the happiness of the person loved.

Now, to make another happy we must devote ourselves to his interest; making

him happy means continually seeking what will seriously benefit his soul, his intelligence, his heart.

This duty for a superior, then, consists in earnestly striving to overcome all prejudices against his religious, which the Evil One will sometimes create in his heart, prejudices inspired by their dispositions and faults, and which require constant vigilance to conceal and subdue.

It consists in bearing sweetly, without any visible effort, with each religious, with his eccentricities of character, his whims, his rudeness, and in receiving all with the same peaceful, kind, pleasant countenance.

It consists in not permitting oneself to be irritated by their faults, and, above all, in subduing any resentment excited against them by these faults.

It consists in receiving them kindly when they come to ask a permission, or a moment's interview; in always giving them a kind word when you can not accede to their request. A kind word is always possible.\*

It consists in kindly and patiently hear-

---

\* "Come to me day or night" Mother Emilie used to tell her sisters, "whether I am at my prayers or in meditation. I am always at your service; do not fear to disturb me. A superior expects to be disturbed!"

ing their complaints, which are sometimes without foundation, most frequently unjust or constantly repeated—in consoling them in their trials and anxieties, never permitting any one to think he wearies you.

It consists in soothing them in their physical sufferings, even though you know they are imaginary or exaggerated;—in giving them even more care than is necessary in their sickness or infirmities—in giving them all that you conscientiously can without disturbing the community or injuring their souls;—in never permitting them to see that what you do for them requires a great effort, or is *expensive* if it is a remedy, or *troublesome* if it is something requiring extra care.

It consists in being eager to provide all the necessaries of food, clothing, health which your religious may require.

It consists in helping them to bear the burden of common life, which, in truth, has its miseries, either by rendering them some little service from time to time, or by procuring them some pleasure, than which nothing is easier if we are so disposed. \*

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\* “Mother” said a sister to her superior one day, “here is a book which I prize very highly, because it contains

It consists in being affable with your religious—giving your orders kindly, and showing yourself pleased with their least efforts.

It consists not only in allowing them *free access* to you at all hours, but also in *anticipating* them when you see that they do not venture to expose their wants to you ;—in *seeking* them when they fly from you, despite the repugnance you may experience, until you conscientiously feel that you have exhausted the resources of your affection. Ah ! it is hard, very hard, to act against poor wounded nature ; it is hard to overcome such antipathies, to hear paternal promptings above a multitude of serious, grave reasons urging us to leave the rebellious, insolent religious to himself. But what a grand act of love it is in God's eyes !

Finally, making your children happy

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pages which benefit me very much, and then,—it was given me by one who is very dear to me ; I pray you, allow me to keep it." The superior smiled. "What about the spirit of poverty, my daughter? A gilt-edged book! and that wretched verb *to possess*, which we have stricken from our vocabulary? . . . Listen, daughter ; I take the book, it is no longer yours, but, because of the good it does you, I lend it to you. Therefore keep it and make use of it, only bear in mind that it belongs to me, and be ever ready to return it to me.

consists in generously providing for the wants of their souls. The souls of your children! Ah! how you should love them! It was specially for them that God confided to you a parent's mission.

The salvation of the souls of your children! Behold the principal end of all your efforts, of all your care, of all your solicitude. The care of their bodies which we recommend to you should only be a means to their sanctification.

Therefore soften the interior trials which God may send your children by listening long and patiently to the details they confide to you—pity them, and treat with devoted care such spiritual maladies as *scruples, temptations, melancholy, discouragement*, which are often so painful. Be zealous and at the same time prudent in affording souls thus afflicted opportunities of communicating with the confessor a little more frequently; call in a strange confessor if you think best, just as you would call in another physician in cases of grave illness.

We shall speak later on of the prudence to be observed in calling any other than the ordinary confessor. It may lead to grave abuses, but, at the same time, never permit

a poor soul whom you know to be pious and faithful, and tried by God in a special manner, to suffer for want of a few words which will restore it to calmness and peace. It is not by restricting, by denying souls, nor by continually refusing them succors which, after all, they have a right to ask, that you will establish the reign of God in their hearts. A very important thing is to *expand souls*, and only love will do this.

Give them every facility for observing all points of the Rule; special retreats, monthly retreats, visits to the Blessed Sacrament. There are occasions when pressing labors in the community require extra time, and God does not forbid us to take it from the hours usually devoted to Him, but then teach your children to labor more directly in His presence,—such work will be prayer.

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The perfection of government consists, St. Francis of Assisi tells us, in the practice of five words: *to love, to watch, to bear, to pardon, to nourish*, and the word *love* could sum it all. Then love, love much!

Love is *strong*, it will prevent you from



sinking under the burden of your charge.

Love is *ingenious*, it will inspire you with innumerable means of winning souls.

Love is *alluring*, it will end by attaching hearts to you.

“I do not say, my daughter,” St. Francis de Sales writes a superior, “that you must be flattering, coaxing, smiling, but sweet, gentle, amiable, affable. Love all your daughters with a cordial, strengthening, pastoral, motherly love, and you will do all that is required of you. This condition alone will suffice, and without it nothing will suffice.”

Be father, mother, nurse, physician ; be all things to all ; and when you are embarrassed how to act ask yourself: *If their mother were present, what would she do? If Jesus Christ were present, what would He tell me to do?*

Love, love! “An affectionate word,” says St. Vincent de Paul, “will suffice to calm grave disquiet, and render a subject content and happy.”

This precept to love will echo through all the pages of this little book.

**Second. To Edify your Children.***I. The Motives of this Edification.*

a. The example of Jesus, who began by practising and then taught.—How will you give advice, or, above all, administer a reproof, if you feel that your religious could say : *we follow your example.*

Ask yourself sometimes whether Jesus does not say to you, in the words of the Gospel : *Physician, heal thyself.*

b. You, whom God has placed at the head of your companions, imposing upon them the obligation of following you, must walk in the path of heaven ;—now this path is clearly revealed to you by your Rule, which regulates the duty of every hour. How will you venture to command others to walk in this path if you yourself do not walk therein?

c. You are like a torch which God has made more brilliant, that all may see by your light what they must practise. Think of this whenever you are placed in a position of any prominence. Your religious will only be what you are ; and it may generally be said : *Like superior, like community.* It is, in fact, most astonishing, the

resemblance which establishes itself between the *spirit* of a superior and the *spirit* of his community. You will not be *faithful, silent, punctual* a whole year without your children following you insensibly in the practice of these virtues.

There is nothing more forcible and convincing than example; it gives to precept an irresistible authority;—if, when a command is received coldly, you can say : *What ! my children, is this so difficult ?* and, putting your hand to the work, enforce your words by example, your religious will not be willing to remain behind you. Authority unsupported by example is irritating; it embitters community life and produces usually either hypocrites or rebels. Example is the first duty of your state; without it all your functions are either useless, or an occasion of fall and scandal to those whom God has confided to you.

Your title of superior dispenses you from nothing; never forget these words of a saint : *A superior, to grant himself a dispensation, must have twice as much need of it as others.*

*II. The Practice of this Edification.*

The edification due your children extends to all things. They should find edification in your speech, your bearing, your recreation, and not unfrequently the example of an exterior recollected without constraint, grave without affection, cheerful without levity, will contribute as powerfully to their salvation as your modesty in prayer.

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Be a *little serious* rather than *too easy* in your bearing and carriage.

Let it be seen (without any ostentation on your part) that you submit to all the minute details of the Rule. You are permitted excess in this respect. Be the first at all the public exercises, begin at the exact hour, and finish at the exact hour ;—be punctual particularly at the morning exercises.

Observe silence as scrupulously as the least of your children.—Let your tone of voice be a little low rather than the least degree too loud,—repeat the public prayers a little slowly rather than too rapidly. Be habitually affable, that your manner may

intimidate no one ; oblige yourself under pain of a self-imposed penance never to offend any one who approaches you.

Meet every one graciously and yield sometimes even to unreasonable claims.

We always picture the saints extraordinarily kind, patient, and gracious.

Nothing scandalizes and estranges a community from a superior more than *detraction* and *railery*. They are most unfortunate faults ; if you are subject to them make heroic efforts to correct yourself.—It is incredible the harm an imprudent word or a malicious smile sometimes does.

Nothing injures a superior's administration more than an impression that he is not discreet, and repeats what is confided to him (We shall speak of this later on), and that he bears resentment for faults committed against himself.—A habit of getting *angry at trifles* also robs him very quickly of the esteem of his religious.

You are not conscious of it, but your subjects instinctively study your expression, your bearing, your gestures, and if they see you yield to irritation, to vexation, to annoyance, like one of themselves, they lose their respect for you ; you lose the prestige

of your position, and much of the good you might effect is rendered null and void.

A superior should be or at least appear insensible to little slights, little failings in politeness, want of consideration, etc., and should continue gentle and kind like a parent who receives a blow from the innocent little hand of a fretful child. Wait until the feeling of annoyance has passed, then, later, with a kindly smile, say a few words which will make the erring religious sensible of his fault.

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Establish for yourself the reputation of *piety*, not by remaining longer than others in the chapel, nor by affecting a constrained modesty, but by being *truly united with God*—and this is always evident, without one's being able to account for it.

If it can be said of you, *he does nothing without consulting God*, rest assured you will be spared many murmurs. Other virtues may be feigned in a measure, *piety* never.

*Piety* is a *gift* to be asked for, a reward to be merited. It is apparent, though its possessor be unconscious that he possesses

it ; it is manifest in one's bearing, in one's words, in one's affection, in everything.

To be pious is to have one's heart, one's mind, even one's senses filled with God ; then the thought of God predominates over all other thoughts, the name of God mingles with all our words, and the blessed name falls so sweetly and naturally from our lips that it shocks no one. Oh, yes, ask God to give you the gift of piety !

“ Where is your mother ? ” a religious was asked.—“ If she is not in her cell, as the community is not assembled, you will find her before the Blessed Sacrament, ” the religious answered ; “ our mother, ” she continued, “ has but these three resorts : the *community*, *her cell*, and *the Blessed Sacrament*. ”

Add to this tender devotion to the Blessed Sacrament devotion to the Blessed Virgin. Frequently speak of her, frequently offer her the beautiful homage of the rosary ; the reputation of devotion to the Blessed Virgin is most profitable to a superior.

Every year, on the anniversary of your election, consecrate yourself, your house, your religious, to the Blessed Virgin, and

remind her that you have established her first superior.

Ah ! if you are not truly pious, how will you bear the weary, overwhelming burden of your charge? What will you have to console you? What will you have to re-animate you? How will you fulfil toward your children the duties not only of a parent, in a material point of view, but your duties as the guide of their souls? Remember that the souls of your religious are confided to you just as much as their bodies, and that souls are nourished by inspiring them with piety. How may you inspire that which you do not possess?

St. Teresa, writing to a superior, said : “ God has shown me that you lack the most fundamental qualities for your office, that is, piety and a spirit of prayer ; now, when there is anything lacking in the foundation, the edifice crumbles ; a want of piety always leads to a disrelish for the things of God, produces trouble of soul, sadness of mind, haughtiness of speech, and a cold, repellent, or frivolous bearing. Hence follow a disinclination to oblige others, a total want of heart, of consideration, of charity, a very poor religious spirit,



and sometimes almost a want of common sense in judging your subjects.”

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Never refuse others what you have felt you could grant to yourself; remember that all the indulgences you allow yourself are known in the community.

Accept with a sweet and joyous resignation the trials which come to you and the accidents witnessed by those about you; speak frequently of Divine Providence and of the wisdom of blessing God in trials. Here, again, is something which contributes most powerfully to edify others: *To will what God wills!*

Speak of yourself as little as possible, and establish for yourself the reputation of not liking flattery.

### **Third. Instruct your Children.**

#### *I. The Motives of this Instruction.*

a. You have a parent's office; the souls of your religious are confided to you as to a parent, and one of the first duties of

parents is to nourish and sustain their children. Now the food of souls is the knowledge of Jesus Christ, the love of Jesus, and the means of acquiring this knowledge and this love.

*b.* You are a *guide* whose mission is to lead souls to heaven ; therefore you must teach them the way thereto, and you must study it yourself, learn its difficulties, its dangers, its illusions, its facilities, if you would safely guide others.

The better instructed a soul is, the more easily will it rise to God ; and an instruction which seemingly has no other end than to enlighten and expand the mind gives, nevertheless, more delicacy to the heart and awakens it to a truer appreciation of the beauty, goodness, and infinite perfections of God.

Doubtless our proper science as well as the most consoling, most useful, and even the most attractive science, is the science of *conversing with God in prayer, of destroying our evil inclinations, of acquiring virtues.* But if this is in a great measure the result of grace, it is also due to our particular labor ; God frequently requires us to prepare the field before He will sow His graces.

Each of your religious is called to a special degree of perfection, which he will attain only in proportion to the means furnished him. For this end God placed him under your direction, and you are responsible before God for the virtues which he fails, through your fault, to practise.

Imagine your divine Master in your position, and you will see with what patient, assiduous care He would prepare the souls of your children, how He would stimulate them, kindly repeating in a thousand different forms the lessons He thought necessary to them.

Since you represent His authority, represent also His devotedness.

## *II. By whom this Instruction should be Given.*

### *a. By the Preaching of a Priest.*

Place yourself in a position to afford your religious opportunities of hearing the word of God as frequently as possible. On great feasts ask, if you wish, for a formal sermon ; but ordinarily insist upon having familiar and simple instructions.

Happy the community possessing a devoted priest, who once a week or at least twice a month preaches God's word to them,—God's word, which nothing can replace! Change but little, if possible; let it be generally the same voice which instructs you; it may be perhaps less attractive, but it will be more profitable.

The great number of preachers heard in a community is a source of dissipation, prejudice, criticism, and, in communities of women, of ridiculous attachments. The heart loses by it what the mind seems to gain. The religious heed the voice, study the delivery, and appreciate the preacher more than his teaching.

Religious, particularly women, have the reputation of being critical, difficult to please, and as they are indiscreet in giving their opinion, they frequently injure the ministry of a priest, and it is for this reason that so few are willing to give themselves solely to their service.

Accustom yourself first, and then your religious, to regard the priest who instructs you, who officiates for you, who directs you, as the minister of Jesus Christ. His hands which are stretched forth to bless

you, his lips which counsel you, distribute *God's grace*. Then, why study so critically the manner in which these graces are given you? It is not the form in which they come to you, but the graces themselves which will sanctify you. Ah, what good a priest might do in a religious house where he felt his ministry was appreciated and esteemed!

*b.* By your own Instructions.

Let us give here a few counsels concerning these to superiors of communities of women.

Whether you are speaking at chapter, or upon any other occasion, never let your instructions have the appearance of a studied sermon; your mission is not to preach, it is the mission of a *mother*, of a *guide*, and your counsels, particularly to your children, should come from your heart.—Read *Les Entretiens de St. François de Sales à ses religieuses*; *Le Commentaire des Règles* and *Les Réponses aux Questions de Ste. Chantal*; you will find in them models of that sweet, gentle, persuasive eloquence, which should

be the chief characteristic of a superior's instructions.

“Let us love one another,” said a superior at the close of an instruction on charity, “let us love one another and mutually do all in our power to brighten life to one another; if this be the great command imposed upon all men, how much more forcibly is it addressed to us in our position? Do we not hold to one another the place of the mother, the sisters, the friends from whom we have parted? Ah! upon whom, then, may we expend that sympathy and love which God has placed in our hearts? . . . . Yes, my children, let us love and bear with one another; for life, at best, is so full of thorns.”—Here the heart speaks.

How truly maternal is the language of holy superiors to those whom they called in all sincerity *their children, their dear children*. How full of tenderness are the exhortations of St. Vincent de Paul!

But there are times, and what superior has not experienced them, when our lips refuse to express the affection with which the heart is filled. We feel that we love these children present before us, we would

Speak to them of this love, make them sensible of it, but it seems in a measure physically impossible. Our lips are sealed by the knowledge that among our children are a few systematically opposed to us, who hear our words only to criticise, ridicule, and misinterpret them, or who listen with an air of contempt and a fixed cold stare. Oh, what courage it requires to speak under such circumstances! How much virtue it requires to fulfil one's duty!

Address a fervent prayer to God before your instruction and repeat to yourself, *the good God wills it, He will gather my words, it is God whom I wish to please.*

Avoid all allusion to your fears, which usually are exaggerated; on the contrary, speak confidently, say to them sometimes that you are glad to speak to earnest religious, upon whose good will you can rely. Avoid speaking in a tone of command, never say *do this*, but *let us do this*.

In exceptional cases, when you are obliged to speak with authority, God will give to your voice and words the necessary firmness, if you have earnestly sought the help of His grace before speaking.

## c. By good Reading.

The choice of books to be read in a community is often perplexing.\*

There are doubtless certain well known books which should be read periodically in the community, at the same time not so frequently as to create a distaste for them, and perhaps it would be well to introduce at intervals other works recommended by the director of the house.

Let us not forget that books read in public should be suitable, as far as possible, for all the community. Therefore do not select those which treat of extraordinary ways by which God leads souls, or only of special revelations to souls.

Here is a list of works suitable for public reading in the community, by omitting those portions which treat specially of

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\* There should be a library in every community, and a sum of money set aside each year for sustaining it, particularly in teaching Orders. "After the chapel, the library," says an ancient writer, "is the department upon which we should bestow most care."

In forming a library, as well as in making any additions, you should always consult ecclesiastical superiors, who will suggest the books, and classify them in different categories.

Let there be several copies of books read during retreats, and of pious books most in use.

Only the superior, in communities of women, should decide concerning the books which each sister may read privately.



superiors and different offices : *Rodriguez, The Knowledge of Jesus Christ, and The Religious Man, by St. Jure. The Spirit of St. Francis de Sales, the same Saint's Letters to Religious. La vraie et solide piété, an extract from his works. The Religious Sanctified, by St. Liguori, and other ascetic works by St. Liguori, who is always so safe in doctrine, and in his practical teachings so pious, clear, and full of unction. The Glories of Mary, The Practice of the Love of God, The Art of Profiting by our Faults, Le Traité de l'obéissance, par Tronson, Les Lettres sur la vie religieuse, par Mgr. Angebault, and a few of the very instructive works of P. Grenade—The Interior of Jesus and Mary, The Hidden Life of the Soul, and Les Caractères de la vraie devotion, by P. Grou.—Le Traité de la paix intérieure, by P. Lombez.—Les Pensées, la Retraite, and a few of Bourdaloue's sermons. The works of P. Judde and P. Nouet.—Le Guide Ascétique. \* Les Conférences spiritu-*

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\* In this book as well as *Rodriguez* the author introduces a great number of incidents which are by no means clearly authenticated. While respecting all the relations of the saints to whom God gave a great spirit of faith, we must refrain from citing such incidents as proofs, but simply receive them as the writers give them, i. e., as edifying traits.

elles, by L'Abbé Basinet—*Les Instructions sur l'Etat religieux*, by L'Abbé Urvoy—*Lives of the Fathers of the Desert*. The works of P. Marin, which are not sufficiently appreciated at the present day.—Biography or Life of some Saint or Blessed.—Annals of the Order and of the Community, if written. Among the Lives of the Saints to be read each day choose the most edifying: *Ribadeneira, P. Giry, P. Croiset, Father Lacordaire, Father de Ravignan, Père Renault, Father Balthasar Alvarez, St. Teresa*.

These books are generally known in religious houses; though they are all profitable, there are nevertheless certain chapters which should not be read in public. The superior would do well to mark such chapters before the reading. \*

In communities of women no book, whatever its reputation or popularity,

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\* This list, of course, may be very much extended. We do not speak of the books of *Meditation* adopted in each Institute, and which should be changed as little as possible,—nor of *Devotional Manuals*,—nor of well known and well appreciated books, like the *Imitation*, the *Spiritual Combat*, which each religious should have for his own use, nor of certain pious books, like *Visits to the Blessed Sacrament*, by St. Liguori, the works of P. Eymard on the *Holy Eucharist*, and others which should have a permanent place on the *Piie-Dieux* in the chapel.

should be introduced without the authority of the ecclesiastical superior, who alone has the grace to decide concerning it. There are, however, among the *Lives of Saints* or *Founders of Orders* published at the present day many which are truly edifying and very profitable, because of their instructive details and wise reflections; the majority are a veritable treatise on asceticism and cannot be read without great profit. The following are some of the best known: *The Life of St. Francis de Sales*—of *St. Chantal*—of *M. Ollier*—of *Father Lacordaire* and *de Ravignan*. . . of *Mme. Barrat*, of *Mme. Duchesne*, of *Mme. Henrietta Kerr*, etc. Be strict concerning the introduction of daily or monthly journals and works which treat of the affairs of the day. Many communities have seen their spirit of prayer, of recollection, and charity weakened by such readings, which create discussions, fears, and party spirit.

d. By particular Advice.

It is particularly in these pious interviews with your children that you can be of great service to them.

In these intimate conferences, which are called direction, you guide in the difficult path to heaven souls that come to you sometimes with great embarrassment, and much timidity.

Direction is difficult ; and this difficulty comes most frequently, I know, from a want of confidence on the part of a subject who hesitates, fears to be indiscreet, who perhaps has been repelled sometime,—who does not care to make himself known to his superior, or perhaps has been prejudiced against you by wicked minds. But if you are very pious, very patient, truly paternal in your treatment of such a religious, you will end by doing him good. It may be that he will say nothing, will receive your questions in silence, with a cold, distrustful, even obstinate manner. But do not lose patience or resort to harshness ; say a few kind, encouraging words, ask some little service at his hands, and do not detain the unhappy soul too long ; let him be able to say, when he leaves you : *I gave him pain, but he did not let me perceive it.*

Do not, above all, be curious, or seek to learn by force or artifice the secrets of a soul that will not confide in you.

Remember that there are three things which never come under the rule of this direction: 1st, anything relating to sins; 2d, anything requiring a theological decision; 3d, anything relating to temptations likely to excite the passions or cause a blush of shame. \*

As a rule, when you observe any repugnance on the part of a subject to speak of some matter, change the conversation, never insist upon confidence; otherwise you may force your religious to deceive you.

There are religious who seek direction to make the most of themselves, to monopolize the kindness of their superior;—they will compliment you, speak, covertly at first, of the faults of their companions

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\* In *L'Esprit de la Mère Emilie* we are told that the holy superior, "Mère Emilie, always checked with great promptness any confidence on the part of the sisters who entered into detail concerning subjects or thoughts against purity, unless it were a young religious, whose conscience needed to be enlightened upon things of which she should have a reasonable knowledge, for her own benefit or that of the children confided to her care.—There are, of course, many things upon which a superior may enlighten one, or decide for one better than a confessor. She inquired very little into the motives which kept a Sister from the holy Table, unless she had reason to believe that she absented herself through a scrupulous fear; she had too just a fear of constraining a conscience or interfering with the ministry of the priest to act otherwise."

seek to excite your distrust. . . Beware of them !

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Here is a summary of questions which will be of service to you in drawing out the more timid souls.

*On happiness in a Community* : Ask what renders one happy?—What disturbs one's happiness? If you receive a wise reply, encourage him; if he is timidly or nervously silent, pass on quickly to something else ;—if he speak to you of his family, let him open his heart to you as fully as he will.

*On his duties* : Whether he has much difficulty in fulfilling them? In this respect, particularly, do all that you can to lighten the burdens of your religious ;—offer them a period of rest, if possible ; praise them for their labor ; show them that you appreciate all their zeal ; sympathize with them in their trials and weariness ; encourage them, and comfort them for their want of success.

*On Virtues* : What are those which they have tried to acquire since their last direction? Mention one and the means of acquiring it.

*On the Sacraments :* Whether the confessor is informed whenever he abstains from holy Communion—whether he receives holy Communion willingly,—whether he asks permission to abstain from holy Communion or from celebrating Mass. (As a general rule refrain from asking a subject his reason for absenting himself from the holy Table. Never insist upon any one receiving holy Communion when he has asked to be dispensed, if you would not expose another to commit a sacrilege.) \*

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\* In support of what we have just said we recommend you to read the following from a well known theologian, *Collet* : “ In a Community where it is the rule to receive two or three times a week a religious who abstains from holy Communion whole weeks at a time will naturally excite comment. But if ever a superior had need to be cautious and prudent it is upon unhappy occasions of this kind. Participation in the divine mysteries is not to be commanded ; it is a matter which should be settled between the penitent and the director. It should be left to his decision, if we have reason to believe from his guidance of others that he is not of the number of those confessors (happily rare at present) who imagine that one is strengthened in proportion as he abstains from the Bread of the strong.

“ To conclude that one who abstains from the holy Table is subject to some grave sin which he will not correct would be a most rash and calumnious judgment. . . God, always just, and frequently terrible in His designs upon souls, leads them sometimes by paths the very thought of which makes one tremble. A slight fault, a movement of pride, of vain complacency. . . fills them with an anxiety and trouble which would make us smile, but which becomes to them an

*Fraternal Charity* : That which weakens it. Do not question too closely on the subject of particular friendships ; usually such friendships are reluctantly acknowledged when they are not very pure ; they are spoken of frankly when they are harmless.

A particular friendship is quickly discovered, but do not meet it with marked or brusque opposition ; gently loosen the bonds ; any attempt to *sever* them incontinently only strengthens them and excites evil passions where there only existed sympathy or childish affection.

*Health* : Dwell much upon the subject of health, the causes which weaken it, the care it requires ; cheerfully grant special permissions which are asked with simplicity, such as *extra sleep in the morning*, etc.

*Fidelity to the exercises prescribed by the Rule* : Insist upon this fidelity, but kindly and gently ; ask which are the exercises found most tiresome, and why. Be always

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insuperable obstacle to keep them for a time from the holy Table.

“Read in the Life of St. Vincent of Paul the terrible anxieties which possessed him and kept him from the altar,—him who so strenuously advocated daily Communion. Then let us leave the confessor entirely free in his guidance of his penitents.”



willing to excuse a little, while exhorting, encouraging to do better; offer dispensations, and promise never to refuse a permission asked for a good reason; generously pardon all faults generously confessed.

*Fidelity, particularly to prayer* : This is the essential point for the support of the soul. Ask the method of prayer used ; approve, modify, retrench, according to circumstances, but always with kindness and, above all, discretion ; never say to a religious that he understands *nothing of the subject, that he is not in the right way.*

Observe a proper gravity, but be not too austere ; do not fear to meet him with affectionate playfulness and great affability ; let no one go away from you dissatisfied, even though you have been obliged to refuse what was asked. Oh, that it could be said of you as it was of St. Francis `de Sales : “ *Let us go to him,* ” people used to say, “ *if it were only to see ourselves dismissed with so much grace.* ” \*

*e.* By Letters.

When your children are away from you

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\* We have published *Spiritual Direction*, a book which we take the liberty to recommend to superiors,

write to them occasionally to encourage them. — Always answer their letters, and without any unnecessary delay.

You can hardly form an idea of all the good your letters will effect if they are written in a truly paternal spirit. Read the very extended correspondence of St. Francis de Sales, of St. Chantal, of Mgr. Chaffoy, and you will see how the saints wrote.

You are not more occupied than they were, you have the same duties to fulfil, therefore do as they did. If your heart is truly that of a good superior, let it guide your pen, it will furnish you all the eloquence you require.

Above all, avoid any studied form of elegance in such letters, only express yourself with prudence, and, unless you are very sure of your correspondent's discretion, do not write too unreservedly. Your religious, particularly the younger ones, rarely know how to keep to themselves the letters they receive. Always write with the thought that the contents of your letter may be communicated to others. This is an inconvenient counsel to follow, but experience has taught us that it is a wise one.

It is a custom with some Superior Generals to address an instruction to the different houses of their order under the form of a letter. It is a custom to be recommended when superiors write animated only by a desire for the good of souls.

*III. The Qualities of this Instruction.*

This instruction should be of two kinds : one, to make your subjects true Christians; the other, to form them to the religious life. The former should precede the latter ; in many religious communities there is frequently great need of *religious instruction*, that is of a better knowledge of the *truths of Christianity*. Much instruction is given on *mysticism*, the *different degrees of prayer*, while the religious can hardly give a *reason for their faith*. Insist upon the truths of religion, and let every one first of all be thoroughly grounded in the catechism.

1st. Your instruction should be *solid* : practical suggestions, practical teachings rather than rhetoric. Make no statement unsupported by proof ; do not indulge in idle discourses ; always give the motive of your decisions

Let your instructions be drawn from the Holy Scriptures, particularly the Gospels explained and expounded by the Church ; consult books approved and generally adopted, never permitting yourself to be attracted by the popularity of a new and unauthenticated work.

In Communities of women the superior should frequently have recourse to the priest charged with the Community, for guidance in all matters relating to doctrine.

Inculcate the *practice* of virtues rather than devotional sentiments.

While respecting all new devotions suggested by piety, be not too eager to introduce them in your Community ; ask the advice of your superiors, and beware of overburdening your religious.

Thoroughly impress upon your children the meaning of the word *devotion*, which is *devotedness*, not *sentiment* or *rapture*.

Insist much upon these three virtues of religion : *Fidelity, obedience, charity*.

2d. Your instruction should be marked by *order* and *method*.

Do not speak at random, changing the subject of your discourse at each conference—draw up for yourself a definite plan

of instruction to be faithfully followed, and which you may resume every three or four years. Let it be, for example, *an exposition of the Rule,—of the truths of religion—of the Gospel of the Sunday,—of the religious life and its obligations.*

The useful recommendations which precede the conference may occasionally, but not often, serve as an instruction.

If you follow no order in your instructions, you will repeat yourself, forget many important points, and weary your hearers.

Here is a list of a few works which you may find serviceable in preparing your instructions :

*L'Évangile médité* par Duquesne.

*Liturgical Year.*

*Explication en forme de Catéchisme des Épîtres et Évangiles*, published by Frère Philippe.

The works of Mgr. Gay.

*Les différentes explications du Catéchisme*, by Couturier, Guillois, — *Catéchisme* by Rodez, — Bourges, and others.

*The Catechism of Perseverance* by Abbé Gaume, particularly the part which treats of the liturgy.

*L'Esprit de la Mère Emilie.*

*L'Esprit et la vie de sacrifice dans l'état religieux*, by the Rev. Père Giraud.

*Les Vertus religieuses*, by P. Valuy.

*Les Principes de la vie religieuse*, par le P. Cotel.

*Réponses Canoniques et Pratiques sur les principaux devoirs des religieux*, par le P. André Marie, des Frères Prêcheurs.

*Little Manual of Novices and Book of the Professed*, which we have published.

*Le Catéchisme du Noviciat*, par l'Abbé Martin.

The works published by l'Abbé Sanson: *Paradise on Earth—Guide de la Religieuse*.

The works of Abbé Leguay: *Voie de la Perfection—Postulante et Novice*.

The works of P. Guilloché, P. Surin, St. Teresa, in which you will find subjects for instructions; but the works themselves should not be placed indiscriminately in the hands of all the religious.

3. Your instruction should be *prepared*, yes, prepared with the aid of a book and, as frequently as possible, pen in hand. If you have not the time, then let your visit to the Blessed Sacrament be employed in preparing what you have to say.

You have the grace of your state, do not

forget this ; God is bound to help you.

You are addressing your family, therefore let there be no studied effort in your words ; think little of how you will express yourself, but much of what you will say.

Your morning meditation will frequently be your best preparation. Place yourself in God's presence, confer with Him on the subject on which you are about to speak to your religious, and give them the thoughts with which He shall have inspired you.

Be faithful, and you will have time for everything—*One always has time to do one's duty*, a superior once said to us. Meditate upon these words, so full of wisdom.

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After instructions on the truths of Faith, Christian and religious virtues, insist much upon the *interior life*.

Procure for yourself, for example, the *Traité du P. Bernezai*, which is very methodical ; read it attentively, make extracts from it, expound it to your children, bringing it within the comprehension of all.

What important and most interesting

things there are to be said of the interior life, so little cultivated. For example :

Its excellence, its necessity, its joys.

Its foundations : humility, a spirit of faith, detachment, obedience.

Its obstacles : dissipation, immortification, etc.

Its acts : seeing God, hearing God, speaking with God, living in dependence on God. \*

Return frequently to the subject of *meditation* ; show the necessity for it ; explain its methods.

You will find very valuable suggestions in nearly all pious books. The *Treatise on Prayer*, by P. de Grenada, you will find a safe guide.

But above all things try to practise what you teach.

#### **Fourth. Correct your Children.**

##### *I. The Motives of this Correction.*

1. Your religious have been confided to you by God that you may help them to

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\* You will find in our *Little Manual of Novices* a summary of the interior life which may furnish you matter for several conferences.



sanctify themselves. Now, when God confides them to you, they have perhaps faults, failings, bad habits, evil inclinations, of which they are not conscious or lack courage to correct.

It is you who must point out to them these faults, failings, and bad habits, and help them to uproot them, laboring with them, or even against their will, until you destroy what may lead them to be lost eternally.

If these religious are lost through your *negligence* in watching over them, in warning them, in correcting them—or because these duties are irksome to you,—or through your *cowardice* when they resist you,—through your *indifference*, which prompts you to argue: after all, they are responsible for themselves,—through your *inattention*, which blinds you to their faults,—through your *ill-regulated affection*, which makes you fear to give them pain,—through *selfishness*, finally, which makes you fear to excite their prejudice, God will hold you responsible for the loss of their souls.

2. You are not only obliged to correct these dear souls for their own good, but also for the good of others.

There are pure, pious, devout, though

weak, souls in the Community, who in their obedience and simplicity will go direct to God if undeterred by any great obstacles. Now to such souls nothing would prove a greater obstacle or stumbling block than bad example, hence your rigorous obligation to remove it.

Yes, carefully guard these privileged souls, these intimate friends of God. Preserve their innocence and candor, even at the expense of bitter sacrifices! Here also a terrible responsibility meets you.

Your heart fails you when you have a reproof to administer, particularly if it be one which you know will give much pain; you wish you had not seen the fault, but you know it, you witnessed it, your duty obliges you to act; then do not be deterred, weak parent. Would you act the part of a murderer by permitting your child to die, or that of a kind physician, who wounds only to heal?

You feel that you will irritate, anger the culprit, that he will harbor resentment against you. Ah! when you believe before God that it is your duty to act do not heed the promptings of fear, which is always a bad counsellor.

“Into how many faults,” says Bourdaloue, “superiors are led through pusillanimity !”

“*I am loath,*” you say “*to pain any one ;*” nevertheless, I tell you, there are persons to whom we are sometimes obliged to give pain.

“*But I will offend them, excite them to murmur against me, and I foresee that it will create comment ;*” —nevertheless, I tell you, there are occasions when one must create comment ; that the murmurs will fall back upon those who indulge in them ; that they will pass away, and you will have satisfied your conscience.

“*But it is unpleasant to subject oneself to disagreeable replies, and to secret animosities, the impressions of which are afterwards so difficult to efface.*” It is disagreeable, I acknowledge, but who will speak, if you are silent ?

Finally, *you desire to win the hearts of your children, to preserve the affection of your household ;* your intention is laudable, but you are mistaken if you expect to win their affection by an indulgence which tolerates everything and grants everything. Treat your children with great cordiality and kindness, but at the same time let it

be well understood that you know how to make yourself feared, respected, and obeyed; they will not love you less, and will esteem you more.

## *II. The Practice of Correction.*

### *a. Of the Sisters possessed of Good Will.*

Whatever the good will of a soul, correction is always painful, more painful in proportion to its delicacy or the rarity of its faults, or—its pride, and, alas! we are all proud.

Here are rules of prudence and charity which, if faithfully observed, will render correction less painful, and, above all, more profitable.

Do not forget that your object is not to *punish*, but to *correct*; not to *humiliate*, but to *sanctify*.

1. *Choose a favorable time*—for example, when you think the delinquent is most united with God, \*—when He manifests more confidence in you,—or when you

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\* A religious, speaking of a sacrifice which was required of him at the beginning of his religious life and which was very painful, was asked :

‘ Did you not murmur a little ? ’

have had an opportunity of giving him pleasure.

2. *Give the culprit usually time to recover himself and recognize his fault.*

3. *Suit your words and your manner to the character of the culprit.* There is always a great diversity of characters in a Community, and all should not be treated alike.

The invariable rule is to treat all with great *exterior calmness*, even though you meet with rude replies; — *great gentleness* of speech, — to show *unalterable patience* in hearing to the end the culprit's justification — *charitable indulgence* in accepting excuses, *gentle firmness*, finally, in requiring what is just. It is not so much what you say as your tone and manner which will determine the moral effect of your words.

4. *Direct and supernaturalize your intention.* If you are irritated against the culprit, if you experience any antipathy for him, if you are annoyed, wait until these feelings have subsided, and pray. It were better to leave a fault unpunished than

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“How could I?” he replied; “my superior, who knew what my repugnance would be, chose the moment after I had received holy Communion to ask me.”

Can one say *no*, with Jesus in his heart?

to administer a reproof instigated by reprehensible feelings.

5. *Punish but little*,—encourage much, —pardon readily,—above all, forgive; and let it be evident that you are influenced only by a desire to benefit the culprit.

6. *Reprove secret faults in secret*; and if a public reproof is necessary, see whether charity and prudence do not require that you previously warn the culprit and thus win his heart by your consideration.

7. *Do not reprove too often, and for trifles*. We must know how to close our eyes to many things, says P. Alvarez. Too much severity embitters characters, and a superior loses his influence when at chapter he has only reproofs to give, or when a religious, each time he is summoned to the superior's room, feels that it is only to be censured.

Have regard in all correction 1st, *to the age*: an elderly religious should not be treated like a young professed. 2d, *to the degree of virtue*: we require little of those who can give little; we must spare weak souls. 3d, *to the degree of good judgment possessed by the culprit*. St. Teresa would not have us rigidly exact certain observances of religious who, though excel-

lent in other respects, had not sufficient penetration to appreciate the motives of these requirements. 4th, *to different natures*, and to this end know how to vary the tone of your expressions, to modify your manner; vary particularly the punishment.

But may we not err by being too kind? Hear what the good St. Francis de Sales says: "You are too kind," he was told; "people abuse your condescension and perhaps will ridicule it." "Alas!" he replied, "*how fine it would be to be lost for having been too kind and too gentle!*" Why, then, does God call Himself the *Father of mercies*? Why does the Incarnate Word proclaim Himself the *lamb without malice*, and the Holy Spirit manifest Himself under the form of a *Dove*? Let me, I pray you, let me heed Jesus' lesson to *be meek and humble*, and let us not desire to be wiser than God."

"Monseigneur," they said to him on another occasion, "how must one govern those who continue to fall after being repeatedly pardoned?"

"Continue to pardon them, after the precept of Jesus Christ," he replied; "and not only seven times, but seventy times

seven times ; and, if necessary, seven hundred, seven thousand times, and as long as eternity shall last."

"Be exceedingly tender toward imperfect souls," he writes a superior ; "remember that a bad soul may attain perfect sanctity with proper assistance. Now your office is to give it this assistance . . . . A superior is not so much for the strong as for the weak. . . ."

"I would rather," says St. Odilon, "err through too much charity than too much severity, and if I were to be lost, I should prefer it would be for having been too merciful rather than too cruel toward my brethren."

But no ; a superior cannot be lost who, to imitate Jesus, is kind, invariably kind, with no other intention than to do good.

Try to bear in mind upon all occasions and in all things that your mission is that of a parent.

See what tenderness and charity P. Lanctius preaches to superiors : Do not give penances either at supper, in the evening, lest your brother should not sleep in peace, or on the eve of Communion, for fear of



disturbing the joy of his preparation. Avoid correcting the cook when he is preparing a repast, or a professor when he is going to class. If the culprit is suffering from some physical infirmity, defer the correction, not to make him suffer too much."

b. Of the Religious who are or seem to be  
Incorrigible.

Are there religious who are really incorrigible? Alas! yes, since there are some who are lost in spite of all God's mercy; but the number is very small, and a truly kind, a truly pious superior will rarely find any in his Community.

1. There are souls incorrigible by nature, souls carried away by an unfortunate disposition, against which they unceasingly struggle, but which leads them into numerous faults: they are brusque, slothful, talkative, irascible, choleric, etc.; but they perceive their failings quickly and are humbled by them;—with such souls be very patient, reprove them kindly, punish them but little, and be sure that, sooner or later, grace will triumph with them. Such souls do not really injure a Community.

2. There are others incorrigible because of their age, or made so by habit. A reproof, so far from benefiting them, only excites them to murmur and criticise. Try to keep them somewhat apart from the others, that they may not spread their spirit of independence. Endeavor by concessions, entirely personal concessions, however, to make them your friends, and then, while never ceasing to pray for them, close your eyes to what you cannot remedy. "We must have great consideration for the aged," St. Francis de Sales writes, "they cannot accommodate themselves so easily, they are not supple; for the nerves of the mind, like those of their body, are already contracted."

3. There are religious, finally, who are incorrigible through obstinacy, opinionativeness, and a bad spirit.

It is particularly with religious of this kind that you have need of all your prudence and, I would add, all your ingenuity.

Pray for them every day, ask of God three things :—that they may be converted, that they may not injure others, and that your charity may never tire.

Offer a Communion for them every week,

and, without naming them, recommend them from time to time to the prayers of the Community.

Do not repel them, or look upon them with disfavor, but give them duties which will fill their time and keep them as much as possible from the others ; gradually withdraw the others without letting them perceive that the void about them is of your creating, or is not accidental.

Manifest some confidence in them occasionally, coax them, humor them, anticipate their wants, and let your consideration be evident to all the community, that the injustice of their complaints and murmurs may be equally evident to all.

Treat them as a physician treats hopeless patients, when he wishes to feel that he has left nothing undone to restore them to health.

If a religious of this kind is trying only to you, if he has not created a party, if, owing to your watchfulness his influence over the others is almost null, look upon him as your *cross* ; bear with him, pray for him, love him.

If he becomes dangerous, make no decision concerning him without consulting

your religious, and superiors, and be guided by their counsels.

The following is a prayer which a pious superior offered for one of her religious, whose conduct gave her much anxiety :

“ Holy Virgin, Mother of grace and of mercy, in virtue of the spiritual authority over Sister——, with which holy obedience has invested me, I cast myself at thy feet to express my sorrow for all the faults she may have committed, and to offer thee in her behalf all the penance I may undergo to-day in the faithful observance of my Rule. As her mother, and responsible for her salvation, I consecrate her to thee and place her in thy hands. Help me to bring her back to her duty by my example and my affection. I ask this, O holy Virgin, patron and mother of this Community, through thy love for thy Divine Son. Amen.”

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We shall conclude this first chapter with the following letter, written by a religious after the death of her superior. If you can not apply every line of it to yourself, it is a proof that you are not fulfilling all your duties.

“ If the charity of our good mother had been an ordinary charity, my trying temper, my continual relapses, and my importunity, would have exhausted it.

“ In youth there are moments of temptation so powerful that everything seems lost, and we feel we cannot but yield to the torrent which is bearing us on ; so it was in my youth ; I mean my religious youth ; there were moments so critical that, but for the gentle firmness of her who guided me, I should have returned to the world and been lost.

“ I often went to her and knelt at her feet, but my heart was of stone and refused to speak ; with great labor and charity she would wrest my trouble from me, a word at a time. Never did I receive from her a bitter or humiliating reproof ; her least actions and words to me were always animated by a holy and religious charity. Therefore, when I left her, I experienced something which reminded me of the disciples on their way to Emmaus ; my poor heart, so cold and indifferent, warmed at her words ; it recovered a little strength and a little love for the sweet obligations of my state.

“ Except when it was absolutely impossible for her to see me, there was no occupation so pressing or so serious that she would not interrupt to help me. It has happened a hundred times that I have gone to her in the evening, after a fatiguing day, or in the morning, just as she had begun an important work, but I can proclaim to the praise of my worthy mother that never, either in her manner or her countenance, did I perceive the least sign of impatience; never even a word that could make me regret having disturbed her. She treated my importunity as she did my faults and caprices; nothing altered that gracious smile which won her all hearts. It was this good and fervent mother who taught me to pray; I did not understand prayer; my meditations had been without relish or fruit. With what piety and patience she explained to me a method of prayer, and heard me recount my attempts to converse with Our Lord, and to overcome my discouragement. I thank thee, O my God, for having so profitably used her to establish me in prayer! I remember that when, to help me in the meditation, she suggested her own reflections on the life and death of my Divine

Saviour, her soul seemed to pass into mine. I was deeply moved, I felt my resolution was taken, that from that moment I adopted the means she suggested to me ; she was truly my mother, she brought me forth to life, to Thee, O my God ! ”

## CHAPTER SECOND.

### The Virtues to be Practised.

We shall not speak of the virtues which, as a Christian and a religious, you are obliged to practise, but only of those required by your office of superior.

We have told you that your office is that of a *parent* and *guide*.

*Love* sums up all the virtues which as a parent you must practise toward your children ; we have already spoken of this, and what we shall say in treating of the faults you should avoid will complete what you should know.

The virtues of one whose duty is to guide others are the three following :

Prudence.

Vigilance.

Uprightness.

We shall not enlarge upon the necessity of these virtues ; we shall only indicate their practical application.



**First. Prudence.**

*I. The Effects of Prudence.*

A simple enumeration of the effects of prudence will show the importance of this virtue.

· It helps us to see what should be done or what should be omitted.

It inspires distrust of self and a desire to consult others.

It gives a facility for profiting by the light communicated to us, address in carrying out a project, and means of removing obstacles.

It tempers zeal, softens correction, indicates the exceptions to be made, distinguishes in the Rule the spirit which quickens and the letter which kills, counsels a mingling of indulgence with severity, kindness with austerity, simplicity with discernment, diligence with slowness.

It teaches the art of discerning spirits, of gently entering hearts, of recognizing what is suitable to different characters, and of not imposing the same yoke upon all temperaments.

After this simple enumeration, are you not impressed with the truth of St. Ber-

nard's maxim : *Take away prudence, and virtue itself would become vice.*

## *II. The Counsels of Prudence.*

1. *To speak but little.* "In treating of affairs," says St. Ignatius, "we must say little and listen much ; and the little we do say should be said, even if it is confided only to one person, as if the whole world were to know it.

"To say little and do much is the way of upright souls," Fénelon tells us.

The great secret of success is to keep your plans secret.

2. *Preserve inviolate any secret confided to you or which you may discover.* This is an obligation of conscience and one which binds sometimes under pain of mortal sin.

You must regard as secret the confidences and faults of your religious, their family affairs, the state of their fortune, the letters they receive or send, their private infirmities, in a word, all that could injure or simply pain them.

Never speak to any one of the portion which some of the religious have not brought, of the sacrifices the House has

been obliged to make, of the embarrassment another's indifference or carelessness has caused you.

Never make any allusion which would lead one of your religious to think that you intend to speak of anything concerning him which has come to your knowledge; avoid even a smile which would create the impression that you know much concerning him.

3. *Do nothing without examination and consultation.* No doubt, too great slowness in deciding is to be avoided, but too great haste in deciding is a worse fault.

“Night brings counsel,” says a proverb; remember this; you will rarely regret sleeping over a decision.

“Two heads are better than one,” says another proverb; then seek consultation in every case of any importance. The Rule imposes upon you a council; assemble its members and consult them. You are not obliged to obey them, but you are obliged to consult them.

When, after mature deliberation, a thing is once decided, hasten its accomplishment; irresolution is a fault which interferes most with success.

Do not hesitate to change your opinion on receiving better advice. Obstinacy is usually the fault of narrow minds.

4. *Respect established customs, and let the changes you find necessary be made gradually.*

“They walk safely,” says St. Vincent de Paul, “who never diverge from the path which the majority of the wise have followed.”

When we are first installed in a House or in our office of superior, we are naturally inclined to criticise or modify many things. Mistrust this inclination, which springs from self-love.

Speak well of the superiors who preceded you. Take a certain pride in finding what they have done commendable; show by your actions that you wish to follow in their footsteps. Wait to be well established in your position before making any changes. Proceed gradually, and, if possible, cause these changes to be desired by the majority of the Community. Never run rashly counter to a general opinion.

Proceed cautiously; do not advance too rapidly at first, that you may draw back with dignity if you foresee that what you have undertaken will not succeed.

5. *Be satisfied in all things with that which is possible.* If you try to do *too* well, you will hardly succeed in doing even *well*.—If you exact too much, you will obtain but little, perhaps nothing, particularly in Communities of women. A spirit of contradiction is innate in woman.

When we cannot effect all we wish, prudence counsels us to confine ourselves to trying to do what we can.

For example, the conduct of one of your religious grieves you; you find, when you exhort him to amend, that he is insensible to your words, then do not insist too much.

If he refuse to practise the counsels, try to persuade him at least to observe the commandments.

If he refuse pious works, persuade him at least to fly vices.

If he refuse to sacrifice all his vices, try to persuade him at least to decrease their number.

If he refuse this, try to persuade him at least to say a little prayer to the Blessed Virgin every day.

If he refuse all you ask, try at least to separate friends, and leave God and time to do their work.

Superiors sometimes endeavor to excite weak and cowardly souls by comparing them to their more obedient, more energetic and fervent companions. "I know not," a superior writes, "whether this is a wise expedient or not, but I confess that I have never resorted to it that I have not been sorry. The comparison excites in souls jealousies which are not easily effaced, besides fastening upon the superiors the accusation of being partial."

Then, what is to be done, and how must one do it? We must ever return to the grand supernatural means: *prayer, patience, hope*; yes, pray, pray, continually recommencing with new ardor, and never cease to hope.

6. *Discover the vulnerable point in each of your children, and make use of it to lead him to God.* Hiding a bitter remedy in a sugared pill is a very innocent deception to practise on a patient.

For example, one religious is open to flattery: commend him a little; another to honors: indulge him in a few; another is very anxious to possess a certain book or picture: let him have it for a time. If your intention is pure, God will bless you;

you will win your children and gradually lead them to God.

“But I am not politic,” a superior will say; I must speak of things as they are; I cannot flatter, or caress, or give praise where it is not merited.”

“You are wrong,” P. Champagnat replies; “Our Lord was *very politic*; He caressed, He flattered, He encouraged, He defended sinners; He ate with them, and was called their friend.

“St Paul was very politic; he assures us himself that he took all forms, that he made himself all things to all men, and that his bearing to the faithful whom he taught was that of a mother to her children. ‘You are not politic?’ then acknowledge that you are not sufficiently humble, sufficiently charitable; above all, sufficiently zealous. Oh! if you only had an ardent desire to gain a soul to Jesus Christ!”

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A superior, to be prudent, does not need to be possessed of an eminent mind or profound knowledge; it suffices that he have ordinary intelligence, sound judg-

ment, an upright, firm, modest mind, and what is commonly called good sense ; God will supply all else.

“I am the poor guardian of my convent,” St. Peter of Alcantara used to say ; “and when I have bestowed on my religious all the care of which I am capable I *leave the rest to God.*”

## Second. Vigilance.

### *I. The Effects of Vigilance.*

1. The first effect of vigilance is to make the Rule faithfully observed by all.

Alas ! it is a humiliating thing to say, and yet it is true, that we are more faithful when we are under our superior's eyes, and that the presence of God is not sufficient for us. Poor human nature !

Then be ever watchful to encourage those who do well, to re-animate those who begin to be disheartened, and to bring back those who wander.

The word vigilant means one who watches, who never sleeps ; then be ever in the midst of your religious ; let your glance rest upon them as rests the eye of



God, so sweet, so calm, and full of gentleness.

2. The second effect of vigilance is fidelity as well as economy in the temporal administration of the house.

Your office of superior extends your vigilance to material effects of the House, and the administration of temporal things for which you are responsible before God and your religious.

You cannot do everything by yourself; you need an administrator, a bursar, lay-brothers. No doubt they have their conscience to forbid them any injustice, but they may be wanting in ability, fitness, order. They may have annoying eccentricities, antipathies, which unconsciously make them unjust; it is your duty to observe how these offices are filled, without, however, trammelling the persons in charge.

3. The third effect of vigilance is general satisfaction. If the Rule is better observed, if neatness, order, and comfort reign generally, many causes of complaint are removed. Of course, all murmurs will not cease, but the Community will at least know to whom to address themselves when

anything is wanting, and the malcontents, when counselled by the more reasonable to make their complaints to you, cannot answer: "The superior! he never interferes in things of this kind!"

Yes, let it be well understood that you concern yourself for everything and that you are interested in everything.

## *II. The Counsels of Vigilance.*

1. Know your duties thoroughly; know in detail what the Rule commands, what it permits, what it forbids. Learn the customs of the House perfectly! Write with their date the changes which circumstances have obliged you to make in these; write also the circumstances, they will be a guide for you in other years.

Have a general knowledge of the duties of each one's office, it will make your surveillance easier.

You cannot superintend if you do not know what should be done.

Acquaint yourself with the duties of the cook, the infirmarian, the treasurer, the sacristan, even the gardener. Read attentively all that the Rule recommends to each

of your religious; above all, be penetrated with the spirit of their duties, and without being imperious or exacting show that you are familiar with all that is required of them.

Hear what some religious of St. Clare say of their superior :

“She concerns herself for everything; she puts her hand to everything. When the portress goes to give an account of her office, the good superior listens to her attentively and counsels her most wisely. ‘There, Sister,’ she will say, ‘you were wanting in tact and prudence; that reply was a little discourteous; here you should have expressed more gratitude and respect.’ These lessons come from the heart, and they reach the heart.

“The Sister charged with the garden would come to her about digging, sowing, planting, pruning the fruit trees, etc. There was nothing with which our mother was unfamiliar; she would choose the plots, fix the time for sowing, and from her room direct all the operations of the gardener with astonishing accuracy.

“The Sister charged with the linen always consulted her. Nothing in the

House was cast aside or replaced without mother's permission. But she never gave a permission blindly, or permitted an object to be cast aside until she satisfied herself of its condition. She required that all the new linen should be measured before her eyes, and it was not cut until a careful estimation was made of the number of pieces it would furnish.

“The Sister in charge of the refectory also went to the superior for orders. She gave her lessons of order and economy, pointed out the delicate constitutions, and the special dishes required for them.

“The cook was also carefully superintended and guided by our venerated mother.

“Nothing in the house is unfamiliar to her. The effect of her intelligent activity is visible from the cellar to the garret, from the sacristy to the kitchen. The most delicate as well as the rudest labor, washing, mending, embroidery, subjects of art, all merit her care.”

2. Be the first at all the exercises of the Community, and observe those who absent themselves or are habitually late. Be the last to go to your room in the evening.

In the life of a superior we read: “Rev. Mother was everywhere, breathing that good spirit which animated her, and gradually causing it to predominate ; she rarely lost sight of her dear Sisters; in the chapel, in the refectory, even in the corridors, she liked to follow and observe them. She studied their bearing, their carriage, their conversation in those times of relaxation when nature asserts itself, and we surprise faults of which we are ignorant.”

3. Note, without appearing to do so, the little irregularities you observe; then, in direction, mention them in a kindly, paternal spirit, not to punish, but to call attention to them.—Assure the delinquent that these failings in no way diminish your esteem for him, but that they are an obstacle to our serving God.

4. Do not carry your zeal for the perfection of your religious or the regularity of the House too far. You will end by being importunate, by losing the affection of your religious, and by making yourself powerless to do good.

5. Do not boast of knowing everything, and of the impossibility of being deceived. This ridiculous vanity would

be sufficient to excite others to deceive you.

6. Your vigilance should extend to particular friendships, which, as we have told you, should be gradually overcome rather than abruptly severed.

To antipathies, which you will easily discover at recreation by the manner in which the religious avoid one another or speak of one another.

To all intercourse with the world, which should be as infrequent and short as possible. See that the Rule concerning permissions to go to the parlor, the companion for the parlor, is strictly observed. What deplorable falls have been caused by prolonged visits in the parlor !

“ Closed and unfrequented grating, a sanctified monastery, ” says St. Liguori ;—  
“ open and frequented grating, a dissipated monastery.”

7. In Communities of women the vigilance of the superior should extend to all interviews with the confessor, which should not be more frequent than the Rule permits, nor multiplied outside the confessional without the superior's authority. St. Liguori censures these too frequent inter-

views in the parlor or at the grating. God speaks in the confessional, he says, but not at the grating.

To the multiplicity of confessors, which is always a cause of trouble in a Community, and, in spite of all precautions, ends by exciting dissensions, quarrels, attachments, which self-love sustains.

To the confessor extraordinary, to whom each religious should present himself four times a year. All are not obliged to go to confession to the confessor extraordinary, but all should at least present themselves to him. This clause is explicitly rendered in the Bull of Benedict XIV., which further gives the following decisions :

A superior is bound to grant any religious the special confessor he asks for at the hour of death.

A superior should readily grant a particular confessor to a religious who does not act through caprice, when said religious manifests a desire to see the confessor, either for the peace of his soul, or even his spiritual advancement.

St. Francis de Sales "earnestly recommends superiors to grant confessors more frequently than four times a year to the

religious who ask for them and really need them, discountenancing at the same time all eccentricity and partiality; for, though we must provide for just necessities, we must not be indulgent to vices."

This question of confessors apart from the ordinary confessors of the house is very important. Here is what we read on the subject in the Constitutions of the Visitation: "When any one desires to go to confession, or to confer on matters of conscience with some well known person, the superior shall readily permit it, without inquiring the reason of the conference or confession asked for; at the same time, if the superior perceives that a religious frequently requests these confessions or conferences, particularly with the same confessor, she shall warn the spiritual Father (ecclesiastic superior); then, with his advice, take measures to prevent the holy liberty of confession and conference, ordained for the good and greater purity, the consolation and tranquillity of souls, being converted into a means of perverting the heart, of disquieting the mind, of indulging curiosity or eccentricity, or of nourishing some secret presumption; or of aversion to



the ordinary confessor, or, finally, of singularity or vain attachment to persons."

St. Chantal would not even permit this temporary change of confessors "save for matters of grave importance, as upon those occasions when there is a risk of offending God; for, as to those little troubles which our self-love and meagre humility excite in us because of a confessor who speaks plain truths to us, they would not be a legitimate reason for leaving him."

We must suppress all caprice in direction, know how to distinguish between eccentricity and necessity, and try to persuade those poor religious who have no confidence in the confessor of the Community, when he is, moreover, all that could be desired for the general good, that their disposition is a special dispensation of Providence in their regard, a cross which they must bear, one sacrifice more to be made, a proof that God wills them privation rather than consolation.

8. Your vigilance should extend :

To the letters received or sent.

To the books lent your religious, particularly those which come from outside; you should glance over these when they come

into the House, and without your subject's knowledge, when they leave it. All pious books, even those written by the saints, are not good for all souls without distinction. "I have seen," says St. Francis de Sales, "religious women, on reading the books of St. Teresa, imagine themselves possessed of quite as many perfections and as much activity of mind as this Saint, though they were far from possessing anything of the kind, so much does self-love deceive us." What illusions are produced in souls by the reading of ascetic books ill understood!

To printed sheets or manuscript wrapped about packages from outside. Such sheets have tarnished with their worldly lore chaste imaginations, which were with great difficulty restored to peace.

To little gifts received or given. In regard to these you should not be more severe than the Rule, but you should always know of them.

To each one's special inclination for any particular devotion, reading, or mortification.

To Communions relinquished, for which we should not, as we have said, require explanations, frequently impossible to give,

but we should inform the confessor if this absence from the holy Table is frequent.

To the different offices, particularly those which relate directly to the material welfare of the House : that of the infirmarian, the cook, the religious who has charge of the linen, etc.

9. Your vigilance should extend to the material wants of the Community. Do not wait until they ask for what they need, or their requests will soon be changed into complaints ; forestall any need in linen by renewing it before it is asked for ; anticipate all they require in their different duties, and all that may be necessary to prevent or soothe a suffering condition. We shall speak later on of the sick, but let us here recommend you to pay attention to a pallid countenance or disrelish for food in one of the Community. Superintend or know the seasoning or the manner in which the dishes are prepared in the kitchen ; give orders, but do not trust entirely to others to execute them.—How many causes of complaint arise from this !

10. Your vigilance, finally, should extend to the temporal administration of your Community.

We have already said, be familiar with all the details of the House—let an account be rendered you of everything—have a very accurate inventory of all that is in the House.—Note carefully in writing all that you receive and all that you spend, with the date of your expenditures and your receipts. You have a steward or administrator for your assistance, but you yourself are the steward of the community, and, what is more, God's steward, to whom you must render an account ; let your books be always ready to be inspected by your ecclesiastic superior, or by your Superior-General—or even by the council of the house ; give them in perfect order to the superior who succeeds you ;—always take the advice of your superiors in regard to contracting debts or making repairs.

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A good and true superior is not one who sees nothing and wishes to see nothing, who shuts his eyes to everything, or excuses the greater part of what he cannot ignore ; who, under pretext of sparing human weakness, regards an imperfect relig-

ious quite as favorably as one who tends with all his strength to perfection ; who even finds the latter a little trying, because he calls his attention from time to time to the daily decrease of the primitive spirit.

Nor is he one of those rapt saints, always in contemplation, who cannot be torn from the chapel or his pious reading ; who takes it very ill that any one should approach him on the futile matters of the household at a time when, following in the footsteps of great mystics, he was about to be raised to the third heaven.

A true superior is one who fulfils all his duties ; and if one of these duties, and undoubtedly the most important, relates to the *spiritual welfare* of the Community, the other relates to the *temporal*. Therefore he should have a competent knowledge of both, and he should pass without difficulty from the duties of Mary to those of Martha, when his office requires it.

“Very frequently,” says Mgr. Plantier, “we find superiors so simply straightforward, and so vainly confident of the frankness as well as the virtue of those about them, that they know not how to discover

either artifice or blemish in the religious whom they have been called to govern. . . . You have no suspicion that that young religious, whom you would reproach yourself for doubting, keeps up with the outside world correspondence and mysterious intimacies; that she receives in certain houses, and, in her turn, gives in the parlor audiences in which her heart and her vocation receive terrible shocks. You regard her as an angel. She fascinates you with her caresses and her artful words. But let us not dissemble it; even in your holy retreats, even among those whose dress claims our respect as the spouses of Jesus Christ, there are deceitful exteriors, deep dissimulation, a versatility of deception, and hypocrisy of words which would perplex the angels themselves; and if you persist in ignoring this, if you continue to yield to the fascinations of this daughter of the serpent who lulls and enchants you, you will learn one day her true character by the noise of a scandal which all the world predicted and which you alone did not foresee."

### Third. Uprightness.

We call uprightness that virtue which enables us to direct all our actions towards the fulfilment of duty, undeterred by what may be said or thought around us.

It is that virtue which St. Francis de Sales calls *simplicity*, which he would never separate from prudence, and of which he said : “ Let us give ourselves to the practice of this holy virtue, daughter of innocence and sister to charity.”

#### *I. The Effects of Uprightness.*

1. It wins the confidence and respect of all. There is something in a frank, open glance, in a simple bearing and true speech, which wins hearts and which can not be feigned. If you do not like your religious you will try in vain to persuade them that you care for them ; you will not succeed for any length of time.

To enjoy the confidence of others, you must merit it, and this you will never do, if you ever give your religious reason to say of you : he is not upright.

2. Uprightness spares one a world of anxiety and trouble. Nothing is more

disquieting than the uncertainty of success based upon questionable means.

We are continually pursued by the fear that our want of straightforwardness will be discovered. We have neither the support of our conscience nor of God, who desires that the rule of our conduct should be truth and simplicity.

When we act uprightly, a failure never troubles us: God remains to us, and God always suffices.

## *II. The Counsels of Uprightness.*

1. Avoid the reputation of spying; nothing demeans a superior more than this base habit. Observe everything, watch everything, be everywhere, but never conceal your presence for the purpose of surprising your religious. . . . Sooner or later God will cause all to come to your knowledge.

2. Do not authorize tale-bearing. Accept, of course, any reports brought you, but show their unimportance if they are made through levity; reprove the speaker if they are repeated through jealousy; thank him if he has at heart the interest of



the Community. Let it be very evident, however, that you take no pleasure in hearing them, and that you are simply doing your duty.

Never trust wholly to what is reported to you ; let it make you more vigilant, but rarely reprove a religious before you have satisfied yourself of the truth of the report.

When you have to reprove any one, you should be able to say, *I have seen*, not, *I have heard* that you do thus, except when the fact is not public.

Never manifest a desire to know what is said or thought of you, or seek to learn it by indirect means.

If you are humble enough to bear the truth your confessor will tell it to you plainly ; if you are not sufficiently humble, be intelligent enough to understand it when he veils it in words which he will render, you may be sure, sufficiently transparent.

3. Never insist upon hearing a name which a religious is unwilling to give ; do not use your authority to compel one to make a revelation which he is loath to make ; simply beg a religious whom you

believe possessed of important information to speak of it to the confessor and to be guided by the advice received in the holy tribunal.

4. To discover a secret, never resort to cunning, almost hypocritical means, which, though without the guilt of sin, have all its humiliation : such as cunning subtleties, base flattery, deceitful caresses, artful promises, feigned affection, false confidences, feigning full knowledge to entrap others to reveal all, etc. They savor too much of dishonesty, all these means invented by entirely human policy ; and how displeasing they must be to God !

Never, either by flattery or, above all, by appealing to the conscience, seek to have willed, or given to the House in any other way, a sum of money not required by the Rule.

How deplorable has been the result of such artifices, licit in a legal sense, but far from licit to an upright mind.

It is a vulgar saying that to excel in business one must know two things, how to conceal one's own designs, and how to discover those of others ; this is not an axiom of the saints. Take straightforward

measures in everything; when you can no longer do so, proceed no further. If you are solely seeking God, if it is only His work which you desire to do, rely upon Him. Do all in your power, but avoid any means which could offend God's glance, who, while recommending you the wisdom of the serpent, requires of you the simplicity of the dove.

In all your acts of any importance, where less straightforward means suggest themselves to your mind, let the following words of Our Saviour be always present to you: "Seek first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all things shall be added unto you."

5. Be straightforward in your reports to the ecclesiastic superior to whom the bishop has confided the care of your House.

Answer with simplicity the questions which he thinks necessary to ask concerning your exterior conduct as well as that of your religious.

He has a right, also, to question you on your manner of directing souls, on the books you read, on the spirit you introduce into the Community, on the priests you see habitually, besides the ordinary

and extraordinary confessor whom he has appointed.

Answer all these questions frankly.

In regard to the temporal affairs of the House, do not seek to conceal from him the amount of money received or expended.

Submit to him your plans for building and improvements, your projects of buying or selling; though superior, you are always bound by a vow of poverty, and your ecclesiastic superior is at hand to give you the necessary authorization.

Besides, when you have frankly stated everything, are you not more free and, before God, do you not feel less burdened? Above all, never prevent any of your religious from going to see the ecclesiastic superior or from writing to him; it would be a serious breach of duty, were you to hinder them in any way.

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As a summary of all this chapter here is the doctrine of the saints:

1st. St. Francis de Sales traces in a few lines the duties and virtues of superiors.

“Let her not esteem herself fortunate

because of the authority which she possesses, but because of the obligation God has imposed upon her to render service to others.

“Let her be an example of good works to all her sisters.

“Let her admonish the turbulent.

“Let her console the timorous.

“Let her receive and comfort the sick.

“Let her be patient with all.

“Let her be strict and severe with herself in observing discipline and the Rule, and let her be lenient with others.

“Though both are necessary, let her desire to be more loved than feared.”

And the Saint adds in this same chapter of Rules the following counsel, truly fitted to make one reflect :

“Be pitiful and compassionate not only towards yourselves,” he tells the religious, “but also towards your superior, whose peril is greater in proportion to the elevation of her office.”

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2d. St. Teresa, among the counsels which she has left, gives the following thoughts :

“Is a good superior one who pardons nothing?—No.

“One who is prodigal?—No.

“One who is too saving?—No.

“One who wishes to know everything, and verify everything?—No.

“One who wishes to see nothing, to examine nothing, or who makes no account of small faults, little failings?—No.

“One whose humor is always austere?—No.

“One who has a weak, timid, embarrassed air?—No.

“What, then, is the science of governing souls?

“Indulgence and severity, gentleness and anger, patience and impatience, simplicity and artfulness; a superior must so unite all these qualities that, if one is wanting, disorder necessarily results.”

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3d. St. Chantal writes to a newly elected superior :

“Your office, my very dear daughter, is that of the *mother of a family* ; apply yourself with holy zeal to the care of your

House, which is of two kinds, *temporal* and *spiritual*.

“ Let your conduct in the temporal care of your House be generous and humble, not mean, nor yet extravagant ; beware of getting your House into debt ; it gives very grave anxieties to those who succeed you, and is a cause of murmurs ; if you are poor, go gradually and sparingly.

“ As to your spiritual care, let it be continual but gentle, do all in your power to make your daughters devout ; their welfare depends on this ; for if they like to converse with God, they will be very retiring and very mortified. Be not one of those tender mothers, who cannot resolve to correct their children ; nor one of those turbulent mothers, who are always scolding. Never flatter self-love ; contrive to induce your daughters to abandon themselves to your care.

“ You must know, my very dear daughter, that all your sisters will not take the same flight toward perfection ; some will fly high, others low, others will take a middle course ; treat each one according to her capacity.

“ There are certain good little souls from whom we must never expect anything but

to see them walk in faithful observance in their own little course, nor should we urge them higher, for this would only fill them with perplexity, weariness, and trouble; others have noble dispositions; these you must sweetly and firmly urge on, without sparing them, to true humility and total abnegation of self.

“If they praise your conduct, humble yourself before God, referring to Him the glory which is due to Him only; if it is censured, humble yourself in this truth: *nothing is capable of nothing*, and hold as certain that with the grace of God you will do much if you are humble, meek, generous, and straightforward.”



## CHAPTER THIRD.

### The Faults to be Avoided.

We shall not indicate the faults any more than the virtues inherent to the special character of a superior.

The same faults which would injure him as a religious would, with still greater reason, injure him as a superior, and irascibility, touchiness, jealousy, curiosity, and irregularity, which in a religious are a source of falls and miseries, may become a scandal in a superior. But just as each age has its faults, so have all positions, and the faults special to superiorship are :

Haughtiness,

Hardness,

Avarice,

Partiality.

Do not protest ; I say the faults special to the *office*, not to *superiors*.

If you are not warned, if you take no precautions against them, you will see, or

rather others will see (for you will be the last to believe they predominate in your soul) these very faults ruling you and paralyzing the good you might do.

### **First. Haughtiness.**

Haughtiness is not properly pride, or self-love, or self-esteem. There is a certain coarseness about these vices which makes them hated even when they reign in the soul.

It is not myself I consider, it whispers, but my position ; I must preserve its dignity.

At bottom this is pride, but it conceals itself with the pompous word dignity.

And under this pretext :

We can not be accessible to all, for we have a certain dignity to maintain.

We even have our hours of audience, as if one had been made superior for himself.

We avoid coming to recreation or taking part in those joyous and innocent amusements which afford relaxation and sustain charity, because we do not wish to encourage familiarity.

We require something a little more elegant than the others in the furniture of our room or cell, something a little finer in our garments, occasional delicacies at table; and if we do not require it we readily sanction it, because it enhances or is due to the dignity of a superior's position.

We do not readily receive excuses, for we must not allow our authority to be weakened.

We pardon no personal want of respect, even though committed thoughtlessly and without malice, and when an affectionate smile would be the most salutary reproof; but we must cause our position to be respected.

We insist upon a manifestation of conscience which violates the rules traced by the Church, and we risk grave faults because we claim that it is our duty to know everything.

We torture without pity a poor, timid religious, who dares not seek direction, or who finds it impossible to open his heart and knows not what to say, for we claim that he should have confidence in his superior.

This haughtiness creates a boundless con-

confidence in one's own strength and, as a consequence, results in one of the most disastrous faults,—*obstinacy*. “*I have spoken, I never relent, once I have decided—Silence! Obey!*” Sad, sad words on the lips of a superior!

It also impels us to avoid consulting any one; to consult another is to lower our dignity or acknowledge our ignorance, and we would not appear ignorant.

It leads us to criticise unmercifully what our predecessor has established in the House.

It prevents the religious from addressing themselves freely to the ecclesiastic superiors, or Superior Generals, though the Rule authorizes these communications.

It visits with unreasonable rigor the least violation, not only of the Rule, but of the superior's personal wishes.

These are not the means by which you will bring souls to God.

Meditate, meditate frequently upon the example and the words of Jesus Christ, who so expressly tells you: “Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart.” “The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.” “He

that is the greater among you, let him become as the younger."

Ah! what rude humiliations you will have to endure in your last years to expiate all your pride! And at the Day of Judgment, how much higher than you in glory these poor religious will be, whom you have despised, and to whom you will perhaps owe your salvation, because in their humble charity they prayed for you and offered for you the humiliation you forced upon them!

## **Second. Hardness of Heart.**

### I.

This fault springs from temperament, and it is the most difficult to eradicate.

It is one which is the most incompatible with the office of superior; we may say it is one which feeds nearly all the other faults.

The two great qualities of a superior are good sense and kind-heartedness.

The want of good sense is too evident to permit a religious of no judgment to be named as superior.

The want of kindness, or hard hearted-

ness, may not be so evident, because the candidate whom we wish to elect has not in his small sphere had occasion to manifest it.

Moreover, this want of heart conceals itself sometimes under the austerity of virtue;—sharp words escape one, but they have for excuse the slothfulness of certain temperaments which need to be sharply roused; we skilfully fortify ourselves with certain words of the Gospel or of the saints misunderstood, above all misapplied, such as: “The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away.”—“Woe to him for whom God does not suffice.”—“We feed children with milk and caresses; strong souls are nourished with virtue.”

This austerity of doctrine captivates timid, simple, upright souls, particularly when the religious who profess it are themselves very regular.

All this may be very good for you as long as you have no one but yourself to guide, but it does not suffice for the guidance of others.

O superiors, be less perfect, and a little more compassionate, a little more paternal!

You are strong, your children are weak ; do not impose upon them a burden which is light for you, but which may overwhelm them !

You have no need to be caressed, or encouraged, or pardoned ; they have ; give them what the maladies of their souls claim.

Remember, says a pious author, that you are in a hospital, as it were, where you see only the sick and poor about you ;—that, since the entrance of sin into the world, there must be many failings and faults in human life, and that you must not require your subjects to be faultless. Your model is the good Shepherd mentioned in Isaias, who takes the little lambs in his arms, warms them in his bosom, and carries the weary sheep.

Your model is the good father, who leads his little son by the hand, suiting his steps, not to the length of his own legs, but to that of the little one, who otherwise could not follow him.

St. Bernard, during the first years when he was superior, was somewhat harsh with his religious ; consequently they feared and avoided him ; hearts closed at his approach and were troubled.

The Saint saw this, and he tells us that “instead of making Clairvaux an earthly paradise, peopled with angels and seraphim, I made it a purgatory filled with suffering souls.”

He humbly asked pardon of his brethren for his severity, and, changing his method, he tried being very patient with them, praying for them, and loving them; and in telling the happy result of this new method he thus conjures all superiors: “*Pray, do not command; ask, do not exact.*” — “By this means St. Bernard,” says the author of his life, “made every one in the convent so happy that everything was done through love; they flew to obey his commands, and the only trouble was when one anticipated another on such occasions.”

## II.

Here are some of the effects of this insensibility or hardness of heart.

It makes a superior dry and uninteresting in his conferences, disagreeable in daily intercourse, brusque in his refusals, rude in his manner, sharp in his corrections, quick to punish, slow to pardon, slow to



comfort. And how, then, can there be any confidence, any outpouring of the heart, any abandonment, or even respect, on the part of the religious?

Ah! I see the poor subjects of such a superior, their hearts filled with bitterness, with no relish for the service of God, which had promised to be so sweet and light a yoke, hating their vocation, regretting their family, and, alas! ending sometimes by breaking every tie which binds them to religion. Some persons were censuring in the presence of a worthy priest the conduct of two religious who had left their convent. "I do not excuse them," he said, "I know nothing; but does not the manner in which they were treated excuse them before God?"

### III.

Here are some marks by which you may recognize whether this insensibility of heart begins to be one of your faults:

1. If you exact things of your religious regardless of their physical or moral strength.
2. If warned that one of your religious

is fatigued, is sad, or that he is weeping, you hear it with indifference or a gesture of disdain.

3. If your tone grows sharper or more imperious than usual.

4. If you abruptly send away from you a religious who wished to speak to you.

5. If you surprise yourself spying upon your religious, to find them in fault.

#### IV.

Superiors hard of heart, hear the words of the prophet Ezechiel :

“Woe to the shepherds of Israel. . . The weak you have not strengthened, and that which was sick you have not healed ; that which was broken you have not bound up, and that which was driven away you have not brought again, neither have you sought that which was lost : but you ruled over them with rigor, and with a high hand.”

With an insensible heart you will never lead your religious to good or fulfil the obligations of a parent.

“One is not master of a place,” says Mother St. Joseph, “if he does not possess the citadel ; one is not master of another’s

will unless he has won the heart. The heart is the citadel of man.

“One who makes no effort to gain hearts, but is satisfied to command and punish, is not a *superior* but a *slave master*.”

“Bear in mind what St. Teresa lays down in her Constitutions: “Let the prioress take pains to make herself loved in order to be obeyed. By this means a superior will keep his religious united, will guide them in peace, will cause them to advance in virtue, and render the yoke of observance very light.”

“Our religious,” St. Jane de Chantal writes, “are Our Lord’s sheep; we are permitted, in guiding them, to touch them with the rod of correction, but not to shear or flay them, or lead them to the slaughter; only the Sovereign Master has a right to do that.”

### **Third. Avarice.**

Can a superior be avaricious with what does not belong to him?

Yes, and perhaps all the more easily that, having only the property of the convent to administer, he must spend it care-

fully and is obliged to render an account of it.

From the economy necessary in every good administration arise, first anxiety, then attachment, then parsimoniousness, finally avarice. There is something in money itself which soils the heart if we are not on our guard against it.

### I.

You will know that you are beginning to be influenced by avarice if a loss for which you are in no way responsible, the failure of certain returns spite of care on your part, the sudden cutting off of a source of revenue through some unforeseen accident, occupies your thoughts during prayer, disquiets you, saddens you to the extent of altering the sweetness of your intercourse with your religious; if you are violently disturbed at the least waste which is unaccounted for; if you are not ready to meet without complaint or murmur expenses authorized by the physician and required by the condition of the health of a religious, or for a necessary journey; if you speak too much of the sum expended,

as if to excite admiration for your generosity.

If at the usual periods for renewing the wardrobes you are extremely loath to furnish the money required, and publicly indulge in bitter extravagant complaints of the want of care on the part of your religious.

The complaints are not so reprehensible as the feeling which inspires them and the tone in which they are uttered.

If you never receive with a good grace the religious who comes to you for the daily expenses of the house ;—or the sacristan who calls your attention to the new furniture required for the sanctuary, or to the faded ornaments of the altar.

If you complain of the number of poor who flock to the door. \*

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\* The poor! here is one of a good superior's cares. Mère Emilie, literally accepting these explicit words of Our Saviour: "*As long as you did it to one of these My least brethren, you did it to Me,*" firmly believed she served Jesus Christ in the person of the poor.

So firm was her reliance upon this belief that to take upon herself the care of a few orphans was with her an infallible means of meeting all her wants. "We must look for two more orphans," she would say, when a building was begun, "one, that no accident may happen to the workmen; the other, that we may have the necessary funds."

Never did the smallness of their resources, the hardness of the times, the scarcity of provisions, prove a reason for

If you treat with more consideration a religious who has brought a dowry than you do one for whom the House has made some concessions, for which, however, his ability and devotedness have made compensation.

## II.

Avarice in a superior springs from three sources, which we shall content ourselves with mentioning :

1. *A hard heart*, which is insensible to the sufferings of others; which cannot understand how painful it may be to a timid or delicate religious to make a troublesome request; which is satisfied with saying, if they want anything, let them ask for it.

2. *A want of confidence in God*, upon whom we do not rely sufficiently, as if God were not bound to help souls, even materially, when they have given themselves to Him, and serve Him with all their hearts.\*

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restricting their alms. It was considered, on the contrary, the time for gathering abandoned children and dispensing from the payment of board in all the Houses novices whose parents were embarrassed.

When we are guided by a spirit of faith, how differently we view everything!

\* We read in the life of a holy Superior that, while recommending her religious to avoid the least useless expense, she could not suffer them to be troubled because of temporal

3. *The vanity of passing for an able financier or administrator*,—one capable of retrieving a ruined House,—of making an institution prosperous, as if the prosperity of a Community consisted in proud structures instead of in the piety, well-being, and happiness of its members.

### III.

The effects of avarice in a Community are most pernicious. Under pretext of enforcing the practice of poverty and mortification it subjects the poor religious, who labor devotedly withal, to the trials of destitution.

It ruins regular observance by obliging the religious themselves to provide against the future, to provide for themselves by importuning their relatives; and they are

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interests. "You are an alarmist," she wrote a religious who took fright at seeing the corn was growing dearer day by day, while no one thought of laying in a provision for the convent,—"You are an alarmist.

"If you truly appreciated that God was your Father, would you fear as you do! Can He not give us wherewith to buy corn at thirty five francs a measure as well as at eighteen?"

Providence never fails souls who sincerely trust in its goodness. But how rare these souls are! Confidence in God should be a superior's special devotion.

thus in a measure forced to sin against obedience and poverty.

It excites the bitterest and most dangerous complaints against superiors who cease to be respected or loved.

A Community which, through any fault of the superior, has just reason to complain of food or clothing will soon fall into the most complete disorder.

#### **Fourth. Partiality.**

##### **I.**

This is a fault into which a superior falls unconsciously; he taxes the discontented with jealousy; he is not aware that he has favorites until murmurs reach him, and then he finds that it is very difficult to sever these attachments, which he has made so powerful and, in one sense, so necessary.

Certainly, we do not censure all affection; a superior needs some support in the bearing of his burden; he needs affection, for his heart is also susceptible and tender.

He needs a devoted friend, upon whom he may rely. And if among his religious he finds this support, this affection, this devo-



tion, will he not naturally accept it, and can we wholly blame him?

Can he be expected to give his confidence to one who is inimical to him? Moreover affection is not partiality.

## II.

Partiality becomes a fault injurious to the Community :

1. When it makes a superior unjust to his religious, granting to some what he refuses to others, dispensing the objects of his favor from all that is painful and laborious, and imposing all the burden of the labor upon those to whom he is inimical.

2. When it makes a superior gracious and affectionate with his favorites, and cold and indifferent to those who do not enjoy his favor; attentive and considerate for those who court his favor, negligent and inconsiderate for those who know not how to either cringe or flatter; kind to those who have the art of divining his taste and flattering his vanity, and almost disdainful to those who have neither the intelligence nor the talent to win his favor.

3. When he grants the object of his preference favors, advantages, permissions, employments, honors, to the neglect of other religious, who deserve them more.

### III.

The effect of these partialities is to excite discontent, jealousy, and murmurs; not unfrequently they give rise to antipathies, coldness, and aversions which divide the Community and ruin its peace.

They narrow a superior's heart, and make him not only unjust, but incline him to be malicious, irritating, suspicious, and irascible.

He imagines plots everywhere, discovers covert allusions in everything that is said, and instead of correcting himself, becomes more obstinate in these preferences.

The heart of a superior is so enslaved by these partialities, that his authority disappears, it passes from his hands into those of his favorites. He believes all they say, and does only what they suggest, and the Community, in addition to their murmurs, tell one another: *If we wish to succeed, we must first gain N—*, that is, whoever happens to

be the object of the superior's preference.

“Superiors must fulfil their office themselves,” St. Chantal writes; “my conviction is unalterable on this subject.”

#### IV.

The evil of partiality comes principally from the bad spirit of the religious who are the object of the superior's preference.

If they were virtuous, truly devoted to their superior, and regarded his authority as that of God, what service they could render him! But such friends are rare.

Be not precipitate in giving your confidence to one of your religious; the sympathy he awakens in you may only arise from similarity of character, an amiable exterior, an attractive manner, the position of his family.—Study him, see him at work, prove him, even repel him at times, if you find he is too eager concerning you. See that he is pious, discreet, loved by the others for his goodness, in no way ambitious. Alas! we are requiring too many qualities!

Mistrust particularly the religious who court your favor. There are flatterers who

will find good everything you do, and boldly commend it before you.

“When a superior is praised,” says St. Francis de Sales, “she should go away and leave the flatterer. . . We must not be astonished,” he adds, “to find in Communities religious always eager to praise their superior; for where there are souls of women there are souls given to praise and to flatter.”

You will find ambitious souls who, in order to rise, will not fear to abase themselves and to render you innumerable little services; who will keep others away, that they alone may enjoy the honor of being useful to you.

You will find hypocrites who, under pretext of zeal, will inform you of the failings of their companions.

No, no, whatever the exterior qualities, the amiability, the intelligence of these religious, they are not ones whom you should make your friends!

Ah! if you would be satisfied with Jesus alone for friend and confidant! If you would be satisfied to love all your religious with the same supernatural love, to use each one according to his capacity, to give

your confidence to no one, to manifest to all, according to circumstances, the tenderness which each one requires, how free your heart would remain, and what misery you would spare yourself!

## CHAPTER FOURTH.

### The Obstacles to be Overcome.

Good can only be accomplished at the price of sacrifices, but it is these very sacrifices which make the merit of accomplished duty.

“The moment,” says a saint, “we enter the path to heaven, the devil scatters stones before us to impede our progress.”

God Himself sows the way with difficulties to make us better appreciate the reward, to compel us to have recourse to Him, and to convince us that our success is only due to His grace.

An obstacle generally is all that is opposed to the success of our undertakings.

In your Community it is all that can hinder you from sanctifying your religious and from sanctifying yourself.

Difficulties are not obstacles when we are animated by a spirit of faith, they are only occasions of merit.

We shall speak :

1. Of the obstacles in the superior himself.
2. Of the obstacles which arise from the religious.

**First. The Obstacles in the Superior himself.**

There are obstacles which spring from the faults of which we have just been speaking—faults which you can easily banish with the assistance of grace and a strong will.

Well recognized faults against which we struggle resolutely are no longer injurious, even when we do not succeed in completely conquering them.

1. There are obstacles which spring from your special character, and these are difficult to remove, for the reason that you do not know yourself, or that you mistake for qualifications what are really faults, or you have allowed yourself to be enslaved by habits which can only be overcome by heroic acts.

The character which militates most against the good a superior may do is an irascible, impatient character.

Irascibility and impatience are not in-

sensibility. A superior may be very impatient and at the same time very kind ; he will be even too kind, through a desire to efface his fault, and will go to excess in little attentions, in granting permissions, etc.

We shall limit ourselves to indicating this character, because it is the most trying to the religious, because it is a source of continual discontent, and because it destroys the aureole of sanctity which should crown a superior.

Pray much ; faithfully confess all your acts of impatience ; perform some penance each time you forget yourself.

Other faults of character which God in His mercy leaves with superiors serve to humble them, to make them more indulgent, more cautious, but are not real obstacles, when faithfully resisted, to the good of the Community.

2. Another obstacle is the discouragement to which a superior yields.

We are discouraged only when we leave God. Observe that the periods in which you feel so fearful, so powerless, so weak, so resolved to abandon everything, are when you have not made your meditation as well as usual, when you have omitted



your Communion, when you have relied upon your own strength and been deceived.

Discouragement is always cowardice. God has placed you at a superior's post; as long as God leaves you there you must perform the duties of a superior, even at the expense of your own repose.

"Be like the anvil," says St. Ignatius, Martyr, "which never wavers under the blows that fall upon it;" it belongs to true athletes to receive continual blows and to continually conquer.

Are you shaken, draw near to God. Let your motto be that of a celebrated warrior: "Unto to the end!"

Good is only won by perseverance.

### **Second. The Obstacles arising from Others.**

Obstacles always spring from the character of individuals. The hardness of the times, the contractedness of the house, the scant supply of clothing, the coarseness of the food, are never serious obstacles to the good of a Community; when a good spirit reigns, all obstacles are easily overcome.

But a Community is not composed entirely of well-disposed religious ; they were all, doubtless, good in the beginning, but the Evil One has sown in these, perhaps, ill-guarded, ill-directed, ill-instructed souls germs of evil, which have flourished, and which offer a formidable resistance to the will of a superior.

It would seem at first as if you had only to second your religious to send them onward in that path which leads to heaven. Alas, there are some who will not go forward and who will even hinder the progress of the others !

“ However carefully we choose subjects,” says St. Chantal, “ God, to exercise the virtue of the others, and, we may add, for the sanctification of superiors, always permits that there be some ill-disposed religious in every House.”

If a good superior were always flattered, if he were styled an angel, a saint, he might end by believing all that was said of him, and look with complacency upon his fine qualities ; but God, who loves him, provides against this evil by permitting erring, frivolous, or indiscreet souls to utter a cruel word, which pierces his heart

and forces him to remember that he is still a creature and very sensitive.

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The following is a painful enumeration to write, but necessary for the guidance of a superior.

Among the religious confided to your care you will find :

The weak, whom you must spare ;

The rash, whom you must restrain and consequently offend ;

The sad, whom you must cheer ;

The timid, whom you must encourage ;

The rude, whom you must soften ;

The presumptuous, whom you must humble ;

The cowardly, whom you must stimulate ;

The lukewarm, whom you must rouse ;

The inconstant, whom you must confirm ;

The audacious, whom you must repress.

You will find obstinate souls, upon whom all your kindness will be lost. This obstinacy is all the more injurious to the Community and painful to a superior, that it fastens upon some special devotion. It is not rare to find in a Community a religious who believes himself called to some-

thing higher than the others,—this is either the result of pride or obliquity of mind. Oh! what annoyance these deluded souls give a superior!

They do not see that this greater sanctity to which God calls them consists particularly in deep humility, great condescension, a great spirit of submission, great kindness to others, above all, in great love for the common life, and in a marked inclination to live unknown, hidden, and even despised; and generally these little souls, who have read books beyond their comprehension, openly criticise their superior and their confessor, find that the Community needs to be reformed, desire to introduce extraordinary mortifications, pose as victims, take scandal at the mirth of the recreations, talk in a grand way of renouncement and sacrifice.

What courage, energy, patience, what immense charity and tact a poor superior needs with such souls!

You will find ill-balanced characters, naturally contrary and inclined to find fault with everything. Nothing will change them, and do what you will, your conduct will never satisfy them. They are

nct opposed to you, precisely, but to all authority, nor are they wholly conscious of their systematic and constant opposition. Every act of the superior is a subject of criticism for them.

What is to be done with characters like these, which never should have been admitted, which are in the Community, however, and for life? We must pray for them, bear with them, merit through them.

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When you have but one isolated religious of this kind to struggle against, the duty will be painful, no doubt, but as long as you can keep him apart from the others, as long as you can be satisfied that his influence is not injurious, be at peace, leave him even a little behind, sometimes, and continue onward with the others.

But sometimes obstacles which have silently grown, fostered by numbers of the religious, suddenly loom before a superior under the form of abuses, or the still more terrible form of cabals or parties.

Here are obstacles which paralyze all a superior's efforts for good, and to remove

or conquer them requires a great spirit of God and rare firmness of soul.

Let us rapidly consider

### *I. Abuses.*

Whence do they come? Who began to introduce them? How were they introduced and propagated?

If you can satisfy yourself on these points the remedy will be easy; unfortunately abuses grow slowly, and we only perceive them when they have effected their mischief.

The principal causes of abuses, particularly in Communities of women, are the following:

The multiplicity of confessors.

Frequenting the parlor.

Neglect of punctuality.

Neglect of silence.

Tolerating particular friendships.

The introduction of too much comfort at the expense of holy poverty.

See what the nature of the abuse is; if it is recent, make a generous appeal or a better observance of the Rule, simply cut off the manifest cause, redouble your own

fidelity in giving good example, and, if you are ever so little esteemed and loved, you will soon banish these abuses, which have not had time to take deep root in the Community.

If the abuses are of long standing, you have need to be patient and prudent.

Patience itself is often prudence—"Go softly to work," St. Francis de Sales writes, "and move only with leaden feet."

Here are some practical counsels concerning these evils :

Avoid directly attacking the abuses, but see that silence is better observed, and the prayers better said. If you can restore or preserve the piety of erring souls, everything is saved.

Say little, do not complain too openly, and pray a great deal.

Strive to gain the most influential without their knowledge : some mark of interest or confidence, a special charge, may soften and win them ; even ask their advice in the direction of the House.

Let there be few general reproofs in public ; they only irritate ; be very kind in administering a private reproof.

Do not let your intention to combat an

abuse be seen; do not even speak of it. Cut off quietly and imperceptibly the exterior causes, and for this purpose ask the support of your ecclesiastic superiors.

If possible, let one of the sermons of the monthly retreat or of some other occasion touch incidentally upon the point of reform;—but it needs to be done with great tact.

Keep your younger religious more about you, that they may not be influenced by others.

Ask some general Communion for your intention, and ask prayers particularly of those whom you know are most pleasing to God.

God is the great Healer, and time is His most useful minister.

## *II. Cabals.*

Cabals or parties are one of the greatest calamities of a Community; only very energetic measures sometimes will repress them, and a superior in these cases is powerless alone, he must call in the support of ecclesiastic authority.

Pray God that, while you are in office, no



cabals may be formed in the Community.

It is almost impossible to write practical counsels on this subject. We shall only tell you : “ Pray much, do not allow yourself to be discouraged. Abandon yourself entirely to your ecclesiastic superiors, and be ready to make any sacrifice, even to be deposed, if God requires it.”

Frequently the only object of these cabals is to obtain the deposition of a superior. Ah ! my dear religious, this is one of your rudest trials ! Certainly, you should not yield to a faction, but neither must you resist a counsel delicately conveyed to you by those in authority over you ; be prepared to understand the slightest intimation given you, and pray fervently for your enemies.

Yes, your enemies ; God will permit that you have them. Praise Him if you are not directly the culpable cause of these revolts.

“ Your religious,” says P. Valuy, “ will dislike you for very trifling reasons, and will take every means to bring about your resignation or your deposition.”

To show that you have lost their confidence, they will avoid speaking to you,

they will refuse you any manifestation of conscience, they will fly from your door, and they will no longer care for your permissions. Whatever your conduct, they will take it unkindly; they will censure you equally, whether you are silent or whether you speak.

Your most innocent actions will be misinterpreted; they will accuse you of all the disorder which they have created to ruin you; verbal and written denunciations will be daily made to your superiors.

Pray, humble yourself, calmly defend yourself, show the truth without making any personal accusations, and await God's justice.

All superiors have experienced this trial more or less. St. Teresa was criticised more than you ever will be, and was not the conduct of Jesus Himself censured? "The best superior," an author has said, "is a soul that is ever on the cross,"

## CHAPTER FIFTH.

### The Means to be Employed.

You see yours is a difficult, let us even say, an heroic work. Ah! said a newly elected superior, I had only my own soul to govern for fifteen years, and I could not keep it in peace a week at a time; what will it be when I have forty souls, whom I do not know, and all differing in character?

*God will be with you*, she was told. This, in fact, is the only answer which can calm this very natural apprehension and fear.

Therefore three means of success are offered you in the work of sanctifying your Community:

1. Union with God.
2. The study of your obligations.
3. The practice of virtues.

#### First. Union with God.

God, in a measure, needs you for the

sanctification of the Community at the head of which He has placed you.

A religious Community is an assembly of souls whom God loves more than others, whom He has wrested from the world to make exclusively His own, whom He specially destines to perform on earth the office of the angels in heaven; it is an assembly in the midst of which He takes His delight, and in favor of which He is ever ready to renew all His miracles of goodness and mercy.

This assembly needed a guide, a pastor, a parent, and God chose you; but as you are a creature imperfect, inconstant, with your own weaknesses, your own passions, inclined by nature to evil and liable to lead others to evil, He is bound to help you if you correspond to His grace.

Now, to secure God's assistance and keep Him near you, you must :

1. Keep yourself in great purity of soul by gravely, sincerely, and faithfully frequenting the sacrament of penance, by devout celebration of the Holy Sacrifice, if you are in orders, or by an almost daily reception of the Holy Eucharist. Yes, daily Communion is almost a necessity for you, and

you are bound to make yourself worthy of it and to appreciate it.

If your confessor does not think to grant it you, humbly ask for it ; if, for reasons which certainly will always be wise, and which you have not to discuss, he refuses it, submit without argument—you are not yet worthy of this favor—and beseech God to make you more virtuous. \*

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\* In Communities of women the superior should never authorize herself or her religious to receive Communion more frequently than the Rule prescribes, without the permission of the confessor.

According to a decree of Pope Innocent XI. of the 12th of February, 1670, the confessor alone has the right to permit Communion.

The Prioress of the Carmelites of Mexico, in 1843, asked the Roman Congregation if she could allow her religious to receive Communion more frequently than the Rule prescribed. She was told she could, provided the religious obtained permission from the confessor, whose decision should serve as a rule. The superior, however, in exceptional cases, for a serious and urgent necessity, as upon the death of a near relative of a religious, or of a signal benefactor of the Community, or when a bishop or some ecclesiastical dignitary says Mass, may grant an extra Communion ; upon these and similar occasions the superior takes the confessor's permission for granted and favorably interprets his intention, but under no circumstances may a superior permit a religious a Communion refused by the confessor.—*P. Meynard.*

Though superiors may not on their own authority authorize a religious to receive Communion, they may refuse a Communion granted by the confessor if the religious who asks it is guilty of a grave fault, particularly when it has been an occasion of scandal to the Community.

As we are speaking of a superior's right to refuse Communion, we shall mention a few other rights which are his.

1. He may dispense, within the limits prescribed by the

And in each Communion, after adoring Jesus in your heart, after thanking Him for coming to you, keep yourself humbly, very humbly, at His feet, and ask grace and strength for the day before you. Oh! how many graces a superior requires each day!

Graces of light,—has he not to guide, reprove, and bring back his religious?

Graces of discretion,—does he not need to have Jesus ever on his lips, that he may recognize when to speak and the many occasions when he must be silent?

Graces of sweetness, graces of patience, graces of strength, graces of constancy, graces of peace, graces of humility. Do you not feel that you need all these graces, and that you need them every day?

At each Communion, also, speak to Jesus of all your religious, of those particularly

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Constitutions, the obligations of the Rule which do not concern the vows, when he conscientiously believes it will be for the general good of the Community or of individuals.

2. He may grant permissions relative to the vows of religion in all cases where he is authorized by the Constitutions, but he can do nothing in regard to the vows themselves. Only the Church has the power of dispensing these, and she only delegates it to those who have the right of jurisdiction.

3. A superior may grant dispensation from the abstinence and fast imposed by the Rule, but in no way from the fast and abstinence prescribed by the Church.

who give you any anxiety ; recommend them all, particularly the latter, to God's tender love.

Do not leave the chapel without humbly prostrating yourself before Our Lord and asking His blessing.

2. You should love meditation, which in your case has a most special end. It is your hour of audience with God, during which He instructs you in your duties, gives you His orders, and qualifies you for His service.

Then, never omit your meditation ; the day you culpably omit it will rarely pass without some disorder.

When you are really unable to make your meditation, be at peace. St. Chantal asked St. Francis de Sales at the end of a day, when the prelate had been very busy, if he had been able to make his meditation. —“No,” the Saint replied, “but I did what was equal to it.”

That which is equal to a meditation omitted because of an imperious duty or a charitable office is the presence of God. “I have made a temple of my soul,” says the amiable St. Francis again, “and I live there with my good Master.”

“Are you long without thinking of God?” St. Chantal naively asked him.

“Sometimes nearly a quarter of an hour,” he replied, still more naively.

How could souls thus united to God fail to always do God’s work?

“It is the habit of good superiors,” says St. Gregory, “when embarrassed concerning difficult or doubtful questions, to recollect themselves in God, and go before the Blessed Sacrament; here they ask counsel and light and arrange everything with God before treating with men.”

“In all things,” says St. Bernard, “rely more on prayer and meditation than upon the light and labor of men.”

“Prayer,” says St. Vincent of Paul. “is the source of good counsels; the Eucharist is the oracle of good thoughts.”

O superiors, pray, then, and approach the holy Table often, and God with His grace and light will be always with you and will cause all that you do to turn to His glory.”

“Talents, human prudence, how weak and impotent ye are!” exclaims the Ven. Mère Rivier. “For my part, I only rely on my prayers and my visits to the Blessed



Sacrament. I would not dare to give an instruction without preparing it with prayer, nor even advice or an admonition without praying over it."

Many holy superiors read before the Blessed Sacrament the letters they receive concerning the affairs of their House, make their plans for the New Year before the Blessed Sacrament. Jesus is their superior; they do nothing without His consent, without being very sure that their will is united to His.

An obstacle to this union are visits to the parlor prolonged without necessity; the pleasure of talking with people of the world, particularly if they are rich, amiable, and of elevated station.

Excessive zeal for the salvation of souls not confided to your care, direction conveyed in letters, verbal counsels, etc. \*

Too active zeal for your personal sanctification, which makes you seek outside your House direction and counsel of priests and religious enjoying a certain reputa-

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\* Oh! how wise it is to confine ourselves to our work, and not to extend our sphere of action beyond the circle of our obligations! How many superiors will be severely censured by God for having given themselves to works of zeal outside their Community, to the neglect of many things about them!

tion. This usually results in great loss of time, disgust for the direction traced for you by obedience, and thoughts of self-love, which cause you to believe yourself called to extraordinary ways.

3. You should pray, and pray much, that God may not withdraw from you because of your infidelities, that He may continually grant you new light, and that He may turn from your children the occasions of sin which could overcome them.

A superior should, like Moses, keep his hands unceasingly raised in supplication to God to draw down the divine mercy upon the souls he directs, and to beseech God to preserve them from the snares of the Evil One.

Ah! if during one hour only you could see the temptations with which the Evil One tries to lead your children into sin, how fervently you would pray for them! At the present moment one of your poor children is tempted to yield to discouragement, another to pride, another to sensuality. The Evil One is about to place before the eyes of this one an object which will soil his imagination, to bring to the ears of that one a flattering word, which

will trouble him during prayer, to recall to another moving memories of home. Yes, pray, pray for them! Write a list of your children, and from time to time read it before the Blessed Sacrament, and as you utter each name, say, "Jesus, have mercy on him!"

Here is a prayer which you may offer in your visit to the Blessed Sacrament:

"Lord, Thou who hast placed me over others in the position of superior, abandon me not at a post so dangerous, but send me Thy divine wisdom, that it may be with me, that it may labor with me, and that it may teach me what is pleasing in Thy eyes.

"Lord, I recognize that I am unworthy of the place I occupy, having of myself no light, nor strength, nor virtue, nor necessary talent, but I rely upon Thy divine assistance.

"Convinced that Thou hast not placed me in this position for my perdition, but rather that I may contribute to increase Thy glory by effecting my salvation and that of my religious, I hope that Thou wilt Thyself complete the work Thou hast begun.

“Inspire me, enlighten me, guide me, be near me when I act, be with me when I speak !

“Lord, give me deep humility, which will never permit me to despise my inferiors, nor to attribute to myself the good I may see about me.

“Give me ardent, tender, ingenious, inexhaustible charity, which will embrace all my religious and make me endeavor to procure them in abundance all the spiritual and temporal solace they may need.

“Grant me a pure, constant, wise zeal in maintaining the Rule, correcting abuses, in reviving the ancient holy practices of our founders.

“Grant me the grace and courage I need to awaken the lukewarm, to stimulate the slothful, to bring back the erring, to redouble the ardor of the fervent.

“Finally, O my God, since I am superior only by Thy command, permit me to humbly ask Thee to be Thyself the superior of this Community and to govern it through my ministry as a father governs his family and a shepherd his flock. Amen.”

“I am never before the Blessed Sacrament” a superior wrote, “without thinking of my dear daughters. I see them in the midst of their numerous, difficult, and fatiguing labors, and I say to Our Lord:

“O my great and amiable Master! grant, I beseech Thee, that among the souls confided to me and whom I love so tenderly there may be found none who labor for any other intention than to please Thee, that at the Last Day they may not, after laboring diligently, appear before Thee with empty hands.’

“My poor children! When I think that this may be the case with some of you, it rends my heart.”

Be not satisfied with prayer alone, particularly when your heart is grieved by the misconduct of a religious, by his obstinacy, his irregularity, by the harm he is doing among your children; humble yourself before God as you recall the needs of this poor soul.

“Alas! who can say positively,” writes a man of experience, “that we are in no way responsible for the evil we lament? Directly, certainly not, but indirectly?—Here, in

truth, is a whole examination of conscience to be made. What was our charity in our relations with this soul, our patience, our prudence? I do not know why I am inclined to believe that nine times out of ten in lamentable instances we poor superiors are not wholly blameless in regard to the great miseries we deplore in our Communities.

“Then let us humble ourselves, without exaggerating our fault, if fault there be; but let us abase ourselves sincerely before God and recognize with simplicity that, if our prayers had been more fervent, our thoughts less human and more supernatural, our guidance wiser, we might have averted much which we now grieve to see about us.”

Let not these thoughts dishearten you, however; rather let them make you seek to be more united with Jesus, with Jesus in the Sacrament of the Altar, who also sees indifferent, culpable, rebellious souls about Him, and continually offers Himself to His Father a victim of expiation for their conversion.

Ah! what a salutary and what a useful thought is that which leads a superior to

offer himself after the example of Jesus, a victim for his Community. \*

4. If you have the happiness of having near you a wise, prudent, zealous religious, sincerely attached to you, and who is willing at your request to warn you of your faults, and, without naming individuals, to inform you of the complaints which your course may excite, you will be very fortunate.

We found the following note written by a superior to one of her religious :

“ My very dear daughter : I am authorized by the confessor to pray you to fulfil toward me the office of admonitress, and even to impose this duty upon you in virtue of holy love. I beseech you, then, my very dear daughter, to reprove me for all my faults. You will do it through charity, for the good of my soul and that of the Congregation. I promise, on my part, to render this duty as little painful to you as possible, by receiving your reproofs in good part and by endeavoring to amend. Should I fail in this, I will punish myself so effectually that I shall not often repeat the

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\* We recommend you to read P. Giraud's excellent work: *Immolation et charité dans le gouvernement des âmes,*

offence. In gratitude for the good service you will render me I promise to offer a Communion for you every month and to say a prayer for you each time you admonish me. Keep this note, that you may show it to me if it should ever be necessary."

5. Behold God in the confessor charged with your conscience, and in your prayers frequently ask God to make him very holy and very interior.

Generally we do not pray sufficiently for confessors. Let all intercourse with him, even your exterior relations, be animated by a spirit of faith. Open your heart to him with the candor of a child; forget at his feet that you are superior, and pray him sometimes not to spare you.

Never allow yourself to utter any complaint concerning him in the presence of your religious, and punish severely any railery or criticism; it is better still never to speak of the confessor at recreation.

If you think you cannot submit to his decisions in regard to the Community, do not dispute them, but seek counsel of your ecclesiastic superior or the confessor extraordinary, being very careful at the same time to refrain from all censure.



Doubtless, the confessor is not infallible, but his experience, his familiarity with the wants of the Community, his particular knowledge and virtue, give him an authority which another, a stranger to the Community, will with difficulty acquire.

**Second. The Study of the Obligations of your Office.**

God does not do everything in the work of souls: as He wishes to award us a recompense He requires that we merit it by the co-operation of our own efforts.

*I. Seek to acquire the Knowledge your Position Requires.*

This knowledge of your obligations is only acquired by study aided by prayer, reflection, and the counsels of persons of more experience.

We have suggested the books necessary for you in preparing the instructions you address to your children; here are others specially for you, and which you should read through at least every two years: *Du Gouvernement des Communautés Religieuses,*

by P. Valuy. *Le Guide des Supérieures*, by Madame Fleuret. *Quel est le Meilleur des Gouvernements, le rigoureux ou le doux*, by P. Binet. *Réponses canoniques et pratiques sur le gouvernement et les principaux devoirs des religieuses à vœux simple*, by P. André Marie Meynard, Dominican. This book is one of the most complete and practical, and may take the place of many others. It answers all the questions which arise in the government of religious Houses.

*Des Communautés Religieuses à vœux simples, législation canonique et civile*, by l'Abbé Craisson, former vicar-general of Valence.

The letters of St. Chantal, of St. Francis de Sales, The counsels of St. Teresa, *Les Oeuvres Spirituelles*, by Mgr. Chaffoy, Bishop of Nîmes, will afford you most useful counsels. Letters written by the founders of Orders to superiors enter into a multitude of details which a treatise cannot give.

Read a chapter of this *Little Book of Superiors* at each of your monthly retreats; you will thus peruse it with profit twice a year, and you will find in it the most useful teachings of the saints.

You will find in the Third Book of "The Knowledge and Love of God," by P. Saint-Jure, pages filled with the wisest counsels. See particularly, in chapter fifth, *Advice to those in charge of souls*, the portrait which this religious proposes to superiors as a model ; it is that of God Himself.

"Imitate," he says, "God's manner of dealing with men :

1. "He governs them for the most sublime and pure ends : His glory and their own good.

2. "He governs them with admirable prudence and deliberation ; without precipitation in anything.

3. "With strength and constancy of execution.

4. "With equity, wronging no one.

5. "With gentleness and sweetness, hearing all without repelling any one, and as long as they desire ; accommodating Himself to their nature, weighing their strength, fortifying the weak, consoling the desolate, soothing them in their trials, praising and rewarding them when they have done well.

6. "Extending His care to all, without forgetting the least among them ; constantly

providing for all, untiringly, sweetly and gently, without forcing anything.

7. "Enduring with invincible patience an almost infinite number of enormous outrages.

8. "Waiting with longanimity until sinners repent of their faults, and helping them to repent by means of His inspirations and His graces.

9. "If He must punish, chastising them as a father in this life, and always in view of their salvation. Every superior should study this divine pattern, and if, after having done what he could, he finds subjects who are discontented, and who murmur, let him remember that there is no government in the world of which there is more complaint than of God's."

Beware of making the study of these books purely speculative ; as you read, take notes of the counsels which you need, adding for their practical application what your experience and knowledge of your religious teaches you is more useful.

The wisest counsels are never perfectly adapted to every House. It does not suffice to read, know, and comprehend all these things ; they must be applied, and in this

application of a general counsel to a particular case a superior's fitness is revealed.

*II. Endeavor to learn the Character of your Religious.*

The study of books is not sufficient ; and as the greatest obstacles in your mission spring from the diversity of character among your religious, you should devote yourself to learning and directing these various characters.

Do not seek to change characters, you will never do it ; devote yourself to suppressing what is faulty in each, and try to lead your little family to heaven, suffering each religious to preserve his individuality.

A fault of over-zealous or inexperienced superiors is to wish that all the religious should feel very much as they do on different subjects, should even have the same devotion, should like what they like, and feel the same aversion for whatever they dislike.

Be not more exacting than the good God, who opens heaven to all characters, and only closes it to sin.

We shall not enter into detail upon the different characters founded on tempera-

ment, the melancholy, the phlegmatic, the sanguine, the choleric, and which count for much in the practice of virtue.

The books we have mentioned give you these details, more curious and interesting, perhaps, than really useful.

Would you know a very simple means of learning the characters of your children? Expand their hearts. Oh! how little trouble you will then have in reading all that passes therein!

Two things particularly expand hearts, the happiness with which we surround them, and the confidence we manifest in them.

1. To afford happiness to others is difficult sometimes; but if you are always contented and happy yourself, if you let your religious understand that they make you happy, if, above all, you remain united with God, the joy of your soul will soon pass into the souls of your religious and expand them.\*

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\* When God is with us He grants to the most insignificant trifles the happiest results.

We read in the life of Mère Pauline de Faillonnet that at her first visit to a certain Community all the religious at the evening recreation were cold and silent and, with down-cast eyes, met all her advances with simply "yes," or "no." What does she do to break this solemn formality and induce

2. To inspire confidence is more easy; you have only to show much confidence yourself. For example, you have the right to open letters addressed to your religious; when you recognize the handwriting of a father or mother, or when you know that the letter is from a former director, who has been God's instrument in the vocation of the religious to whom it is addressed, give it with the seal unbroken, and say, with a kindly smile, read it all to yourself.

Sometimes send without reading a letter addressed to a mother, which a religious brings you in a filial spirit; seal it at once,

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her daughters to treat her as their mother? She seizes a plate of nuts on the table and empties it into her apron, then, taking a handful, she extends her closed hand to one of the religious, saying gaily: "Odd, or even, the number in my hand? Guess!" The religious answered timidly, and the superior exclaims, after counting them, "you have won, daughter, take them." "It is your turn," she continues, turning to another religious; this one, a little re-assured, guesses and loses. "Ah! you have lost;" she exclaims, with a merry laugh, "now pay me, I always pay when I lose." The play continued until every countenance brightened, and a general merriment replaced the gloom which prevailed at the beginning of the recreation, and the superior was able to assure herself the next day that the fear they felt on her arrival had vanished.

On another occasion, as she was setting out to visit another Community, whom she knew to be also somewhat in awe of her, she filled her trunk with a number of pretty little gifts, which had been recently given her on her feast. When she arrived at the House she asked to be left alone, and then hid them in different parts of the room and furni-

saying affectionately : You at least told your mother you loved her very much ?

You risk nothing by this ; and little by little you will learn what passes in these souls, made happy by your confidence, much better than if you had read all their letters.

A month will suffice,—(except in case of great hypocrisy, which is hardly probable) to enable you to know your young religious. At the age at which postulants enter, and during the novitiate, one has not learned to dissimulate, and the exterior manner and bearing readily reveal the mind and heart. *Young religious* are not difficult to read. In regard to the *older ones*, neglect no indications which may enlighten you, but, at

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ture. After this she presided at the evening meal, and when the signal for recreation was given, her face brightened, and she told them of the presents she had brought ; “ but those who want them must look for them.” she added gaily. “ They are hidden all about here, even in my pockets, where you will find the finest.” Immediately every one starts in quest of the gifts ; wardrobes, shelves, drawers, every corner, and even the good mother’s effects, are carefully searched. One religious, who a moment before would hardly raise her eyes to the superior’s face, boldly searches her cloak and the various pockets of her dress. The discovery of each object is followed by a merry peal of laughter, and the mother, happier than the children, rejoices at sight of their child-like freedom with her.

Here again she attained her object : the hearts of her children were no longer closed to her by prejudice and fear.



the same time, beware of judging hastily.  
Here is what you may perceive:

*Faults of the Mind.*

Restless,  
Curious,  
Distrustful,  
Flattering,  
Suspicious,  
Presumptuous,  
Indocile,  
Choleric,  
Ill-balanced,  
Touchy,  
Mocking,  
Intriguing.

*Faults of the Heart.*

Dissimulating,  
Bitter,  
Wicked,  
Uncompassionate,  
Unaffectionate,  
Selfish,  
Rancorous,  
Easily wounded,  
Inclined to antipathies,  
Insincere,  
Cowardly.

*Qualities of the Mind.*

Upright.  
Frank,  
Opposed to all exaggeration,  
Straightforward,  
Artless,  
Devoted to its duties,  
Disinclined to think evil,  
Little curious,  
Attentive,  
Patient,  
Sincere.

*Qualities of the Heart.*

Frank and open,  
Sweet,  
Good,  
Forgiving,  
Obliging,  
Grateful,  
Devoted,  
Inclined to piety,  
Slow to resent slights,  
True,  
Courageous.

With a little experience, a little tact, a great deal of good sense, and a great love of good, a superior may extract virtues from

all faults, or, better still, almost convert them into virtues, just as commendable qualities may be perverted and become in the future a source of anxiety.

It is impossible to give you in detail the means you should adopt to compass this end. Tact, humanly speaking, is one, and another, supernaturally speaking, is interior light, which suddenly reveals these means to us, but only on condition that we are united with God.

### **Third. The Practice of Virtues.**

It will not suffice for you to be virtuous, your virtue must also be manifest to all.

We have already spoken of the good example you owe, of the fundamental virtues you should practise ; we shall treat of three, which are no doubt included in those already mentioned, but which should be more particularly prominent in you.

To do good you must have the reputation :

1. Of being devoted to the sick.
2. Of being in no way distinguished from the others, granting yourself no dispensations.
3. Of laboring diligently.

*I. Of Being Devoted to the Sick.*

1. The human heart, particularly a woman's, is instinctively and powerfully drawn to every creature that suffers. It seeks to relieve it, and if it cannot do this, it pities, protects, and defends it.

If you would win the affection of your Community, and this you should desire to do, for without affection you will not lead them to good, love your sick children, lavish every care upon them, visit them frequently, see for yourself that your orders and those of the physician are faithfully carried out.

At the bedside of the sick must you particularly show yourself a father, loving them more and more tenderly in proportion to their sufferings.

The lives of the saints are filled with traits of their kindness to the suffering and the minute and devoted attentions which indicate love.

They beheld Jesus Christ in their sick children ; they knew that the sick drew God's blessing upon a House, and they lovingly complained when they had none. "Oh ! for at least one sufferer," said a

saint, "one whose sufferings would not be so extreme as to rend my heart, but who would give me an occasion to merit by the practice of patience, and would draw down God's mercy upon the Community!"

"You are condemned to repose, my dear child," Mère Faillonnet wrote one of her sick children; "beware of imagining that you have become useless to us; God afflicts you, He restricts you to suffering and prayer, that is, He places in your hands the greatest interests of our dear Congregation; for when He blesses our works He has less regard to those among us *who labor* than to *those who suffer in a spirit of prayer and love.*

"Oh! sweet and salutary union of the religious life, where all is in common; where the prayers and weary labors of the many are rendered fruitful by the prayers and sufferings of the few! Understand this, my child; relish the part assigned you; you see, it is very beautiful for you and for us."

St. Ignatius Loyola always wished that he should be the first one informed of the indisposition of a religious; it was his custom to go through the infirmary several times during the night, and several times

a day; he informed himself whether the infirmarian had faithfully carried out the doctor's prescriptions. When he saw a sick man sad, or dwelling upon his sufferings, he sent for the most skilful musicians among the novices to divert the patient with the singing of canticles. In an illness of his own he dispensed himself from everything but his solicitude for the infirmary.

With such sentiments a superior could not but win the love of his religious and bring God's blessing upon himself.

2. Here, according to an ascetic author, are the faults with which a superior may have to reproach himself in regard to the sick: Deferring calling in a physician; showing that he visits the infirmary reluctantly; appearing distressed at the number of sick in the House; refusing or deferring under various pretexts to furnish the remedies or special nourishment prescribed by the physician, or only granting them ungraciously; substituting for what has been prescribed remedies and food which are less expensive and also less efficacious; adroitly persuading the physician to order only the latter, though he

deems the others safer ; prejudicing him with the idea that a patient is whimsical, exaggerates his ills, is slothful ; complaining of the expenses occasioned by illness ; repeatedly intimating that the prolonged convalescence of the sick is due to their own want of energy ; showing only an uncheerful and weary countenance to the sick ; causing them to feel, at least indirectly, that they are a burden to the Community ; refusing them the spiritual succor they ask, under pretext of inconvenience ; holy Communion, for example, though the confessor has permitted it, \* etc. Here, finally, are the counsels given by St. Leonard of Port-Maurice.

1. Behold Our Lord in your sick and

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\* One is permitted, according to the Roman Ritual, to receive the Holy Viaticum several times in the same illness, even without being fasting. An interval of six or seven days is sufficient to permit its being brought again to the sick, and some of the Doctors, St. Liguori among others, do not even require so long an interval. According to these theologians it may be brought, particularly in a House where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved, every two or three days to a religious who has been accustomed to receive frequently.

With still less reason should we refuse it once a week to an infirm or sick religious who can fast, and who asks to receive Our Lord.

Do nothing, moreover, without the assent of the chaplain of the House, with whom you must always live in peace, whatever sacrifices it may cost you.

infirm religious; hear Him inviting you to care for Him and to visit Him.

When you feel any repugnance, weariness, or fatigue, say to yourself: I must go; it is Jesus who lies on that sick-bed, and who deigns to receive my attentions.

This truth, founded on the words of the Gospel, will encourage you and make you zealously insist that everything about the sick be neat, abundant, and even attractive.

2. Never tax a religious with exaggerating his ailments; real or imaginary, leave them to the judgment of the physician and the sick person's conscience; do your duty devotedly; your kindness will end by overcoming the sickness, and will win you the esteem of all.

3. Always visit your sick religious with a cheerful countenance, never reproach them with the cause of their illness, and recommend yourself to their prayers. The prayers of a pious sufferer! Oh! if you knew how willingly God hears them! "I feel for you," St. Francis de Sales writes, "a special reverence, dear sufferer, as a creature visited by God, clothed with His livery, and become specially His spouse."

“God forbid,” says Mgr. Plantier, “that we should counsel you to surround your Sisters with delicate or rather luxurious care ; the foundation of the life of a religious must be austere. But the regimen may be severe without being murderous. If your religious are of feeble constitutions, you must strengthen them ; if they are robust, you must be careful not to impoverish or ruin them by making them suffer through an exaggerated principle of economy or mortification.”

Nor should you allow your companions to ruin their health themselves through excessive zeal or penance.

Do not forget that, if the body must be a slave, it is a slave necessary to till the field which the Father of the family has confided to you to cultivate. If your religious, through excessive zeal or mortification, deny themselves to the detriment of their health, reprove them firmly, and oblige them to accept all the indulgence and all the remedies you think necessary for them.

Mother Mary S. François used to say to the cook : “It is a duty of conscience with you to care for the daily fare of the Community. It is infinitely better that the



sisters eat in the refectory than that they languish in the infirmary. Know also that many of them have been accustomed to a generous diet and delicacies, and these are condemned to accept the poor food, just as you prepare it for them; if, then, through any negligence of yours, the dishes are not properly and cleanly prepared, you expose them to long for the fleshpots of Egypt, which they have so generously abandoned.”

The historian of this same superior tells us that the Reverend Mother, on this principle, frequently went herself to inspect the dinuer in preparation on the range; she uncovered dish after dish, tasted the soup, added the necessary seasoning, satisfied herself that the meat was properly cooked, and repeated her instructions on the subject to the cook.

“These seem very trifling things to occupy one,” said another superior, “and yet, let the health of the Community suffer, and it affects everything in the House: office is no longer said with proper dignity and solemnity, and the rule itself is not properly observed. That is why, on my way to the chapel, I frequently stop in the

kitchen, to see that everything is cleanly and properly prepared. \*

*II. Let there be no Distinction between you and your Religious.*

Outside your functions as superior, which require some distinction, and the liberty necessary to fulfil them, let there be no other difference between you and the other religious.

The dignity of your office is not inherent in your nature; when it is taken from you, you will return again to the simple religious you were before you were invested with it; then remain always and in all things a religious.

Thus, in regard *to the food*, follow the same regimen as the Community, and, if your health is delicate, do not permit any more indulgence for yourself than you permit others.

A superior does not need to *command* services, to be better cared for than the rest of the Community; there are always relig-

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\* We recommend to you our *Livre des Gardes-Malades*, which you will find very useful, and we would like to see it in the hands of every religious charged with the infirmary.

ious who, through zeal, or a spirit of faith, or affection, sometimes also through a desire to flatter, or to attract attention, will overwhelm him with attentions ; repel them gently, and only accept what is necessary. \*

If any of the religious are ill at the same time with you, insist that they be equally well cared for, and even served before you. If you see that they are neglected, send them a portion of what is served to you.

*In regard to clothing*, observe the same religious poverty ; do not take advantage of your position to remake, complete, or increase your wardrobe ; let the Sister charged with the vestry apportion your linen as she does that of the others.

Do not imagine that you can keep the Community in ignorance of what you have done specially for you ; the very religious

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\* A religious charged with supplying the table used to choose the finest fruits the House afforded for Mère Emilie. As soon as Mère Emilie perceived this she warned the religious not to do it, but the latter, seeing in her superior's words only a desire of mortification, made no scruple of disobeying. The good mother, then, to show her that she was serious, said to her : " Sister, until further orders you will put at your own place the fine fruit you reserve for me, and you will eat it before all the Community." The lesson was a good one. The religious was so mortified that she came to the superior, with tears in her eyes, to ask pardon and to promise that she would not repeat her offence.

who help you will be the first to reveal it sooner or later.

*In regard to your cell*, the same furniture, the same bedding. Have a few extra chairs, if it is the custom to receive your religious in your cell, a few articles for the reception of documents, papers, and other things pertaining to your office ; but nothing for your special use, or which savors of luxury or sensuality.

*In regard to the Rule*, the same scrupulous observance ; it is no more excusable in you than in any one else to break silence unnecessarily, or to be late at an exercise. These things rest with your own conscience, and you must beware of accepting as reasons what are only pretexts.

*In regard to recreation*, be present as frequently as possible ; you will learn to know your religious at recreation better than anywhere else.

Recreation is a very influential exercise in a religious House, and it should be the object of special care on the part of the superior.

There is no place where he will more readily discover the symptoms which indicate the health or illness of his Community.

How many little vexations, which would have rankled in hearts and occasioned many troubles, are dissipated at a pleasant recreation. Then, do not fail to be present at the recreations!

Speak a little less than your Sisters, but be affable with all; mingle a little in their amusements; above all, let them amuse themselves with perfect liberty before you. Preserve your own dignity, but show that you are glad to see them as children before you. \* Do not be shocked by any childishness, or thoughtlessness, but, while continuing to be charitable, amiable, pleasant, be inexorable towards detraction and railery; an emphatic reproof, a word of warning uttered with a smile, will frequently arrest ill-natured remarks.

### *III. Labor Diligently.*

One of the drawbacks of the office of a

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\* Accept with simplicity and good grace the efforts of your religious to celebrate your feast-day or the anniversary of your superiorship.

Imitate the holy superior who used to say: "I have neither eyes nor ears on these days; my dear children must be allowed to believe that they give me an agreeable surprise. Besides, it is not to me," she humbly added, "but to my office, that these honors are paid. Therefore I have not the least pain in receiving them, and I have never been tempted to take to myself the smallest portion of them."

superior is that it deprives one of the habit of regular and continuous labor.

One is so frequently interrupted by religious, by strangers, and so absorbed by the material cares of the House and the duties of direction, that frequently we are unable for several months to undertake any kind of work, and when we have a little leisure, a certain lassitude tempts us to be idle.

Before God this is excusable in us, but may it not be a cause of disedification to your religious, particularly to the lay-Brothers or lay-Sisters, who are all day long absorbed in manual labor, and who, seeing you coming and going with your hands empty, are far from realizing your mental labor or your cares ; they doubtless think you very fortunate to have nothing to do, only to command. Consider these ignorant minds, and try to edify them by sometimes busy-ing yourself like them, and even by assist-ing them. We read the following in the life of a holy superior : “When our Mother was in the kitchen, if she saw that one of the Sisters was pressed with work, she would seize a knife and peel the carrots and potatoes ; and when the dinner

was well on its way, she would say to the cook, profit of my being here if you wish to go and take a little rest or go to the chapel. Then, when everything was nearly ready, she would say to the sisters : “ Well, now I’ll go to my prayers ; I shall be at rest, because the dinner for the Community is well prepared.” \*

Here are some practical counsels :

1. Avoid any appearance of eager haste as you go back and forth in your necessary surveillance. This bustling manner indicates a soul which is not self-possessed, and which is pre-occupied, not occupied.

2. Do not be too frequently among your religious at work to observe or talk to them ; they may say, he would do better to help us. Then, too, your presence constrains them ; they imagine that you have come to watch them.

3. Help your religious as much as possible. St. Magdalene of Pazzi went some-

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\* “ You complain,” says St. Liguori, “ that your lay-Sisters become disobedient, proud, and are without devotion ; but do you give them time to make meditation, to prepare themselves for Communion ? Do you teach them how they may sanctify themselves in their work ? ”—Read to them, or make them read, *Le saint travail des mains*, by P. Le Blanc. To help the souls of these dear Sisters we are preparing *Le Livre des Converses*.

times among her lay-Sisters and by her activity excited them to labor; you will be fortunate if they can say of you, as they did of her, she can turn her hand to anything.

4. Do not waste your time in long conversations, either in the parlor or with your religious, particularly if they have work to do. In regard to the parlor, profit of the first exercise to excuse yourself from people who take up your time uselessly. When the bell rings no one will be surprised or offended to hear you say, that is an exercise, I must be present at it.

5. During recreation, do not remain idle when all your religious have some work in their hands. Never fear that you will lose your dignity if you are seen mending your clothes or making your own linen.

Take to yourself St. Jerome's counsel to a holy woman : Always have a ball of wool in your hands.

As a conclusion to this chapter on the means of maintaining or restoring the piety of your House, here is a summary of a conference delivered by P. Champagnat, founder of the Little Brothers of Mary.

A Brother director spoke to the Father of the grief he felt at seeing that the Broth-



ers of his establishment were wanting in piety. The Father took occasion of this complaint to give publicly the following advice to the Brother directors:

“My dear Brothers, be not astonished that the Brothers of fifteen and twenty have not your fervor and devotion in the exercises of piety. This age is the most critical period in life; it is a time when the passions begin to make themselves felt, and to subject man to that cruel war, which ends only at the hour of death. During this period the soul, allured on one side by the attraction of sensible pleasures, weighed down on the other by the weight of its miseries and wearied by the combat which it is obliged to sustain, relishes nothing; the holiest things make no impression upon it, and the most terrible truths hardly suffice to rouse it from its supineness, and to bridle its evil inclinations. All souls pay a sad tribute to this age, and even those who are naturally good and pious feel the unction of grace and piety very little. That is why, instead of complaining of the little devotion and fervor of souls passing through this period of life, you should pity them, pray for them, treat them kindly,

encourage them, but, above all, avoid scolding or treating them harshly, for by misplaced severity you may cause them to abandon the path of virtue, to cast themselves into the ways of vice, which is alluring them, and even to lose their vocation. Four things are indispensable to sustain these Brothers, to bring them without accident through this time of trial, and to preserve them to the Institute.

1. "*Make them pray.* 'But that,' I hear you say 'is just what they will not do, and what I complain of.' I reply: it is precisely because they are disgusted with prayer, or that they feel great repugnance in devoting themselves to it, that it is necessary for them, and that you should take every means which an industrious zeal may furnish to render them assiduous in this holy exercise. Give them good advice; induce them to read works proper to inspire them with sentiments of virtue and love for their state; let them frequently give you an account of their meditation; suggest to them to make some novenas to the Blessed Virgin to obtain the gift of piety, and insist particularly upon their faithfully acquitting themselves of all the

pious exercises prescribed by the Rule.

2. “*Keep them very busy.* For every one idleness is very dangerous, but to young souls it is a sure cause of temptation and sin. That is why a Brother director who causes silence to be observed, who insists upon the studies, and sees that they are pursued according to the Rule, who requires each one to fulfil his charge with care and devotion, prevents a number of sins, preserves the Brothers from innumerable perils and temptations, and renders them the most signal service.

3. “*Encourage them.* At every age man needs to be encouraged and strengthened ; but this succor is particularly necessary to the young, for, being without experience, the least difficulty arrests them, and leads them to abandon their good resolutions. As they have no strong convictions, and their imagination is very lively, they easily yield to persuasion, and follow almost without resistance the impulse which is given them. If they are well directed, if they receive good counsel, if they are encouraged, they take the path of virtue and tread it firmly. But if we abandon them to themselves, and, still worse, if we are

sufficiently imprudent to tell them or to let them believe that virtue is difficult, that they are not fitted to practise it, that they are unqualified for their employment or for their state, this is all that is needed to discourage them, and lead them to abandon everything, and blindly cast themselves into the ways of vice.

4. “*Make them observe the Rule.* The observance of the Rule procures great graces and removes great dangers. The little victories which a young Brother gains over himself by following the Rule prepare him for great combats, great acts of virtue, and, according to the oracle of the Holy Spirit, fidelity in little things makes him faithful in great. He, on the contrary, who fails to observe the Rule, who follows his own will in the details of his conduct, will be weak on great occasions and fall an easy prey to evil temptations.

“How often I have heard the Brothers say : ‘I cannot resist temptation, if I do not observe the Rule ; I was unfortunate ; I was overcome because we do not observe the Rule, because we do not get up at the regular hour, because we do not make our exercises of piety at the time appointed for

them.' Oh ! how culpable a Brother director is when he neglects the Rule ! The little infractions which he regards as trifles may lead to grave faults, for which he will be responsible before God. The Brother directors who are truly imbued with the spirit of their state understand these truths ; they adopt the means which I have just indicated, and they have the consolation of being useful to the young Brothers, and of maintaining them in piety, and of preserving them in their vocation."

## CHAPTER SIXTH.

### The Rewards to be Hoped for.

**First. Upon what these Rewards are  
Founded.**

Before speaking directly of the recompense which awaits a faithful superior, let us see how his position helps him to merit this recompense.

We have certainly spoken sufficiently of the dangers which surround it, to say a few words of the peace and glory which it procures.

1. *The position of superior obliges one to lead a more perfect life.* A superior is on a pedestal, surrounded by a brilliant light and almost continually exposed to the observation of all his religious.

His faults, which no one perceived as much when he was a simple religious, appear now like stains on the aureole which surrounds him, and assume a graver character ; that which was formerly only weak-

ness appears vice; what formerly excited only a smile appears folly.

Oh, the precious charge which in a measure forces you to continually watch over yourself, to correct your faults, to hide your imperfections, to *appear holy*, consequently to *be holy*, for you know well that you cannot long appear what you are not.

2. *The position of superior obliges you to practise a multitude of acts of virtue which are not required of a simple religious.* Among these acts we shall only cite the devotion of every day, the forgetfulness of self, or rather the gift of self to others, which is the essence, so to speak, of a superior's duty.

A superior's life is a life of charity, consequently of renunciation, of humility. It is the life which, after that of the priest, bears most resemblance to that of Jesus Christ. To spend oneself for others,—is there anything more meritorious?

Oh! the precious charge which forcibly obliges you every hour to be kind, to be devoted, to suffer for the salvation of souls!

“I love it, I love my office of superior,” a holy soul writes, “because it promises me

almost constant immolation, and because I can only fulfil it by never ceasing to forget myself for the souls God has confided to me.

“I love it because, while having all the appearance of commanding, I am sure of never doing my own will.

“I love it, because, sometimes flattered, sometimes humbled, sometimes approved, sometimes censured, I learn not to esteem myself any more in the midst of applause than in the midst of criticism and censure.

“I love it, finally, because each hour promises me a sacrifice, when, like Jesus, I must immolate myself for the salvation of my religious !”

3. *A superior's position obliges God to grant him more special and most efficacious graces.*

“Think you,” says St. Francis de Sales, “that so good a Father as God would make you the foster-mother of His children without giving you an abundance of milk, and butter, and honey ?”

Therefore He gives you :

*Graces of light* which define your duties more distinctly ; now we must needs be very culpable not to endeavor earnestly to



fulfil our duties more carefully when we know their importance and understand the responsibility of them.

*Graces of assistance.* God sees that it is His work you are doing ; He cannot, therefore, leave you to labor alone ; He is in a measure bound to strengthen you, to come to your assistance even with material succor ; and you will feel this assistance more and more, in proportion as you become more faithful, more diligent, more abandoned to grace. Many a miracle is performed in favor of superiors. You have near you your guardian angel, that of the Community, that of each of your religious, and all interested that you should be holy, more holy than the rest.

*Graces of pardon.* Do you think that God forgot when He made you superior that you were still weak, subject to all human failings, capable still of committing many sins ? He certainly knows this, and what He asks of you is not that you *never fall* but that you remain humble, that you courageously rise, that you draw nearer to Him.

Think you He does not know that, your obligations being more numerous, you risk

falling more frequently than the others? He knows it certainly, and what He asks is that you love Him with a greater love than others, and, as your life is all charity, He tells you : “ Many sins shall be pardoned thee, because thou hast loved much ! ”

Behold upon what these rewards which await you rest ; now let us examine them.

### **Second. The Nature of these Rewards.**

We cannot be absolutely disinterested ; God does not ask it, and He Himself excites us to the practice of virtue with the promise of an infinite reward.

Ah ! there is a most *special one* for you, dear religious, who have accepted the burden of superior !

For long years, patiently and resignedly, have you borne this burden with its weight of continual renouncement, of almost superhuman vigilance, of devotion equal to every trial : *yours will be the martyr's reward.*

Like a vigilant shepherd you have defended, at the expense of your rest, the souls the Evil One coveted ; you have brought back those who wandered ; you

have revived those who languished : *yours will be the apostle's reward.*

With tenderest care did you surround these poor children, who left father and mother for the service of God ; you have taken the place of all their loved ones, and God saw that their hearts more than the Rule gave you the name of father : *yours will be a parent's reward.*

You have not only kept pure and chaste your heart, consecrated to God from its earliest years, but you have also watched, as an angel guardian, over the chastity of these young hearts, whom God had chosen for His own : *yours will be the reward of virgins.* Yes, your reward will be a very beautiful one.

Certainly, I do not present it to you on earth ; I do not speak to you of the esteem you will enjoy because of your virtues, which, despite your modesty, will be known even outside your Community.

I do not speak to you of the tender and filial affection of your religious, who, appreciating your devotion, will look upon you as their father, their guardian angel, and pay you a double tribute of respect, of love, of submission.

I do not speak, finally, of the piety, fidelity, charity, fervor of your Community, the sweetest joy to the heart of a superior, whose only desire is to *sanctify his children*.

Alas! it may be that on earth God will refuse you these pure, legitimate, and well merited joys, and that, after sacrificing yourself, after devoting your strength and your life to the happiness of your children, you may be unappreciated, calumniated, despised, and you may die with these heart-rending words on your lips: *My God, I have failed.*

Be consoled, faithful superior; if you have sowed in tears, you will reap in joy; and if the last hour of your sleep on earth has been bitter, oh! how beautiful will be your awakening!

JESUS, whom you have chosen as Superior, and to whom you remained intimately united; JESUS, the witness of all your sighs, of all your efforts; JESUS, whose devoted servant you have been, doing His work according to your strength, will meet you, holding forth the triple crown of *Apostle, Martyr, and Parent*, and extending His hand to you, He will say: *Faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!*

Ah ! what a brilliant throne will be yours above ! Let our place of meeting be there, dear superior, there, near Jesus and Mary, whom you and I desire to love and serve with our whole hearts.

J. M. J.

## APPENDIX.

### **First. The Rule which a Pious Superior Traced for Herself.**

“O my God, my Saviour, and my sovereign Master! may Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Thou willest to charge me with the guidance of Thy holy spouses; but who am I? the last of all in merits and in virtue; or, rather, I recognize in myself neither merits nor virtue; and what have I not to fear in the exercise of my charge if Thou dost not sustain me, assist me, protect me, and guide me by Thy spirit of wisdom which governs with me? Even as Thou didst create the world out of nothing, so Thou willest, O my divine Saviour, to use this vile instrument for Thy greater glory and the consolation of Thy chaste spouses. Ever act in me and with me, that I may fulfil, according to Thy designs, the duties which my office imposes upon me, and that I may never separate myself from Thy holy will. Enlighten my mind, purify my

heart, place Thy word on my lips, direct my steps, grant me the prudence, zeal, and charity of a superior according to Thy heart. I cast myself into Thy fatherly arms, and I abandon myself to Thy providence. The more I feel my weakness, the more I have recourse to Thee ; I hope in Thee, and I trust in Thee.

“ I here renew the vows by which I consecrated myself to Thee before Thy holy altar, on the day on which Thou didst deign to honor me with Thy holy alliance. I renew the promise I made Thee to faithfully observe our holy Rule, and to labor all my life to attain perfection. But since Thou hast willed to charge me, all unworthy as I am, with the government of this Community, I promise Thee, O my God :

“ First, to encourage and sustain to the best of my power a faithful observance of the Rule.

“ Secondly, to be myself an example in this, never dispensing myself, but for a lawful reason, from the common exercises, endeavoring to walk at the head of all, to teach them by my regularity the fidelity which they should practise.

“ Thirdly, I promise Thee to respect our

old religious as my mothers, and the others as my sisters; to have equal charity for all, avoiding all partiality; to cherish them all in Thee, and sincerely bear them in my heart with motherly tenderness.

“Fourthly, never to refuse my assistance and care to those who address themselves to me in trials of mind, in their temporal needs, or to seek counsel; I will even try to anticipate them in this respect when I judge it necessary for their salvation; I shall always give them free access to me; my cell will be always open to them, and I shall receive them kindly.

“Fifthly, I shall interest myself for all as I would for myself, share their joys and their sorrows, and make myself all to all, that they may serve Thee more contentedly.

“Sixthly, I will never reprove the erring in a bitter or impatient spirit, and still less for the purpose of giving them pain; but always with a good intention, with patience, prudence, and charity; and if I am forced to resort to firmness or severity, I will never separate it from gentleness and mercy, and I will help the erring to rise again, having no desire to grieve them, only to reform them.



“Seventhly, I will give all my attention to the sick as well as to the infirm ; and, though I know the charity and zeal of the religious charged to care for them, I will never feel myself dispensed from visiting them frequently and doing all in my power to relieve them.

“Eighthly, I will endeavor to the best of my power to distribute the various employments in a manner to make all contented, and I will be watchful not to overburden my religious, but place them according to their strength, their talents, and their qualifications.

“Ninthly, I will see that the lay-Sisters have sufficient time to devote themselves to the needs of their souls in prayer and meditation, that the workwomen are instructed in their catechism and serve Thee as good Christians.

“Tenthly, I will watch over the temporal interests of the convent, taking care that nothing deteriorates or is wasted through my negligence; I shall give orders to this effect and see that they are executed.

“But I promise Thee, O my God, whilst laboring for my Sisters, I will not neglect the care of my own soul; for what would

all my efforts for the salvation of others avail me, if I were lost myself.

“I will never, through negligence, omit meditation, prayer, holy Communion, and the monthly retreat. I will try to walk in Thy holy presence and to do nothing but for Thy glory and Thy love.

“I will watch over my heart and my senses, to suffer nothing in them to displease Thee.

“I will behold Thy holy will in all things, to submit and confirm myself thereto.

“I will not fly from the trials attached to my charge, but endeavor to bear them with meekness of spirit, as the cross Thou wiltst me to carry after Thee.

“I will prefer the satisfaction of others to my own, and I will regard myself as the victim of the convent, who must be immolated to Thy holy will, ever preferring to suffer myself rather than give suffering to others, and I will endeavor to relieve them and to reserve all pain for myself.

“But, my God and my Saviour, however great my desire to faithfully practise these resolutions, I know my own weakness too well not to feel that, if Thou dost not assist me, I shall belie myself on the smallest oc-

casation. Help me, Thou who art my strength ; let Thy grace prevent me, accompany me, and perfect in me the work of my salvation. Permit not the charge which Thou has imposed upon me by the suffrage of my sisters to be an obstacle to my spiritual advancement ; but rather let it serve to lead me to Thee, that, all laboring in concert to serve Thee in Thy holy House, we may render ourselves worthy of the crown Thou hast prepared for Thy faithful spouses in a happy eternity. Amen."

**Second. List of the Duties of a good Superior.**

A good superior governs his religious as he would wish to be governed.

\*

A good superior makes himself the purveyor and servant of all his religious ; he serves them, he cares for them, he sees that they never suffer for spiritual or temporal succor through his fault.

\*

A good superior respects himself and always respects his religious ; he never

indulges in trivial conversations ; he never administers a humiliating reproof.

\*

A good superior is very reserved in his speech, and scrupulously guards the secrets confided to him or which he discovers.

\*

A good superior is careful to maintain the authority of his religious, and never speaks ill of them outside the monastery.

\*

A good superior likes to be counselled and warned by his religious.

\*

A good superior loves all his religious equally ; he buries in the depth of his heart any sympathy which would cause him to be partial ; his affection is serious, making him desire the good of all ; it is strong, he does not fear to give offence when he believes it necessary for the good of a soul ; it is tender, manifesting itself as occasion requires and proving that he has a father's heart.

\*

A good superior recognizes his own imperfections as well as those of his religious, recognizes that these imperfections will disappear only gradually; therefore he waits patiently, and bears with them; he kindly helps his religious, and compassionately spares them sharp or irritating reproaches.

\*

A good superior proportions the labors of his religious to each one's strength and capacity; from time to time he learns the amount of their labors, and, instead of overburdening them, he encourages them, sustains them, and relieves them; he only asks what each one is capable of doing.

\*

A good superior is easily pleased; he encourages more than reproveth; he is more ready with thanks than censure; he has a smile rather than an austere countenance.

\*

A good superior is large-minded; he sees everything, no doubt; no failing escapes

him ; but he knows how to be wisely blind on occasions ; he does not visit as a crime a word uttered through thoughtlessness, impatience, or irritation.

\*

A good superior makes himself all to all, to win his religious to Jesus Christ :—he is an infirmarian to the sick, joyous and gay with the young, calm and patient with the slow and infirm, forbearing and uncomplaining with the petulant ; in one word, he has a good disposition and a pliable temper.

\*

A good superior never judges his religious by reports which are made to him ; no doubt, he listens to these, but he examines and observes for himself, taking care to rid his mind of all prejudice, and his judgment is formed only after wise and mature deliberation.

\*

A good superior never condemns a religious unheard, though the accusation were made by an angel.

\*

A good superior does not allow himself

to be prejudiced by an open, pleasant sympathetic exterior any more than by a sombre, disagreeable countenance or unrefined manners; he always seeks, despite the exterior, to see and know the soul; he does not consider what pleases him, but what pleases God.

\*

A good superior does not fear to yield even to his inferiors when he finds he is mistaken or has been misinformed; he readily hears excuses and always yields to good reasons.

\*

A good superior is not impatient, even for good results; he prays, he exhorts, he waits; he bears with what he cannot correct, happy to be able to diminish the evil about him or even prevent its increase.

\*

A good superior is not irritable. Always peaceful, his feelings never control him, and his counsels as well as his reprimands are always mingled with a sweetness which takes from them all their sting when they must be unpleasant.

\*

A good superior knows that excessive justice degenerates into injustice ; he prefers, after the fatherly counsel of St. Francis de Sales, *to be more kind than just*, and for this reason he is satisfied with *well enough*, provided he sees there is no bad will.

\*

A good superior does not exact of a religious all that he is capable of, though he continually asks and exhorts him to it, and he never exalts the Rule at the expense of charity. He never punishes a fault as much as it deserves, leaving always a little margin for mercy, and, after the example of the saints, pours oil on the wound he has made.

\*

A good superior never reproves a fault the moment it is committed, except in very rare cases, particularly when he feels disturbed himself, or when he sees that the culprit is in a state of excitement.

\*

A good superior speaks of his religious



- more to God than to persons outside ; and if he opens his heart or complains to God, with others he never fails to speak of his Community in terms of esteem and praise.

\*

A good superior, by the very fact of his elevation, becomes the servant and the slave, so to speak, of all his religious. He sacrifices his time to them, for he is obliged to receive them at all hours when they come to him ; he is obliged to hear their troubles, to solve their difficulties, to console them in their afflictions, to stimulate them to the practice of virtue, to watch over their conduct, even to know their temporal affairs.

He sacrifices to them his sweetest consolations, leaving reading, study, retreats, recollection, for occupations contrary to his tastes, to his qualifications, and which are frequently very disagreeable to him.

\*

A good superior understands that among the dangers of his position there are particularly four things to be feared :

1. *A spirit of pride*: it is very difficult to

find oneself elevated above others, honored, respected, obeyed by all, without feeling a secret pleasure in one's heart, without believing oneself a person of merit, without gradually yielding to a love of power. One must have a strong head not to have it turned in a position so elevated.

2. *Love of independence and abuse of one's liberty* : there are few persons who are not insensibly led to take advantage of their authority to procure for themselves little pleasures, to which they had formerly never aspired, to dispense themselves from certain observances, for which no one will reprove them.

3. *Dissipation* : the numerous anxieties attached to a superior's position, and which are too often needlessly increased, are extremely distracting, and destroy the spirit of piety, of recollection, and of the presence of God. A superior who keeps his soul in peace in the midst of his numerous duties is a saint.

4. *The losses we risk* : we risk the loss of *humility* in the continual homage we receive ; — *obedience*, because of our liberty to do as we please unreprieved ; — *solitude* and *silence*, because of the frequent conver-

sations we are obliged to hold ;—*interior peace*, because of the disturbances incident to our position,—the *consolation* and *unction of the Holy Spirit*, in the embarrassment and perplexity of business.

For this reason it is absolutely necessary that a superior be united with God, and that he become, above all things, a *man of prayer*.

### **Third. Thoughts ever Present to a Good Superior.**

I am not superior to seek my pleasure, my consolation, my rest, my welfare, but to procure the consolation, rest, and welfare of those confided to me.

I am obliged by my position to sacrifice my tastes, my satisfaction, my convenience, my interests, my life itself, if necessary, for the salvation of my subjects. Woe to me if I do otherwise !

My position must be attended with many trials and many sacrifices, therefore I must be prepared for them.

I no longer belong to myself, but to these beloved children, whom God has confided to me, to whom I am sold, so to

speak, and who have a right to seek from me all that is necessary for the good of their souls.

I am after the example of God a servant and purveyor for all my religious ; there is no one among them to whom I may refuse myself, whatever antipathy his character excites in me.

I must be in the midst of my Community like a *torch*, to show each one the path he must follow ; I must dispense myself from no point of the Rule, but observe all punctually, respectfully, and with a spirit of faith.

Therefore my *recollection* must teach my religious how they should pray.

My *bearing*, grave but unaffected, how they must bear themselves.

My *straightforwardness*, how they must proceed.

My *affability*, how they must bear with one another and speak to one another.

My *simplicity*, how they must act.

My *patience*, how they must restrain themselves.

My *resignation*, how they must suffer.

My *charity*, thoughtful and kind, how they must love.

My *generosity*, how they must sacrifice themselves.

My *silence*, what theirs must be.

My *labor, assiduous* but not over eager, how they must work.

My *regularity*, how they must love the Rule.

My *sobriety*, how they must mortify themselves.

My *detachment*, how they must practise poverty.

My *docility* in accepting the advice of others, how they must yield.

My *continual joyfulness*, how they must rely upon God.

My *eagerness* to receive the Holy Eucharist, and the fidelity of my thanksgiving, how they should receive holy Communion.

My *constancy* in continuing enterprises, undaunted by obstacles, opposition, or failure, how they must persevere.

#### **Fourth. Maxims for the Use of Superiors.**

##### *I. Maxims of St. Ignatius.*

Discipline is soon lost, if it is not vigorously maintained in a Community.

There is often less danger in violating great rules, than in neglecting small ones.

Superiors should have a knowledge of all things, but they should avoid doing everything themselves.

It is better to be deceived on certain occasions than to appear distrustful.

One is sometimes obliged to accept things, not in the way which will be best, but in the way in which they admit of being settled.

To succeed in our enterprises we must distrust the vain fears of pusillanimity and the false hopes of presumption.

Contradiction is the character of the works of God.

One frequently attains his object better by yielding, than resisting.

In treating of affairs one should speak little, and listen much.

One who desires to do something for God should beware of being too wise, that is, of heeding human prudence too much.

## *II. Maxims of St. Vincent de Paul.*

A superior holds the place of Jesus Christ; like Him, he should enlighten and vivify.

The virtues and faults of a Community usually come from the superior.

In the position of superior one should seek only to serve God, without expecting any satisfaction from men.

Superiors who desire to fulfil their duties faithfully have always much to suffer.

They should always keep before them the example of Jesus Christ, who patiently bore with the rudeness, jealousy, and other faults of His disciples.

Nothing is more injurious to a Community than to be governed by weak superiors, who seek to please and to make themselves popular.

Superiors often gain much by taking the advice of their subjects.

A superior should choose a favorable moment to correct those who abuse his patience.

A superior should manifest esteem and confidence for his subjects.

Superiors should be condescending to the scrupulous, and also to the captious and exacting.

They should be neither troubled nor discouraged if their government does not please all.

• It is easier to prevent than to reform abuses.

A superior should like to be warned of his faults.

It belongs to the spirit of God to act with sweetness and with love.

Nothing militates more against success than precipitation.

The works of God are done by degrees : they have their beginnings and their stages of progress.

Calumnies and persecutions are usually the favors God awards those who labor for His glory.

When a superior relies too confidently upon his own prudence, or knowledge, or intelligence, God leaves him to act alone.

### *III. Maxims borrowed from Different Authors.*

A person of a domineering spirit is ill fitted to govern ; but he merits authority who believes himself unworthy of it.

The thought of one's own unfitness sustains humility, leads one to act with gentleness, to be indulgent to others, and to gain the heart of inferiors. Example should go before precept. A superior who has taken



Jesus Christ as his model first begins by practising the counsels He gives.

It is to be desired that we could see at the head of religious Houses humble, mortified, detached religious, *grounded and rooted in humility*.

A superior may easily cause the trials of his position to serve as an expiation for his faults.

Even in the most regular Communities there will be found restless, cavilling spirits, who censure and condemn everything.

With patience and kindness a superior triumphs over bitter and fretful dispositions.

Ever bear in mind, when commanding, how much it formerly cost you to obey. Show yourself a father, not a sovereign.

One can make himself loved more easily than he imagines. Charity overcomes everything when it perseveres, unrepelled by coldness, unwearied by resistance.

Do not rigorously require your subjects to seek you. Choose rather to go to them and to make the first advances.

Esteem nothing in your position but the power it gives you of contributing to the happiness of others.

Be indulgent and compassionate toward

your subjects. Do not subject their weak virtue to too rude trials.

Do not consider the attractive or repellent qualities of your religious; regard them as God's images.

Be, then, severe on principle, not through temperament. Never let your gentleness degenerate into weakness, nor your firmness into rigor.

Avoid the appearance of spying everywhere, of informing yourself concerning everything, and of triumphing when you discover something amiss.

Keep a vigilant watch over the abuses likely to creep into your Community, but without permitting your vigilance to be disturbing and annoying.

Avoid with equal care giving too much or too little heed to reports.

Receive calmly the complaints and reproaches which your religious may make you in a moment of irritation.

A superior cannot bind himself to punish every fault; this would be carrying severity too far and making himself hated to no purpose.

There is a prudent indulgence, which we must frequently practise. Violent correc-

tion only irritates and produces no amendment; it inflames the wound instead of healing it.

Never punish, except when you are forced to do so by the nature of faults and by the requirements of your office.

Be on your guard against unevenness of temper, which renders the character inconstant and irresolute.

There is a firmness which is nothing but stubbornness, opinionativeness. It is well to know how to yield upon occasions, and to ignore what we cannot correct.

Authority, even the most lawful, may become an arbitrary power, a species of tyranny.

In critical circumstances act with great circumspection, and ask yourself what a wise and able superior would do in your place.

Never act without counsel. Several torches give more light than one.

Never seek counsel with your mind made up upon a subject, merely to be confirmed in the opinion you have formed.

Be sure that neither complacency nor fear interferes with the freedom of the advice you ask.

Do not lose time in discussing when it is your duty to act ; distrust all irresolution, which only serves to disquiet you fruitlessly.

And yet you must avoid equally too great attachment to your own views, or being too ready to change them.

Nothing is more injurious to a superior's government than an impression that he will allow himself to be influenced and governed by others.

A superior should not wish to do everything by himself. There are things, says St. Bernard, which he does with others, and things which he does through others.

Do not pride yourself upon being very out-spoken and frank, but know how to observe upon occasions proper reticence and silence.

Be very reserved in your communications, and do not too readily confide to those you love your sorrows, joys, fears, and perplexities.

Do not exact too rigorously what is due you ; when one cannot do all that he desires, he must be satisfied with *willing* to do all that he can.

Very often, by claiming too much, we obtain nothing. The right to command

has its limits, as has also the duty to obey.

At the same time, do not let excessive diffidence and pusillanimity prevent you from maintaining your authority.

Be grave without haughtiness, reserved without coldness, friendly without familiarity.

Always present yourself among your religious as an angel of peace, laboring to soften and to unite all hearts.

Endure without trouble the tone, the language, the manners of others; have a cordial affection for simple, imperfect, or even tiresome persons.

Bear with yourself in your corporal and spiritual infirmities; do not let your pride make you unhappy at sight of your own misery, or indifference or sloth callous to it.

Do not love your faults, but love the salutary humiliation which follows them. Fear the renown of virtue more than your own imperfections; for to you the greatest evil would be to be puffed up with pride and a vain complacency in your own righteousness.

Receive praise, marks of esteem, and vain applause with sadness and fear. Con-

sider yourself fortunate to be sometimes neglected, despised, or subjected to unjust censure.

Make no account of your tastes or your repugnances. It is not to satisfy yourself that you are superior, but to satisfy God, and to satisfy others.

A good superior is not one who has the reputation of being clever, but one who best promotes the salvation of his religious, who diminishes their faults most, who leads them most effectually to God, for this is his office.

The government of one's self is a necessary condition for governing others.

To command well one must first have been formed in the school of obedience.

It is well for superiors to be the first to submit to what they prescribe for others.

One is not superior for himself but for others.

They who command should treat their subjects as they would wish to be treated themselves.

To govern another well we must love him.

We must reprove gently, amiably, piously, and with a fatherly heart.

One who knows not how to suffer knows not how to govern.

If a good superior were always flattered, proclaimed an angel, a saint, he might end by believing it in a measure, and might look with complacency upon his good qualities; but God, who loves him, provides against this evil by permitting erring, or thoughtless, or indiscreet persons to utter sharp criticisms, which pierce his heart and cause him to remember that he is still a creature keenly susceptible.

Every one is agreed that *good religious* are best for a Community, but it is equally true that *imperfect religious* are best for superiors.

I would it were established as a fixed principle that the office of superior is not a favor but a veritable burden. I knew a superior who described it well in the following words: "It is a wearing anxiety for time and a great treasure for eternity."

Nothing indicates a good and holy government more than when the superior is seen to take for himself the most difficult duties, leaving the easiest for others.

Nothing is ever spoiled by sweetness any more than by sugar; and if it lead us into

some fault, it will always be an innocent one before God, or so profitable in its consequences that we shall exclaim, in the words which the Church applies to the sin of Adam, “O happy fault !”

It is necessary that they whose mission is to cure the wounds of others be not the first to succumb to similar weaknesses.

It belongs to upright souls to say little and do much.

A *request* is often more effectual than a *command*.

It is the part of wisdom to adjust matters not in the very best way, but as they *admit* of being settled : *Le mieux est souvent l'ennemi du bien*. “Better is often the enemy of good.”

It shows much talent to know how to use the talents of others.

Superiors will have a double reward from God : that of their own virtue, and that of the virtues they will have sought to make others practise.



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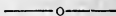
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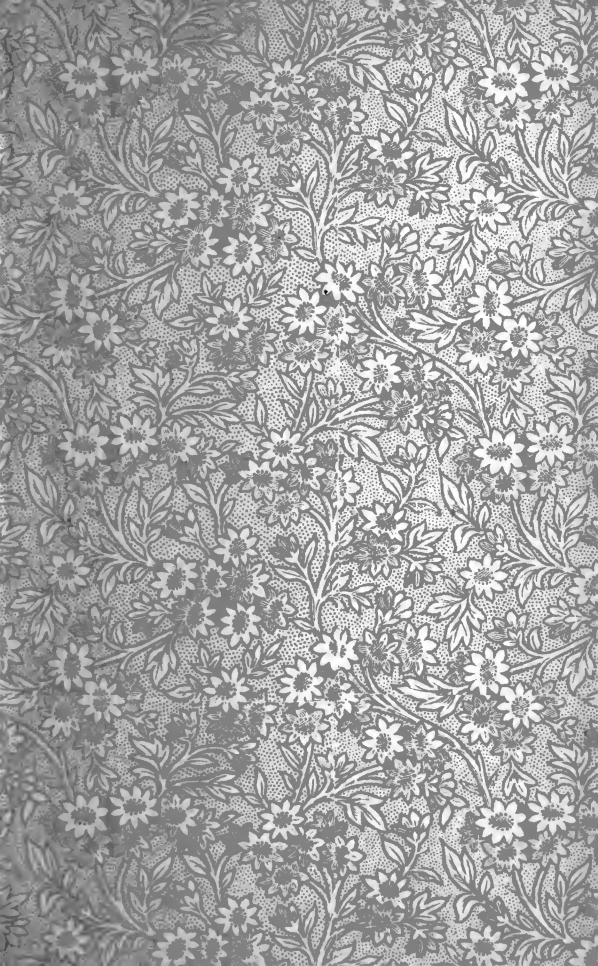
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