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THE
PARABLES

OF

PERE BONAVENTURE GIRAUDEAU, S.J.

Author of l'Évangile Médité.

A NEW VERSION, BY T. R.

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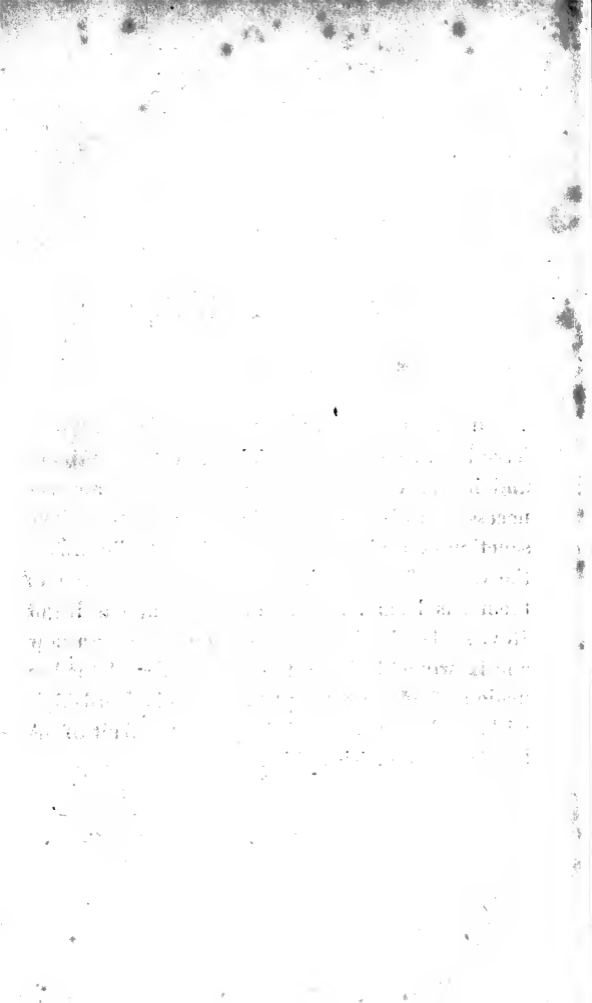


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TO THE PUBLIC.

THE PARABLES OF FATHER BONAVENTURE have been so well received, both on the continent and in this country, that nothing more appears necessary to be said in their commendation. The sanction of a pious and discerning Public proves the value of them. The last English Edition of them has been long out of print; and a Right Rev. Prelate having expressed a wish to see a new and improved Edition, the present Translator has made an humble attempt to meet his Lordship's wish, and here respectfully offers the fruit of his labours to the Irish Public.

61700



PARABLES, &c.

PARABLE I.

The untractable Orphan.

A KING of Persia,* who had no child to inherit his throne, met in the street a poor little orphan beggar. Being taken with the beauty of his figure, he ordered him to be conducted to his palace, with an intention of adopting him. When the child was dressed as the son of the king, he appeared charming, and became the delight of the court. The king happening to die soon after, it was discovered in his will, that orders were left for this child to be educated with the greatest care possible, till he was fifteen years of age; and

* Persia a celebrated empire of Asia, consists of several provinces, which, at different times, have had their particular kings. Its productions are corn, wine, oil, silk, and excellent fruits; and the manufactures of carpets, gold and silver lace, embroidery, and harnessing for horses are here carried to the highest degree of perfection. There is no considerable river in this extensive country, except the Araxes, and it has but few forests. The principal cities are Ispahan, Schiraz, and Teheran. The religion is generally Mahometan.

that, if his improvement corresponded to the care that should be taken of him, and he was found virtuous, and worthy of the throne, he then adopted him, and bequeathed to him his kingdom: but if, on the contrary, he did not profit by the education he should receive, but grew up in vice, that then he should be stripped, driven from court, and condemned to hard labour, &c.

The will was executed. Preceptors were appointed him; and nothing was omitted that could contribute to form his heart, to improve and adorn his mind, and to make him completely fit to fill the high station destined for him.

During his infancy, he discovered nothing but bad inclinations, and a disrelish for every thing that could be useful to him. He was extremely self-willed, and passionate with his instructors: his books he either trampled under foot, or threw out of the window: whatever was put into his hands for his improvement, he broke and spoiled. When he was bigger, he was made acquainted with the king's will. Daily were the sceptre and the crown, that were destined for him, represented to him, on one side; and on the other, the infamy and punishment to which he was condemned. These considerations made no impression on him. As he grew older, he employed himself in nothing better than raising houses of mud, and building castles of cards. When his masters overturned these frivolous things, he cried, he fretted, he threatened; and, instead of applying to what was appointed him to learn, no sooner was he alone than he returned to the same childish amusements: in a word, he would learn nothing good. He,

however, learned, and nobody knew how, to utter the most vulgar and unbecoming words. It was in vain to attempt to correct him; he was hardened against all reproof. As he advanced in age, he became more and more wicked, and plunged into the greatest vices. Passion, cruelty, avarice, excess in eating and drinking, were not the only vices he was guilty of. His discourse was suited to his inclinations: those actions only did he praise that were vicious: debauchery was his delight, and drunkenness his glory.

These bad dispositions grew up with him, till he attained the age of fifteen. The council then assembled; he was summoned before it: the king's will was read to him; and being unanimously declared unworthy to reign, he was stripped, and condemned to hard labour for life. On hearing his condemnation, he then, for the first time, seemed to feel, and to shew signs of repentance. He turned pale—he trembled—he shed tears—he sighed—he asked for pardon; but it was too late—the decree was passed, and there was no repeal.

I cannot but feel compassion for this wretched child. What a dreadful day must that have been for him! What a fall! How irreparable the loss! Yet his conduct cannot fail to shock us: it was odious; it was insupportable. Wretch that he was! did he not know what he had to hope for, and what he had to fear? Alas! and have not you the like knowledge? Are you not this child, destined, by adoption, to an eternal kingdom, if you conduct yourself, through life, in a manner worthy of the throne which is promised you? And are you

not threatened with eternal punishment, if you lead a life unworthy of your adoption?

Compare your life with that of this child, and you will find yours equally frivolous, unworthy, and vicious: yet you have been instructed: you know how matters stand in your regard. If God, in his mercy, has sometimes deprived you of objects, to which you were unworthily attached, so far from entering into yourself, and returning to him with sincerity and affection, have you not been obstinately bent on fixing your whole mind and heart on the earth only? The day, however, is coming, and is near at hand, when it shall be decided, whether you are worthy of heaven, or deserving hell. In that day, tears and lamentations will be of no avail.

PARABLE II.

The Imprudent Slave.

A GENTLEMAN of large fortune, named Aristus, conceived an affection for one of his slaves, whose name was Afrenes. He had taken him from the drudgery of the fields, to employ him in his house, with an intention of shortly giving him his liberty. In fact, he one day called him, and said to him: "Afrenes, I have a commission to entrust thee with, and to send thee some leagues hence. If thou execute my commission well, I will give thee thy liberty, and with it a gratuity, with which thou wilt have reason to be satisfied. This," continued he, "is the commission in question. Thou know-

est my Lord Eusebius, and where he lives : take him these thirty talents of silver,* which are due to him ; receive his acknowledgment, and bring it to me : this is all I require of thee. Thou knowest, that, when thou hast passed the monument of Hebe, two roads will present themselves, one to the right, the other to the left. Take that to the right, which will lead thee to the house of Eusebius : the one to the left will take thee to Caquistus's : I absolutely forbid thee to enter his house. He is a wicked man, who pretends he has a right to every thing, and who will seize on thy money. Notice particularly this caution : for shouldst thou part with the money to him, all my love for thee will be changed into hatred : and instead of liberty, and the other advantages promised thee, I would load thee with irons, and condemn thee to the hardest work in the country, where thou shouldst remain for life."

"Master," replied Afrenes, "neither the hope of reward, nor the fear of punishment, need be employed to prompt me to execute your commands : duty, and the desire I have of pleasing you, will ever be to me the sole motives of action." Saying this, he took the money, and departed.

He had not gone far, before he began to exclaim : "O happy liberty, for which I have so long sighed ! thou art now within my grasp, and to-morrow's sun will see me free. O thrice happy day for me !" He then began to reason with himself, and to say : "When I am free, with the little money I have, and the present my master will

* The talent here meant was probably worth 60l.

make me, I may do something for myself. Yet," added he, "if I had only ten talents more, I could then manage much better. What a fool I am," continued he, "to want ten talents, while I have thirty in my possession! Who can hinder me from taking ten talents from these thirty? Who will know it? My Lord Eusebius will have quite enough with twenty." This said, he opens the bag, takes out ten talents for his own use, and continues his journey, and his soliloquy.

"I am going then to carry," said he to himself, "these twenty talents to my Lord Eusebius. I know him well: he is a hard man, and very avaricious. I will lay a wager he does not so much as thank me for my trouble. Ah! it is not so with my Lord Caquistus. I am very sure, if I go to his house, he will not let me go without first making me taste his wine." Saying that, our traveller comes to the monument of Hebe; and the two roads are open to his choice. "Here is the difficulty," said he, "which road shall I take? After all," continued he, "I can first of all call upon my Lord Caquistus, and then, when I shall have rested a little, I can go to my Lord Eusebius's; it will be all one." Upon this, he takes the road to the left. Caquistus espied him at some distance; and, on his approaching, thus accosted him: "Well, is it you, my dear Afrenes? Do you bring any money?" "Yes, sir." "How much?" "Twenty talents." "That is very little; but no matter; come in, notwithstanding, and take a glass of wine before dinner." "But, sir," said Afrenes, "I do not bring this money for you." "For whom then?" "For my Lord

Eusebius." "Very well," replied Caquistus, "but Eusebius, I know, does not want it: only give it me, my child, and you shall dine with me." "But," rejoined Afrenes, "I am to take a receipt to my master." "Very well," answered Caquistus; "I will give you one: it will make no odds to your master." Afrenes, who did not know how to read, nor the amount for which the receipt was given, delivered the money, and took the acknowledgment. They then sat down to table: and after dinner, they amused and diverted themselves, till it was time for him to return home.

Afrenes walked off slowly, a little disturbed at what he had done, not knowing how the business would terminate. "Thou returnest very late," said his master on seeing him." "Sir," replied Afrenes, "it is because I was obliged to stop dinner." "Is Eusebius well?" "Yes, Sir; at least he did not appear to me to be indisposed." "Didst thou give him the money?" "Yes sir." "Hast thou his receipt?" "I have, sir; here it is." Aristus, on opening the note, at first sight discovered Caquistus's signature, "What now!" cried he; "it was Caquistus that gave thee this note; thou tookest the money then to him." Afrenes was disconcerted; he faltered, and remained silent. Aristus having perused the note—"How is this?" said he; "thou hast given only twenty talents. Where are the other ten?" Afrenes seeing that every thing was discovered, threw himself at the feet of his master, and said: "My Lord, I am a wretch, deserving nothing but your anger. I have not done any thing that you ordered me; and I have done every thing that you forbad me. Punish me; I have merited punishment." Aris-

tus said to him : “ Thou hast not kept thy word, but I will keep mine ;” and immediately ordering irons to be put on him, he sent him into the country, to be there employed in the most irksome labour ; nor would he any more either see him, or hear his name mentioned.

Can a conduct be conceived more unaccountably foolish, than that of this slave ? Let us consider its principal features, and see, if in some points, it does not resemble ours.

1st. His ingratitude. Call here to your mind all the benefits you have received from God. He made you out of nothing, by your creation. He afterwards, by a special goodness, drew you out of the state of perdition, by admitting you into his house, viz. his Church ; there for some time to try your fidelity in his service, and shortly after to put you in possession of Paradise, to enjoy entire liberty, unbounded happiness, and life eternal. This is the end for which he created you. Could you wish for one more noble and more advantageous ? To help you to attain this end, he created the world, and established his Church. In giving you a body and a soul, and in leaving to your discretion the use of all creatures, he requires only one thing of you ; he forbids you only one thing. What he requires of you is, that, when you come to the use of reason, having passed the years of infancy, and become capable of distinguishing good from evil, you should then enter into the paths of justice, piety, and devotion, walking in the ways of his commandments, using his benefits only with a reference to his service and your own salvation, and referring all to his glory. The only thing he forbids you, is not to

enter the wide road of iniquity, not to sacrifice to the devil and the world the talents, which were entrusted to you to be employed only in his service ; to rob him of none of the goods he has committed to your care, and not to make them subservient to self-love, avarice, pride, or the gratification of any inordinate passion. Here examine what your conduct has hitherto been in these particulars.

II. His disobedience. It is of importance to examine this point well.

1st. He considers the reward promised to his obedience as certain ; and yet he is indifferent, whether he obeys or not. The pleasing idea of liberty fills his mind, but he does not even think of the means required of him to obtain it. In the same manner, we all expect to be saved ; not one of us would willingly damn himself : yet we do not think seriously of the only means we have of salvation, and of avoiding eternal ruin, which is, obeying the commands of God.

2dly. He pretends to obey ; and yet he entertains those thoughts only, which invite him to disobey. And how do you expect to keep the law of God, if you listen to nothing, if you read nothing, if you seek and love nothing, but what is contrary to it ; if you revolve in your mind and in your heart those thoughts only, those projects, which are directly opposed to it.

3dly. He pretended to obey and disobey at the same time ; to do first what he was forbidden, and then what he was commanded. This is the fatal rock : we begin by serving the world, and purpose afterwards to serve God ; but, generally speaking, people are cut off by death, without an opportu-

nity of serving God, after having been slaves, and nothing but slaves, to the world.

III. His rashness. This is observable in three things.

1st. He flatters himself, that his actions and proceedings will not be known by his master. Are there philosophers, who can persuade themselves that God is ignorant of their actions and blasphemies; or that, knowing them, he will not punish them? There may be—but we, who believe that God knows and sees all things, how dare we sin in his presence, and under his eye? Ah! how has this word, “Nobody will know it,” emboldened the hearts of men to commit iniquity? It is then thus, that among men the Almighty is accounted as nothing.

2dly. He is satisfied with the receipt, obtained from his master’s enemy. And do not we feel satisfied, if we can but gain the applause and approbation of the world? Are we not content to save appearances? When the world applauds us in our disorders, for actions contrary to the law of God, do we want any thing more? Do we not congratulate ourselves, and feel quite at our ease?

3dly. He was not afraid to present the receipt to his master. That was the height of rashness. It is, however, in this point that we resemble him most. We are always advancing, in spite of ourselves, towards the tribunal of God; and we dare appear before his awful Majesty with a conscience loaded with iniquities, with a conscience, witness against us, and bearing in plain characters an exact account of all whatever we have done, said, thought, loved, and desired.

But three things make us still more culpable than this slave.

1st. He did not know how to read; and this was not his fault: whereas we, in our conscience, can read and examine what it contains; and if you should say, that you cannot read there, I answer, that it is your own fault, because you have never practised, nor accustomed yourself to it. On the contrary, you are afraid of looking into it, that you may not be at the trouble of entering into yourself, and taking a few moments for recollection; as if it were not better to take this trouble to remove whatever is against you, than to carry it unexamined and unrepented of to the tribunal of God, to be punished eternally for it.

2dly. He did not know the value of the note: and this note discovered every thing he wished to conceal. But supposing it to be true, that you did not understand how to read in your conscience, you at least know very well, that it contains all the ill you have done, and that it will reproach you with it at the tribunal of God. You are, then, very rash and foolish, to carry it thither in this condition.

3dly. He could not alter the note; and after the fault he had committed, he had no remedy left: but you have a remedy, and you certainly would be very foolish, not to avail yourself of the use of it.

The remedy is this: 1st. That you learn to read in your conscience; that you turn over with the greatest care this record of your life; that you examine, and thoroughly understand what it con-

tains ; that you wash off by your tears, and remove by a good confession, whatever appears against you.

2dly. If, in spite of all your care and application, you find any passage that you cannot make out, you will leave it to the mercy of God, try to consume it in the flames of divine love, and make it serve as a foundation for humility ; not disturbing yourself, but persevering in the service of your Master with confidence and love, and at the same time with fear and trembling ; remembering, that your Master is your Father ; that he requires no more than an upright heart and good-will ; that he does not wish to be served with anxiety ; that excessive scrupulosity offends him ; and that you honour him, by placing your confidence in him.

3dly. That you take great care, for the future, not to give admittance to any thing into your conscience that may load it, and be witness against you ; and if any such thing should happen to enter through your negligence, examine it immediately, and wash it off by a true and sincere repentance. Doing so, you will keep your conscience in a good state, and present it to God with confidence. It will be the test of your fidelity, and God will grant you the reward promised to the faithful servant, which you will enjoy throughout eternity.

PARABLE III.

The Manna of the Desert.

THE manna which God gave to the Israelites in the desert, is a very natural figure of the goods of this world.

I. The manna was unknown.—The first time the Israelites saw the ground covered with it, they asked one another in surprise, “What is that?” From this question, made in Hebrew, that small, white, crispy substance, was called Manna. The same question may be put respecting the goods of this world, “What is that?” Young man, you who are just beginning to behold and distinguish the objects, spread in profusion before you upon the earth, judge not of them by the impression made on your senses. You see, in the world, riches, honours, pleasures. Before you abandon yourself to these objects, learn first what they are, and ask: “What is that?” Ask it of your parents, or of some virtuous or prudent man; but particularly ask it of the Father of lights, that you may not be deceived as to the nature and use of these blessings. You will see the greatest part of men running after them, and labouring without intermission to procure them; and yet never satisfied with them, when obtained. You will observe others, on the contrary, who contemn these worldly advantages, who fear and quit them. At this sight, ask again: “What is that? Whence comes this difference in the judgments and conduct of people?”

II. The manna was a white substance, transparent as crystal. The goods of this world have the like quality: they shine and they dazzle. Let not their splendor seduce you. Never court them; never make use of them, without first asking: "What is that?"

III. The manna came from heaven. The goods of the world have God for their author. It is God that created the earth: it is by his order that it produces so many different things, so many fruits, so many metals, so much riches. It is God who regulates the different ranks of men: it is he, who makes kings, potentates, great and illustrious personages, and who confers on them the glory that surrounds them: it is he likewise, who makes the poor and the ignorant, and who supports them in their lowly and abject state. It is God, in fine, that is the Creator and Bestower of all the pleasures that are on the earth: who gave the senses to your body, and to your soul the faculties necessary to enjoy them. This first truth leads you to a second, viz. that God, in creating these good things, had his views, to which you ought to conform, as he will, one day, demand an account of the manner in which you have employed his benefits. He will examine, if, in the use of these goods, you have conformed to his laws, or disregarded them. If then there be any of these goods, which he forbids you the use of, in order to try your fidelity, from these it is your duty to abstain: if there be others, the use of which he has regulated, you are obliged to observe the rules he has established, and to keep within the bounds of moderation, justice, and charity, which he has

marked out, and not live as if, in the acquisition, the possession, or the enjoyment of these goods, you had no master, but were at full liberty to do as you pleased.

IV. The manna was a very small substance, which very well expresses the insignificance of the goods, pomps, and pleasures of this world. You must not judge of these by the noise and bustle made by worldlings; judge of them rather from the satisfaction they derive from them. Interrogate them, examine them closely; and, among those who enjoy these goods with the greatest relish, and in the greatest abundance, you will not find one that is satisfied.

V. The manna was a transient good; that is to say, it was to serve as food for the Hebrew people, only during the time of their journey through the desert, and till they entered the Land of Promise. After this, the manna was no longer to fall for their nourishment and support. In like manner, the goods of this world are given us in the desert, and during the pilgrimage of this life: but at our death, which will be our entrance into eternity, other goods, other glory, other delights are reserved for us. What will the goods of this world then be to us? They will be taken away, both from those foolish ones, whose heart was attached to them, and from the wise, who, contemning them, used them only in conformity to the will of God.

VI. The measure of manna was regulated for each individual: no one was to gather more than a certain quantity each day. They who out of greediness, gathered more, gained nothing by it;

for, on reaching home, they found no more than the measure prescribed, the rest having melted away. The measure of the goods of this life likewise is regulated according to the wants of each one in his particular state. Were this measure, as prescribed by Providence, observed by every body, there would be more than enough for every one, nor would any be in want. Of what use is the accumulation of riches to the miser? Does he live more sumptuously on that account? Often less so. Is the ambitious man more content and more honoured, for having so many dignities united in himself? These are often the cause of his being more uneasy and more contemned. What better is the voluptuary, for possessing such a profusion of delights, and wallowing in them? Is he the more happy? Does he, on that account, enjoy better health? On the contrary, he is often, in consequence of his excess, made more infirm, and rendered incapable of tasting the innocent and moderate pleasures, which otherwise he might have enjoyed.

VII. The manna required vigilance and labour. It was necessary to gather it before sun-rise: it was to be ground, kneaded, baked, and made bread of. Poverty, brought on by idleness, does not deserve compassion. Work, placing your confidence in God, and you will never want bread.

VIII. The manna spoiled by keeping; so that they, who wished to keep it from one day to another, found it the next day corrupted and full of maggots. An exact image this of the little dependance there is to be placed on the goods of this world. Worms, thieves, unsuccessful specu-

lations, the injustice of men, the intemperature of the air, the irregularity of the seasons, a thousand unforeseen accidents, daily deprive us of some property or other, on the enjoyment and possession of which we thought we could depend with certainty.

IX. The manna, in certain cases, was incorruptible. Every Friday a double quantity was gathered, one half of which kept without spoiling, for Saturday's use. This was done, that the law of holy rest on the Sabbath-day might not be violated. Moses took a Gomer* (one day's allowance) of manna, which he put into the ark, for the purpose of carrying it into the Promised Land, that it might be to the Hebrew people a monument of the benefits God had bestowed upon them; and that the remembrance of his loving kindness might never fail to excite their love and confidence: and this manna did not spoil. The Promised Land and the Sabatical Rest were figures of Heaven and of Eternity. The use we make of the goods of this life for heaven, for God, for the salvation and relief of our neighbour, changes the nature and the quality of them. Of corruptible, as they are, it makes them incorruptible; of fleeting and perishable, it makes them lasting and permanent; of temporal, it makes them eternal. Happy the man, who knows and practices this admirable and divine secret!

X. In fine, the manna had different tastes, according to the dispositions of those who ate it; so that to some it was insipid and disgusting; to

* Or Homer, measuring about five pints.

others it was delicious, and of exquisite flavour: in like manner, the goods of this world, according to the use that shall have been made of them in this life, will procure in the next, for some, insupportable disgust and bitterness; for others, a relish, delicious and unspeakable.

PARABLE IV.

The Sleep-Walker.

THE King of Korea* sent two officers of his household to fish for pearls for him. He wanted these pearls to make a superb-necklace, which he intended to present to his father: that is to say, to the Emperor of China,† this Emperor being so called by the Kings, that are tributary to him. One of these officers he sent to the eastern coast of Korea; the other, to the western. He charged

* Korea, or Corea, is a peninsula lying to the N. E. of China.

† China is an extensive empire of Asia, being about 3500 British miles in length from E. to W. and 2200 in breadth from N. to S. It produces abundance of corn of every sort, and particularly rice; as also a very great quantity of silk. Tea is a production peculiar to this country, and China supplies all the rest of the world with that commodity. The English alone bring away annually fourteen millions of pounds of it. It also contains mines of every sort of metal.

China is particularly remarkable for its vast population; for the singular manners, ideas, and genius of its inhabitants; for the jealous policy of its government; for its agriculture and inland navigation; and for its celebrated

them to be very diligent, to collect as many pearls as they could, and to return to his court on a certain appointed day. Mindao was the name of the one dispatched to the eastern coast. He acquitted himself of his commission with assiduity and with success. He went every night to the coast with a lamp, and employed his time in fishing; and during the day he took his repose. As for the other, named Yanki, who had been ordered to the western coast, where pearls were more abundant, he passed the days in amusements, and the nights in sleep. He, however, came each night to the coast; but as he was a sleep-walker, he came thither asleep, without knowing what he did; and instead of fishing for pearls, he gathered pebbles, with which he filled a basket, which he took care to bring with him. The other fishermen, that saw him from some distance, might have sworn by his manner and by his motions, that he was fishing for pearls, and that he returned loaded with them; yet he did not gather, nor did he return loaded with any thing but pebbles. On his return home, he emptied his basket, without awaking, into the casket destined to contain

wall, the most stupendous work of human labour in the world. This wall is above fifteen hundred miles in length, and is in general twenty-five feet high, and fifteen thick; and at every hundred yards there is a tower. It was built more than two thousand years ago, to protect China from the incursions of the Tartars.

The principal rivers of China are the Kian-ku and the Hoang-ho, each of which runs about two thousand two hundred miles. The chief cities are Peking, Nankin, and Canton. This last is the only port to which Europeans are permitted to trade.

his pearls. He then went to bed again, where he continued to sleep till broad day-light. During this last part of his sleep, he had the most pleasant dreams imaginable. He seemed to be on the coast fishing for pearls, which he got in great numbers, filling his basket with them, and then emptying them into his casket. On his awaking in the morning, he was so full of his dream, that he did not doubt but it was a reality; and besides he was so taken up with his pleasures, that he did not even allow himself time to look into his casket, in order to see what it contained. The whole of the time, prescribed by the king, passed in this manner. At length the day arrived when he was to return. Occupied even on that day with a thousand other objects, he packed up his casket without opening it, and arrived at court on the same day as Mindao. Both their caskets were presented to the king: Mindao's was opened first, and a great many fine pearls found in it. The king was so well pleased, that he immediately appointed Mindao governor of a province, and gave him a considerable pension. Yanki flattered himself that he should receive an equal reward: but what was the surprise of all present, when, on his casket being opened, instead of pearls, it was discovered to contain nothing but pebble-stones. Yanki could not believe his eyes: but the king who considered this as an insult, was so irritated, that he gave orders for Yanki to be stoned to death, with the very pebbles he had had the impudence to present him with.

Yanki wished to make his excuses; but the king would not hear him, and withdrew in a vio-

lent passion. He, however, contrived to get an audience of the chancellor of the kingdom, and endeavoured to excuse himself, by lamenting the misfortune of being a sleep walker, this being, he thought, the sole cause of the disaster. But the chancellor answered, that, since he knew that he walked in his sleep, he ought to have taken the precautions necessary to keep himself awake : that he ought, at least, during the day to have examined the transactions of the night ; that he ought, before his return, or, at least, before he presented himself at court, to have examined the contents of his casket, and not to have exposed himself to the anger and indignation of his sovereign. Yanki allowed that he had done wrong, and was satisfied to petition that he might be again sent to the coast, promising to repair his fault. Oh ! interrupted the chancellor, the king does not twice expose the glory of his commands to the disobedience of his officers. Saying this he withdrew, and poor Yanki was led out to punishment.

It is easy to discover the drift of this parable. We are all placed in this world to gather and lay up pearls ; that is to say, to practice virtue and good works. It is Jesus Christ, our King, who sends us, and furnishes us with the opportunities and the means. It is to him that our merits must be referred, and through him that they must be offered to God, his Father. We can, directed by the light of faith, gather some on the eastern coast ; that is, in prosperity ; but the western coast, the way of afflictions and sufferings, is the richest, and abounds most in them.

Alas ! in this lower world, how many sleep and

dream; who, instead of pearls, worthy of being presented to their King, amass nothing but pebbles, which offend him, and enkindle his wrath, and are calculated only to be instrumental in their own punishment. Is it not amassing stones instead of pearls, to suffer our whole time to be taken up with the goods of the earth, with the honours and pleasures of this life, and to neglect the goods of eternity? What is that man, who piques himself on his probity, but who has no religion; who does good works but who has not true faith? He is a sleeper and a dreamer. Again, what is the man who suffers without patience and resignation; who attends divine service without devotion; who recites his prayers without attention; who fulfils the duties of his state without a right intention; who is actuated in what he does by natural feeling, custom or human motives? He is a sleep-walker, who does not know what he is about; who has the appearance of virtue, and imitates its ways and motions, without its merits; who, in a word, gathers nothing but pebble-stones; and who, instead of a reward, has every reason to apprehend punishment.

Awake, ye that sleep; think of what you are doing: open your eyes, and see what you are amassing. Do not go and present yourselves before your King, and appear at his tribunal, without knowing what you take thither; and without having first well examined what there is in your conscience, before it is presented and laid open to his view. During life, you may still remove the stones, and substitute pearls in their place, by a true sorrow, a sincere repentance, the sacra-

ments and good works. But, when you have once entered eternity, do not expect a second life will be granted you, to repair the errors of the first. Do now what you would then wish to have done : for nothing will then remain to you, but to receive either punishment, or reward, for what you shall have done in this life.

PARABLE V.

*The Astronomer in Lapland.**

AN astronomer, by order of the king his master, set sail for the northern climes, to observe the passage of Venus over the sun's disk. Upon his arrival in Lapland, he found that the inhabitants of that country, who are of a very diminutive size, had not yet left their winter habitations. These were deep caverns under ground, having no other opening than the door by which they entered. In these caverns were kept up immense and continual fires, made of whole trees, quite green, and with their leaves on : the rising smoke was so thick, that they could not see, much less distinguish one another, when they approached to warm themselves.

* Lapland, in the N. of Europe, is a dreary country, being almost entirely a mass of rugged mountains, gloomy vallies, dusky forests, and noisome morasses and lakes. The inhabitants are few in number, and in an uncivilized state. They subsist chiefly on the milk and flesh of their rein-deer, and they make use of these animals to draw their sledges when they travel. It is subject to Sweden.

One calm and fine evening, before the Laplanders had retired to their subterraneous abodes, our astronomer, who had already made his observations, explained to them the course of the stars, told them their names, and pointed out the planets to them. The Laplanders were wonderfully delighted with hearing him discourse, and in viewing the instruments he made use of. One took up a quadrant, but understood nothing of the use of it: another looked through a telescope, but could see nothing. The names of Descartes, Newton, and Copernicus, caused loud and continued bursts of laughter among them. At last, the chief of the company, assuming a more serious air, thus addressed the astronomer: "Indeed, Sir, both you and your king, and your whole nation, must have lost your senses, to amuse yourselves with such silly fancies." The astronomer, who felt himself piqued, replied: "That you who live in darkness, who inhabit the caverns of the earth, and see not what is in them for smoke, and who know nothing of the productions of the earth; that you, I say, should be ignorant of the phenomena of the heavens, and that you should laugh at those who do observe them, and discourse to you about them is by no means surprising." On hearing this, all the Laplanders set up a frightful cry; they hooted him loudly, and perhaps would have proceeded to violence, had not the prudent astronomer instantly withdrawn. Shortly after, he returned into his native country, where he published an exact account of his observations, and a detailed memoir of his adventures. In the bosom of his family, he now enjoys the favour of his king, and the esteem of his countrymen.

I observe three things in these Laplanders :

I. Their darkness. With regard to the things that concern our salvation, we all are in this world as in a house full of smoke. The corruption of our senses, and the blind impetuosity of our passions, raise within us and about us clouds of thick vapour, which darken the pure light of our mind, and stifle the noblest sentiments of our heart. We see neither what is within us, nor what is without : we know neither what is in the world ; nor what is out of the world ; neither what is in time, nor what is in eternity ; neither the insignificance of what is temporal, nor the greatness of what is eternal. We give to earthly and perishable things the esteem and attention which things heavenly and everlasting only deserve ; and we show for the latter the contempt which the former only merit. Hence men call that good, which is evil ; and that evil, which is good. They take darkness for light, the way for the term, the place of their exile for that of their true country.

Before death, let us remove the veil from before our eyes, let us take the *torch* of Faith, which, as St. Peter says, will enlighten us in this place of darkness. Let us listen to those, who, guided by this heavenly light, teach us the important truths of salvation ; admonishing us, that eternal goods and eternal evils alone deserve our thoughts ; and that the perishable goods and evils of the earth do not merit our attention, unless in as much as they have a reference to the goods and evils of eternity.

II. Their raileries.—When I see impious men

attacking religion, heretics resisting the church, libertines scoffing at devotion, I seem to be in those northern climes, and that I hear the Laplanders giving their opinion on the subject of astronomy.

III. Their anger.—The world, at all times, has ridiculed sincere Christians, and those who wished to instruct it. Often has it persecuted them: sometimes even it has put them to death. But they are triumphing in their heavenly country, where they enjoy the eternal favour of the King of Ages, in the blessed company of angels and saints. God grant us the grace to be, one day, of this happy society.

PARABLE VI.

The Viper-Catcher.

A CERTAIN countryman was very expert in catching vipers, which he afterwards sold to an apothecary. One afternoon he was so successful, that he caught a hundred and fifty. In the evening, when he returned home, being spent with fatigue, he went immediately to bed, without taking any supper. According to his custom, he carried his vipers alive into his bed-room, and put them into a barrel, which he stopped up, but not effectually. In the night, whilst he was asleep, the vipers forced their prison, and, wanting warmth, they all made to his bed, and, crawling in between the sheets, they got upon his body, and covered him all over, without doing him any harm, and even

without awaking him, or disturbing him in the least. As it was his custom to sleep with his arms out of bed, he was strangely surprised in the morning (he did not awake till late) to see vipers twisted all round his arms. "Ah!" exclaimed he, "I am a dead man; the vipers have escaped." He had the prudence, however, not to stir, as he perceived they were entwined also round his neck, legs, thighs, in fine, round every part of his body. What a condition! Still, he was not disconcerted; but recommending himself earnestly to God, he quietly called his servant. When she had opened the chamber door,—“Dont come in,” said he to her, “but go down stairs, and fill the large kettle half full of milk; then make it lukewarm, but no more. You will bring the kettle, and place it in the middle of my room, making as little noise as possible. Don’t shut the door—go—make haste—don’t lose a moment.”——No sooner was the kettle in the room, than the vipers, smelling the milk, begin to let go their hold. He sees those on his arms untwisting themselves, and making for the milk; those on his neck he hears crawling away; and presently he finds his legs and all his body at perfect liberty.—What inexpressible joy! He, however, keeps himself quite composed, giving all the vipers time to leave his bed. At length, seeing them all safe in the kettle, he gets up; and finding them almost drowned, and quite stupified, he takes them out with a pair of nippers, one by one, and cuts off their heads. Immediately, falling on his knees, he gives hearty thanks to God, for having delivered him from so imminent a danger. This duty performed, he

goes down and relates what had just happened to him. The recital caused him, and all that heard him, to shudder. The vipers he sent to the apothecary, desiring the person that took them to tell him he must not expect any more from him. In fact, he gave up his trade, and conceived so strong an aversion to vipers, that he could not bear the sight of them, but the name even, or the thought of them, distressed him.

A story so terrible and alarming deserves to be minutely examined and meditated on.

I. The condition of this man in his bed.—When I consider this man covered all over with living vipers, my blood goes cold, and the bare idea makes me shudder. What a situation! Can a more dreadful one be conceived? Yes, that of a soul in mortal sin, is a thousand times more dreadful. When I consider a sinner, either sleeping quietly in his bed, or acting with full liberty, during the course of the day, and reflect that a thousand mortal sins, and as many demons worse than vipers, possess his soul, being entire masters of it; and that his whole body, and all the senses of his body, are not surrounded only, but filled and penetrated by them, I am seized with horror and affright. The wretched sinner is not sensible of the horror of his state; he is as one asleep. Neither was the viper-catcher sensible of his danger; he likewise slept. Is the condition of either of them less dreadful on that account?

II. His danger during his sleep.—Had this man, during his sleep, moved in the least, which is usually the case; if, turning, he had crushed

any one of these animals ; if, by a deep breath, a sigh, or a word, he had disturbed these monsters, he would have been lost; and had he had a thousand lives he could not have saved one.—And, should the sinner happen to die suddenly in his present state ; should any of those accidents which daily occur, befall him, where would he be ? Where are they to whom these accidents have happened ? If they were in a state of mortal sin, they are lost for ever.—It would certainly be a very cruel death, to be devoured by a hundred and fifty vipers ; but what is that, after all, in comparison of hell, where the wretched sinner is the constant prey of devils, of his sins, of remorse, of despair, of eternal flames ?

III. The affright of this man on awaking.—Sinner, you will not always sleep ; you will awake at your death, when summoned by God to Judgment. And what will be your dismay, on finding yourself the enemy of God, a rebel, an imitator of Satan, a man of sin, fit for nothing but the flames of hell, that are ready to receive you, there to dwell for ever ? Ah ! do not sleep on till this fatal moment arrive : it will be too late for you. Awake now, whilst you have it in your power to remove from your bosom the vipers, you there conceal and entertain, and which are waiting to devour you. You have seen the countryman's danger ; and you cannot deny, that yours is even greater than his. Consider now, how he extricated himself, that you may do the like.

IV. His prudence.—He did not lose courage—he conceived the only expedient capable of succeeding ; and this expedient did succeed. In

like manner, in considering the dreadful state of your soul, do not you lose courage, do not give yourself up to despair; do not say with Cain—"My iniquity is too great to hope for pardon." Were you a thousand times a greater sinner than you are, the mercy of God being infinite, would be infinitely greater than your sins. You have no need to look out, and contrive the means of freeing yourself from your sins; this is already done for you, and the mercy of God offers it you. It is the blood of Jesus Christ, in which you must, as it were, drown all your sins, by a good confession. Let not this word disturb you, keep yourself composed: do not look upon this work as impossible, or too difficult. God does not require impossibilities; and he will help you to do what you have to do. In the first place confess the sins you remember: afterwards endeavour *deliberately* to discover the others; and give time to all the vipers to go out. Do not be afraid: they will all leave you.

V. His joy on seeing himself delivered. This joy must certainly have been great; but it is nothing in comparison with that, which a sinner, converted and restored to the favour of his God, experiences. But who can comprehend the joy, that will fill this sinner's soul, when being for ever delivered from all his enemies, he shall be invited to enter into the joy of his Lord? Ah! how will he then congratulate himself for having freed himself from his sins; for having renounced, confessed, detested and expiated them.

VI. His resolution. He cuts off the head of every viper, without sparing one. He entirely

gives up a trade, which was near being his ruin. In a word, he conceives an eternal aversion to what had placed him in so great danger. You understand what all this means : put it then in practice. Flee sin, as you would the sight of an adder, or a viper.

PARABLE VII.

The Beam in the Water.

Two countrymen brought to a certain town, two cart loads of wood for sale. The wood being sold, they went to take a walk by the side of the river. Observing a beam in the water, pushed along by a youth, with one hand, towards a certain place on the shore. "What wood can that be," said they to one another, "for a child to steer it where he pleases?" The master carpenter, who was waiting for the boy to bring the balk to the edge, hearing this discourse of the two countrymen, thus accosted them; "My friends, if you wish to know what wood this balk is, and how light it is, let us strike a bargain. When my boy has brought it to the edge of the river, if you two can draw it quite out of the water for me, I will give you twelve francs;* but, if you cannot, you shall put your horses to it, to draw it out, and give me six francs, which we will spend in a dinner at yonder inn." The proposal seemed advantageous. "If the beam," said one of the countrymen, "be so

* About 10s.

thin and light, that the boy can guide it hither without help, it will be a sad pity, if we two cannot draw it out." The bargain was agreed to, and the money deposited in the hands of the landlady, who was come to the place to wash some linen, and was much surprised at the simplicity of the countrymen. The beam being arrived at the appointed place, the two countrymen, one on each side, set about drawing it out of the water: but, after having hauled and pulled for a long time to no purpose, they at last owned themselves overcome. They had nothing to do, but to draw the beam out with their horses, and pay for the dinner.

The small and trivial faults which we discover in others, our Lord in the Gospel calls *motes*; and the grievous and weighty transgressions, which we ourselves are guilty of, he calls *beams*. A beam, sailing on the water, does not appear what it is, either as to its thickness or weight. With respect to its thickness, one half of it is hid under the water: and as to its weight, a child may move it and guide it where he pleases. But, when it is to be drawn out of the water, then are discovered its real thickness and heavy weight.

This life is a vast ocean, on which we are all sailing, and with us the sins with which we are loaded. These sins do not appear half what they are. We hide a part of them from the sight of men, under a deceitful exterior; and many do we hide from ourselves, by dissembling, excusing, or forgetting them. Besides, those we do perceive seem light and trifling, because they swim, as it were, in the waters of the false maxims of the

world, and in the tide of bad example, which authorises them. But when the time comes for us to draw them out of this water, in order to present them before the tribunal of God, then they will appear what they are, of enormous bulk and weight. When those tricks of trade, those secret frauds, those artful calumnies, those perverse intentions, shall be drawn out of the water, and confronted, not with the customs of the world, but with the law of the gospel; not with the corruption of men, but with the sanctity of God; then, yes, then will be seen their enormity; then will be felt their immense weight. Let us, therefore, efface them by repentance, before we leave this world, that we may not be overwhelmed by them when we appear before our God.

Sin appears light and trifling, when we commit it, but heavy and enormous, when we come to confess it. How then will it appear, if we carry it unrepented of before the tribunal of God?

PARABLE VIII.

Empedócles on Mount Etna.

ETNA is a mountain of Sicily,* which continually emits vast quantities of fire and flame. This is a true image of hell; and an image too of that impure flame which leads thither. I therefore compare this burning mountain to assemblies,

* Sicily is an island in the Mediterranean Sea, pleasant and fertile. In the middle is Mount Etna, the most celebrated volcano in the world. It has sometimes thrown its

balls, plays, which like so many Etnas, are always surrounded with flames, causing a conflagration in every heart. Besides these, how many individual Etnas are there, some on the gay parade and public walks, others in our domestic circles, whose fires are equally dangerous. All these cannot be too much dreaded, nor too carefully avoided. To approach them, is to wish to perish in them. Whoever fears sin, ought to avoid the occasions of sin.

Empedócles, a celebrated ancient philosopher, but more famous for his death, than for his life and writings, was curious to take a near view of the fires of Mount Etna. He wished of himself to know the nature of these fires; how they issued from the mountain, and what vestiges they left behind them. He wished to see the top of the mountain, to know the nature of the soil, to examine the construction of the place, and to ascertain the truth of what others had said of them. In a word, he wished to talk wisely about them: not from what others had said of them, but from his own actual observation.

More than once did his disciples endeavour to dissuade him from an enterprise so dangerous and rash. They represented to him, that all who had attempted to survey the mountain, had perished in

ashes to the distance of eighty miles. Sicily is separated from Italy by the Strait of Messina, famous for the Scylla and Charybdis of the ancients; the former a rock, the latter a whirlpool. This island belongs to the King of Naples. The chief cities are Palermo, (where the Viceroy resides,) Messina, and Syracuse. This last was once famous for its wealth and magnificence.

the attempt; that one ought to be satisfied with knowing of this mountain, what could be made out from a distance, and without risk; and as to the rest, to reason about it from conjecture, not from experience. They represented to him, that the summit must be calcined, and that, while he thought he was placing his foot on solid ground, there was danger of his placing it on an abyss of ashes, and of being swallowed up. They represented to him, in fine, that the fire not always issuing from the same part of the mountain, a sudden eruption might take place under his feet, burn him alive, and reduce him to ashes, even before he reached the bottom of the abyss.

Empedócles answered, that they were too easily alarmed; that their fears exaggerated the danger, which was not near so great as they represented; that a philosopher ought not to suffer himself to be intimidated, like common people; that if they who had ascended before him, had perished there, it was because they did not go thither like philosophers, and with the necessary precautions; that, as for himself, he had taken safe measures, and ran no risk; that he would see and examine every thing; that he should return safe and sound, and would bring them an account of his discoveries.

The philosopher did not say what the measures were that he intended to adopt; they would have appeared too ridiculous. They were only two: the first, to carry with him a walking-stick, for the purpose of examining the ground, before he trod on it; the second, to go barefoot, that he might know whether the ground was hot, or began to be so, in order to have it in his power to withdraw before an eruption took place.

Wherefore, one fine morning, Empedócles, without saying a word to any one, takes his stick, and sets off to the mountain. He leaves his sandals at the bottom, and climbs barefoot to the summit. It happened that two of his disciples had, at the same time, taken a walk to a neighbouring mountain, for the purpose of enjoying the fresh air: these were much surprised to see a man walking on the top of Mount Etna. They concluded it to be their master, and were horror-struck at the danger to which he was exposed. But what could be done? Nothing could dissuade him from his enterprise. They, therefore, contented themselves with following him with their eyes, and observing what might become of him.

Having reached the summit, Empedócles was enchanted at the novelty of the scene before him. He there saw a thousand objects, curious, and deserving the attention of an amateur; but which, in the eyes of every other person, would have appeared hideous and contemptible. To his astonished sight, calcined rocks, mountains of ashes, presented themselves: he saw pools of melted and stinking sulphur, holes and crevices, through which at that moment, flames were actually bursting forth to a prodigious height.

Empedócles walked round this terrible volcano with more than philosophic intrepidity. His stick saved him from more than one abyss; and his feet more than once warned him to change his situation. He had even sometimes the consolation to see the seasonableness of the change, the fire darting forth with a burst from the very place he had the moment before quitted. He was applauding himself for what he had done, and was pre-

paring to descend, replete with the idea of the honour and glory that would accrue to him, for having been able, without fear and without accident, to explore the whole of this famous mountain, which no mortal before him had attempted without losing his life ; and to have it in his power to say, in recounting its marvellous curiosities : “ I have been there ; I have seen them.” While he is taken up with these thoughts, and taking another glance at the objects which struck him most, and a description of which he proposed giving, he was not sufficiently attentive to the warning of his feet, or perhaps his feet did not give him a timely warning ; for there burst forth under him a whirlwind of flames, which carried his half burnt stick far from him. As for himself, whether he was consumed in the flames, or swallowed up, or both, is not known. All that is known is, that he never appeared more, nor was any part of him ever found.

His disciples, witnesses of this terrible catastrophe, ran immediately to the place where they saw the stick fall ; and having found it, they discovered to their extreme sorrow, that it was their master's walking-stick. They afterwards went round the mountain, to see if they could not find any of his limbs scattered about ; but they found nothing but his sandals, which, with the stick, they deposited in the Temple of Prudence, to warn those that should see them, that true prudence consists in keeping out of the way of danger, and in using suitable precautions, when the danger is unavoidable.

PARABLE IX.

Women.

A LADY, of strong sense and exalted piety, said one day to a young canon, in presence of a large company: "I have heard an observation made upon you, Reverend Sir, which is certainly not to your disadvantage. People say, that whether in the street, or in the house, you never look a woman in the face." "Madam," replied the canon, "women are to me, what bayonets are to women: the more naked and shining they are, the more they alarm me, and the more eager am I to take my eyes off them." "You are right," said the lady; "bayonets frighten us on account of the cruel wounds they inflict; and the wounds inflicted by women are certainly not less so." "There is still something else," replied the canon, "the sight of bayonets cannot, in reality do any harm; whereas the mere sight of a woman may inflict deep wounds; and, in some instances, has inflicted wounds incurable." "In that case," said the lady, "you might moreover have compared women to fire-arms, that carry a great way." "I could likewise, Madam, compare them to fire-works, whence issue blazing squibs, that spread on every side, and burn those, who, thinking themselves in safety, approach too near." "I have read on this subject," said one in the company, "a sentence in scripture, the two members of which do not seem to me to agree. Job somewhere says, that he had made a covenant with his

eyes, not even to think of a woman." "The two members of this sentence," answered the canon, "agree perfectly well. The meaning is, that the sure way not to think of a woman, is, not to look at her." The gentleman who had started this difficulty, proposed another question. "What do you think," said he, "of the following story, which I have somewhere read? A certain priest, exorcising a possessed person, asked the devil, which was the sin that men were most easily drawn into?" "There are two in particular," replied the fiend, "in which we endeavour to entangle them, because we then look upon them as entirely at our disposal; and they seldom or never disengage themselves. The first is, the unjust possession of other people's property, which they do not restore even at their death: the second is, the love of women, of which they are not corrected even in extreme old age; continuing even then to sin, if not by actions, at least by looks, thoughts and desires." "However true the story may be," subjoined the canon, "it contains at least a very good moral. Thus to spite the devil, let us preserve ourselves from both these sins: and to prove him a lying spirit, let those who have the unhappiness to be engaged in either, or both of these vices, take effectual measures to disengage and correct themselves." As the young canon said this, he got up to retire. "We see plainly," said the lady to him, "that you will not only not look at women, but that you do not even like their company for any length of time." "Madam," answered the canon, "I find nothing in my present company, but what is agreeable and

edifying; but I hear the bells summoning me. Our first virtue, from which we ought to fear being diverted by women, is exactness in performing our duties."

PARABLE X.

Pious Cheat of a Capuchin.

A YOUNG gentleman, of amiable manners and great possessions, had paid his addresses to a young lady of rare accomplishments and immense fortune. Every thing was settled for their marriage, and they only waited the arrival of a relation, to celebrate the nuptials. In the mean time, the young gentleman had a short journey to make, which would require him to be absent for a few days: but, before he set off, he made the lady a present of his portrait, set in a beautiful gold snuff-box. The lady, on her side, determined to send her portrait also to her intended, before his return.

She knew a Capuchin, who excelled in miniature painting; and, as she wished her portrait to be executed in a masterly manner, she addressed herself to him. The father, at first, refused, saying, that if he had any talent that way, he did not choose to employ it for such a purpose. After repeated solicitations, however, the father suffered himself to be prevailed on, and undertook to do it.

He painted no more, at first, than the head, and sent it to the lady for her approbation. A finer head could not possibly be—the young lady

was in raptures—she shewed it to her friends, and to every one that came to the house: all agreed they had never seen any thing so beautiful, and so well executed. She sent it back to the father, accompanied with a handsome present, begging of him to finish so excellent a work, and to send it her back as soon as possible.

In fact, the father did finish it—but how? instead of painting a beautiful figure under so fine a head, he painted a skeleton with all the niceness and perfection of his art, and sent it back to the lady. She undid the parcel with eagerness: but—when she saw this shocking thing appended to the head, she became so outrageous, that, had the Capuchin been within her reach, she would have disfigured him. She was loud in her complaints, demanded signal vengeance on the man who had played her so shameful a trick.

She, however, took delight in looking at the head; but not being able to admire it, without at the same time, seeing the object of horror, she again became furious, and vented her anger against the father, and against the whole order of Capuchins. Nevertheless, the skeleton by degrees lost many of its terrors. Alas! said she, after all, am I not one day or other to come to this? It was not a trick the good father wished to play me, but rather a lesson he intended to give me: let me profit by it. Whilst she was employed in these reflections, she heard the bell at the Carmelites' ring for Benediction. Thither she goes—the skeleton recurs to her mind—she sheds tears—she hesitates—at length she determines:—she enters among the nuns, and takes the habit.

From hence she sends her picture to her lover, and writes to him the reflections she had made, and the part she had taken, exhorting him to do as much.

The young gentleman, on receiving this news, becomes distracted, leaves every other business, and comes home. He hastens to the convent, and demands an audience with the young lady. She sends him word, that she is too much engaged to come down into the parlour; that he has her portrait and her letter; that he may look at them both, and then make his reflections. More enraged at this answer, he hurries to the Capuchins, and asks for the painter, but he was no longer there; he had foreseen the storm, and was gone to another convent. He then asks to see the Father Guardian, who, having received the first volley of his abuse, mildly exhorted him to patience, and gave him to understand, that all this was an effect of Providence, wishing to detach him from the world, that he might fix his affections upon God alone.

The young man, overpowered by fatigue, uneasiness, and vexation, returns home, and throws himself upon his bed, to take a little repose: but his soul was too much agitated to allow it. He takes from his pocket the letter—then the portrait:—he looks first at one, and then at the other:—he sighs—he sheds tears. After a few moments silence—“What a fool I am,” said he to himself, “to fix my heart on corruption, whilst I have it in my power to love God; to attach myself to the earth, while I can gain heaven. Come, I will not be overcome by a woman: I will, at least, sum-

mon the courage to imitate her." Saying this, he rises, goes and throws himself at the feet of the Father Guardian, communicates to him his determination, and asks for the habit.

As soon as he had received it, he wrote to the Carmelite, to inform her of his change, and to recommend himself to her prayers. The answer of the Carmelite was in the same style. From that time, they neither saw one another, nor did they write to one another; but, after a long life spent in unabated fervour, they both died on the same day, in the odour of sanctity.

What happiness do they now enjoy in the blessed mansions of eternity! If we wish to partake in their happiness, let us think as they did, and put our reflections in practice.

PARABLE XI.

Definition of the present Life.

A PHILOSOPHER was one day asked, what this life was, and he answered: "It is the journey a criminal makes (after his sentence has been read to him) from prison to the place of execution." In fact, we are all condemned to death from our mother's womb; and from the time of our birth, we are continually advancing towards the place of punishment. Our eyes, to be sure, are not covered with bandages, as are those of criminals, but which is the same thing, the place of punishment is hidden from us. We are continually making towards it, without knowing where it is, or whether we are near it, or at a distance from it.

All that we know is, that we approach nearer and nearer to it every day; and that we shall reach it before we are aware. It may be, we are there now, or only one step from it.

One thing, besides, of which we are ignorant, is the kind of death to which we are condemned, that not being specified in the sentence, and known only to Almighty God. Will it be mild, or severe? Will it be sudden, or protracted? Shall we, or shall we not, have time to enter into ourselves, and place our affairs in order? Of all this we know nothing.

What is really astonishing, is, that, being under the sentence of death during our journey from our prison to the place of our punishment, we should sin, laugh, joke, and fool away our time in empty projects and childish enterprises. But, does it not often happen, that people, in the midst of their pleasures and enterprises, reach the term which they imagined to be far distant; and that they are obliged to undergo their last punishment unprepared, because they never allowed it a place in their thoughts.

PARABLE XII.

*The Oracle of Delphi.**

WHEN the ancient philosophers had any fa-

* Delphi, now Castri, a town of Phocis, situate in a valley at the S.W. side of Mount Parnassus. It was famous for a Temple of Apollo and for an Oracle, celebrated in every age and country.

avourite dogma, that they wished to be credited and adopted, they always gave it out as received from some oracle. Over these oracles the devil presided, who cannot be supposed to have uttered truths, such as they wished their dogmas to be thought.

It is said that Zeno†, wishing to lead a virtuous life, went to consult the Delphic oracle, to know what he was to do, to live in the constant practice of virtue; and that the oracle gave him this answer: "Consult the dead."

In fact, for a Christian in particular, there is no means more efficacious, and more easy to reform his life, and more conducive to preserve him in the practice of virtue, than the thought of death and eternity. Did we but consult our relations and friends, that are already dead, and those whom we have seen die, and attended to the grave, and ask them what we have to do; what would their

† Zeno was the founder of the sect of the Stoics. His school at Athens was attended by the great, the learned, and the powerful. His life was an example of soberness and moderation; his morals were austere; and to his temperance and regularity he was indebted for the continual flow of health which he enjoyed. After he had taught publicly for 48 years, he died in the 98th year of his age, B.C. 264.—An arbitrary command over the passions was one of the rules of Stoicism. The Stoic could view with indifference health or sickness, riches or poverty, pain or pleasure; none of which could either move or influence the serenity of his mind. It was his duty to study himself: in the evening, he was enjoined to review, with critical accuracy the events of the day; and to regulate his future conduct with more care, and always to find an impartial witness within his own breast.

answer be?—How holy would our life be, how sweet and pleasant our death, did we but listen to and follow the lessons the dead would give us.

The more useful the thought of death is towards regulating our lives, the more does man, an enemy to restraint, divert his thoughts from it, by living in an entire forgetfulness of it. But the wisest people, as well whole nations as individuals, Pagans as well as Christians, have been careful to recall, by divers devices, so salutary a thought, being persuaded, that, though we forget death, death does not forget us.

Formerly, in China, on the eve of the coronation of an emperor, each of the sculptors of the city of Pekin presented to him a piece of marble, for him to choose which he would have his tomb made of, as they had to begin to work at it from the very day of his coronation. The sculptor, on whose marble the emperor fixed his choice, was the same that had to work it; and the town paid him in advance. This ceremony was attended with a great deal of pomp, and was, for the people, but particularly for the emperor, an important lesson. Let it be such to you; and reflect, that round about you, all nature is incessantly at work preparing you a grave.

At the ceremony of the coronation of the Kings of Abyssinia,* they were presented with a vase filled with earth, and a death's head, to admonish them of what they were one day to come to, with-

* Abyssinia is a large empire of Africa. It is exceedingly fertile, and abounds both in wild and tame animals. The capital is Gonda.

out the crown being able to preserve them from the common lot of man.

At this day, at the installation of the Roman Pontiff, a clerk carries a little tow at the top of a reed, and, lighting the tow at a wax taper, he burns it before the Pontiff, saying: Holy Father, thus passes away the glory of the world."

Philip, King of Macedonia,† and father of Alexander the Great, had given orders to one of his pages to say to him three times each morning: "Sire, remember you are a man." This word alone says every thing.

The emperor Maximilian I. had his coffin made four years before his death. He kept it in his bedroom; and when he travelled, he always took it with him. He found it a useful monitor: and having followed its counsels during life, he saw undisturbed the moment arrive, when he was shortly to be shut up in it.

The Cathusians greet one another in this manner: "Remember death;" because there is nothing more powerful than this remembrance, to make us persevere in the rugged paths of virtue, by keeping constantly in our mind, that our sufferings will soon be over, and followed by eternal happiness, delivering us from eternal evils.

St. Bernard was accustomed to repeat frequently to himself during the day: "If thou wert

† Macedonia, formerly a celebrated kingdom of Europe under Philip and Alexander, is now a province of Turkey. The air is clear, sharp, and wholesome; and the soil, for the most part, fertile. The capital is Salonichi, the ancient Thessalonica.

to die to-day, wouldst thou do that?" And, when he began any good action, or any work of obligation, he used to ask himself: "Wert thou to die after this action, how wouldst thou do it?" Thus, by a constant remembrance of death, he kept himself in unabated fervour.

P A R A B L E XIII.

The Pope's Penitent.

A GENTLEMAN of great family, but a great sinner, determined at last to be converted. For this purpose, he went to Rome, and wished much to have the comfort of making his confession to the Pope. The Pope heard him, and was edified at the accuracy of his confession, the liveliness of his sorrow, and the generosity of his resolutions. But when the Pope proposed his penance, the penitent could not submit to any. As for fasting, he had not strength to fast; for reading and prayer, he had no time; making a retreat, undertaking a pilgrimage, interfered with his other business. To watching and lying on the ground he objected, because his health would not allow it. Besides, there was another reason for complying with none, which he did not mention; and that was, his dignity. What was to be done? The Pope gave him a gold ring, on which were engraven these two words:—"Memento mori—remember thou must die:" and the penance he imposed on him was, to wear this ring on his finger, and to read the words that were on it at least once a day.

The gentleman withdrew very well satisfied, congratulating himself on the trifling penance he had got: but this was a preparation and introduction to all the others. The thought of death entered so forcibly, and with so good effect, into his mind, as to discover to him the mortality of his present state, and he cried out: "Well! since I must die, what else have I to do in this world, than prepare myself for a good death? What use is there in caressing a body, that will soon be the food of worms? Why be so careful of my health, which death will at length destroy? The effect of these reflections was, that every kind of penance, after this, appeared trifling and easy to him. He embraced them all, and persevered in the practice of them till his death, which was precious in the sight of God, edifying to his neighbour, and full of comfort to himself.

Ah! did we but seriously reflect on this sentence—"I am to die;"—did we but draw the just conclusions, resulting from it—"Since I am to die;"—did we pay serious attention to the admonition it gives us—"Am I not to die?"

As to the rest, let not these terrible words alarm you. Only take your measures, and death will have no terrors for you.

P A R A B L E XIV.

The Thread of Life.

OUR eternal happiness, or misery, depends on our death; our death depends on our life;—and our life hangs but by a thread. But this thread is

very weak, and easily broken, cut, or burnt. This thread fails us at the time we expect it the least: sometimes, when we think it is the strongest; and sometimes, by the very means we employ to strengthen and secure it; as you shall see in the tragical end of Don Carlos, King of Navarre.* The relation cannot fail to excite in us feelings of horror and astonishment.

No man could be more enslaved to the shameful vices of the flesh, than was this king. Finding himself, at last, worn out with his debaucheries, and utterly incapable of pursuing his excesses, he consulted his physicians. They prescribed, that his whole body should be covered with a sheet soaked with brandy, to remain four and twenty hours in this sheet stitched fast about him. The king would have the operation performed by the youngest and dearest of his mistresses, but who was, at the same time, the most giddy and thoughtless. This woman, having finished sewing the sheet on the king's body, and not having her scissars at hand to cut off the thread, had the imprudence to take the wax candle to burn it. The thread, being impregnated with brandy, took fire; which, communicating with the sheet, set the whole of it in a blaze. What an uproar was there in the palace! what hurry! what confusion! Every thing was done to save the king, but to no purpose; he wast burnt to death before any assistance could be afforded. What a life! what a death! what an eternity!

* Navarre, formerly a kingdom of Europe, lies partly in Spain, and partly in France, and is divided into the Upper and Lower. The upper belongs to Spain, the lower to France.

PARABLE XV.

Singular Taste of a King of the Bulgarians.

BOGORIS, a king of Bulgaria,* was fond of every thing frightful and terrific. To be in places the most dismal and hideous, was his delight; and to hunt the most ferocious animals, was quite an amusement to him. The hangings, pictures, and carvings in his palace, each represented some object of terror.

Being informed of a monk in the neighbourhood named Jerome, that excelled in the art of painting, he went to him, and desired him to draw a picture according to his taste, that is to say, the most frightful that he could imagine. The father complied with his wishes, and chose for his subject the last judgment. The sovereign Judge, seated on a cloud, and surrounded by his angels, appeared with an air of majesty and indignation, that had something in it at once charming and confounding. On his right hand were the just, beaming with glory; and on his left, sinners, pale, dismayed, affrighted, in expectation of their final sentence. Towards the bottom of the picture were devils, represented in shapes the most hideous and frightful. They appeared furious and threatening, being armed with all sorts of instruments of torture. Beneath yawned a frightful gulf, whence darted forth horrible whirlwinds of flame.

* Bulgaria, a mountainous province of Turkey in Europe, the vallies of which produce some corn and wine.

The infidel king, at the first sight of this picture, was quite delighted; and he declared he had never seen any thing, either so beautiful, or so terrible. But as he did not know what it represented, he requested the monk to explain each particular part to him. This Father Jerome did with so much energy and unction, that the prince, more alarmed even at the explanation, than at the picture itself, embraced Christianity; and was so penetrated with a sense of the judgments of God, that ever after, upon undertaking any thing, or when any state business was deliberated in council, he used to say: "Let us remember, that what we are going to do will be examined at the judgment-seat of God."

PARABLE XVI.

The incredulous Marquis.

WHILST Father Jerome, as mentioned in the preceding parable, was explaining to the King and the whole court the truths of the Christian Religion, and particularly that of the last judgment, a lord of the court, a Marquis, who was a relation of the king's, a free-thinker, and a very profligate man, was employed in combating what the Father said, and in proposing, chiefly against the last judgment, subtle objections and perplexing questions, which the new catechumen could not answer.

The king insisted, that the marquis should propose his difficulties to Father Jerome, in pre-

sence of the whole court, and that the father should answer them. The marquis having spoken for a long time, with a great deal of fluency and much warmth, but without any order, the father resumed his discourse, which he reduced to three principal points, viz. The resurrection of the body; the manifestation of consciences; and the confusion of sinners; and replied as follows, addressing himself to the marquis.

“First, as to the resurrection of the body.—Every thing you have advanced, my Lord, against the resurrection of the body, is no ways difficult to one who has a just idea of the power of God, and who believes this power infinite, as you yourself do. He, who gave life to every thing that breathes, can likewise restore that life when he pleases: one and the other are equally easy to him. However dispersed the ashes of the dead may be, they are not beyond the power of his arm: he will know how to find them again, to separate them, and to reunite them.

“What you object as to the identity of bodies, to prove that it is impossible for each of us to rise again with the same body, will not be any more difficult to one, who is sensible of his own weakness and ignorance, and has, at the same time, a just idea of the omnipotence of God. For, it is a lamentable thing, that we, who understand not the things in this world, which we see, should wish to comprehend every thing in the next, which we do not see, and which we know only by faith.

“You say, my Lord, that the same matter will have belonged successively to several dead bodies; and you ask, to which it will belong at the general

resurrection? And do you know, my Lord, whether the same matter may not have belonged successively to many living bodies? And does that prevent every living man from having his own body, and subsisting in this same body? You say, that you had four years ago, a sickness, which reduced you to such a degree, that you did not weigh half as much as before your indisposition. You have, however, recovered your flesh again, and you now weigh more than you did before your sickness. Does this prove that you have changed your body? Have you the same body, or have you another?

“You suppose a child to die immediately after being baptized, and to be only a foot high: now, you say, for this child to rise again in its own body, it must rise in a body only a foot high. But have not you, my Lord, though now above six feet high, been a child of a foot, and half a foot, and even less? Have you on that account changed your body? and have you not your own body, the same that you had when you came into the world? Ah! my Lord, these are mysteries in this life, and we cannot comprehend them; why then wish to comprehend those of the next? Let us believe in the word, and rest on the wisdom and power of the Author, both of this world and the next.

“You then ask, where there will be room to contain the immense multitude of bodies, when they rise again? My Lord, he who divided the children of Adam, and dispersed them over the face of the earth, providing for them subsistence and every comfort, will know where to place them,

when he comes to judgment. You had nothing to do with the first, neither are you disturbed about it: you will have nothing to do with the second; do not then make yourself uneasy about it.

“Lastly, you ask, whether we shall have the same faces in the next world that we have in this? My Lord, all these questions answer no end. He, who made this world with all that order and beautiful variety of parts, which we admire, will know how to make all things in the next conduce to his glory, to the happiness of his friends, and the punishment of his enemies. The treasures of his wisdom are not exhausted. Let us put our whole trust in him, and be only anxious to live and die in his love.

“Secondly, as to the manifestation of consciences.—I pass, my Lord, to the second part of your attack, the manifestation of consciences; and I agree with you, that, for this manifestation to be entire, it is necessary each one should know clearly and distinctly what concerns every other man. He must know their situations, their relations to each other, their natural talents and supernatural gifts; and then their actions, their thoughts, their desires, their intentions, their words, their writings, and the consequences of all these. Besides, we must know the ways of God, with regard to men in general, and the care of his particular providence with respect to each individual. These, and many other things, are immense in detail; but still, my Lord, they are not infinite, nor do they require infinite knowledge to be understood; but God can communicate to every created intelligence that degree of light

which he shall please; reserving, however, for himself, that knowledge which is infinite.

“ You repeat over and over again, that this is incomprehensible. I allow it, my Lord; but on this subject, as well as the others, we may form some idea from natural occurrences. Suppose a person has been born and brought up in a dungeon, and had never seen, except by taper-light, the objects contained in his prison, this person would not be persuaded, that there is in the world a luminary, which gives light, at the same time, to more than a hundred thousand leagues of country; and, though he should be assured that this is the case, and that all those who inhabit this vast tract of country, see distinctly, and without difficulty, all the objects it contains, all he could do, would be to believe without comprehending. The thing, however, is so, and we see and know it. Now, the difference there is between the light of a taper and that of the sun, is less than the difference between the light, which God now communicates to men, and that which he will communicate to them at the last day. You ought, then, to have no difficulty in believing, that, at the last day, every thing will be open and distinctly seen: and you ought not to flatter yourself, that there will be any of your actions, or thoughts, that will not be known by every one. We find no difficulty in believing this truth; but the consequences of it, are what alarm and terrify us: but after all, we may still turn them to our advantage.

“ I now answer the question, whether, at the last day, in heaven or in hell, we shall know one another again? As to the last day, it is certainly

manifest, that we shall know one another again ; for it is impossible the manifestation should be so clear and entire, as I have shewn it to be, without our knowing not only those with whom we have lived, but those too who have gone before, or those who shall come after us. Now, why should this knowledge, which God shall have communicated to men, upon that day be taken from them, it being so necessary for the justification of his providence, for the glory of his saints, and for the confusion of sinners ? They will not be deprived of it : it will subsist for ever. Thus, sinners will know one another to their misery ; the saints will know one another to their happiness ; and both to the glory of God, through endless ages.

“ Thirdly, as to the confusion of sinners. It remains for me, my Lord, to say a word on the supposition you make, that the number of sinners, at the last judgment, being much greater than that of the just, the former will not feel any shame for their crimes. You add, that, in this world, libertines often boast of their debaucheries even in the presence of the just. Without here examining the shame, which, even in this world, sinners may feel for their sins, on which much might be said, I answer in three words : that what sometimes makes sinners bold and insolent in this world, is their blindness, the absence of their Judge, and the distance of punishment : but when they shall see the grievousness of sin, their Judge present, and hell ready to swallow them up, then, my Lord, their confusion will be great. And as the fear of all will not

diminish the fear, which each one has for himself, so the general confusion, in which all sinners will be, will not prevent the particular confusion which each one will feel.

“ Before I conclude, I will answer another question you ask on the subject. You ask if the sins of the saints will be manifested? Certainly they will; but it will be for their glory, not their confusion. Yes, my Lord, they will appear, effaced by the blood of Jesus, and washed away by the tears of repentance. Sins, thus atoned for will not be a blemish, but an ornament, which will add to the splendor of the saints, be glorious to Jesus Christ, and increase the confusion of sinners, because, having had the same means of effacing their sins, they have not made use of them. And, as the knowledge we have of the adultery of David, of the denial of St. Peter, of the debauchery of St. Augustine, does not in the least diminish the esteem and respect we have for these great saints: so the sight of the sins of the elect will not lessen either their glory or their happiness.”

As soon as Father Jerome had ceased speaking, the king and whole court came to thank him for the comfortable instruction he had given them. As for the marquis, he withdrew, vexed at heart: and whether through prejudice, or vanity, he persisted in his incredulity, and was the only one of the whole court that did not receive baptism. Terrible judgment of God! Fatal effect of the corruption of the human heart, and of a rash curiosity, that wishes to fathom mysteries, which it ought only to believe and adore.

PARABLE XVII.

A second Narcissus.

A YOUNG gentleman, who had no brother, and who had the misfortune to lose his father while he was yet very young, lived at his seat with his mother and two sisters. Whilst the mother and her daughters were employed in works of piety and Christian charity, the young man's whole time was spent in courting and caressing his body. He would pass whole days at his toilet. His only care in the house was curling, powdering, and perfuming his hair. His mother repeatedly made him an offer to buy him a regiment: but how could he consent to enter the army, he who would never go a hunting, or shooting, for fear of deranging his curls, or of being scratched by some bramble. This love of his body had, however, in him, one good effect: it kept him entirely from every sort of debauchery; for he always guarded against excess of every kind, for fear it should impair his health, or destroy the bloom of his countenance. This singular mode of life drew upon him many reproaches and railleries: but this second Narcissus always comforted himself before his looking-glass, admiring his own sweet person, and that blooming appearance of health, in which he placed all his happiness and glory.

One day, Father Basil, superior of a neighbouring monastery, a man of great penetration, and mortified life, called at the castle, and they prevailed on him to stop dinner. It was hinted

to him by the young ladies, that, during dinner, he should try to inspire their brother with more manly and more Christian sentiments. The desert, however, was served, before a word was said on the subject. The elder of the ladies, impatient at the Father's silence, began by asking, whether it was not a shame for a young man, and much more for a gentleman, to employ his whole time about his body? "Miss," replied the Father, "the body is a great part of the man. It is by the body that man lives in this world; that he is visible to other men, and keeps up his intercourse with them. It is by the body, that man receives the most lively sentiments of pleasure and pain; that he communicates with all the other bodies in the universe; that he acts upon them, and is acted upon by them. Of all the bodies, which the Almighty has created, the human body is certainly the most beautiful and admirable, without excepting even the stars of the firmament. A body well made, exact in its proportions, healthy, active, and robust, a mien noble and majestic; and at the same time, mild and interesting; a face, all the parts of which have their charms, and all the features their beauty and regularity, and all this covered with a fine skin and beautiful complexion, and a head erect and adorned with fine hair: there is not, I repeat it, any thing in the world so beautiful. A person possessing all these advantages, would be universally admired, and there is nobody but would be glad to possess them. Therefore, I think that the body, this essential part of man, deserves all our cares, all our attention, and all our thoughts."

The young gentleman was in raptures all the time the Father was speaking: and from such a beginning the young ladies thought themselves betrayed; and this idea put them a little out of humour with the Father. The one that had proposed the question to him, said: "Indeed, Father, you lay down excellent morality: I am sure we had no reason to expect such from you." "This morality," said the mother, "is just to the taste of my son." "But," said the youngest, with some warmth, you are in this instance, Father, in contradiction with yourself. You, who exhorts others to take care of their body, what care do you take of yours? You clothe your body with a coarse sack; you make it go barefoot through thick and thin, in the depth of winter: you overpower it with work; you emaciate it by fasting; you bruise it with blows; and you give it no rest either by day or night; is this the care you take of your body?" "The care I take?" replied the Father; "that is quite a different thing:—I expect another at the General Resurrection." "And do we not all," said the young man expect the Resurrection?" "Ah! if that is the case," answered the Father, "take care what you are about. We cannot place all our happiness in our body here, and look for a better at the Resurrection. It is by now subjecting the body to penance; it is by immolating it to the service of God; it is by making it serve, work, and suffer for God, that we ensure its being given back to us, at the Resurrection, a thousand times more beautiful than the one I have described to you: and beside this, it will be immortal and impassable, and by so much

the more charming in the other world, as it shall have been humbled and mortified in this.

“When I was young,” continued the Father, “I was a great admirer of my body; I thought of nothing but it. I was told I was pretty, and I believed it. I liked to be told so: and I loved them that did tell me so. At the age of fifteen, I had the small pox. This disease alarmed and vexed me sorely, and made me think a great deal. Ah! my God, said I to myself, all the love I have had for my body, and all the attention I have paid it, have not been able to secure me from so frightful a disease, which will entirely disfigure me, and make me not to be known again! And it will be the same with all the other changes, which other people experience, and which I likewise shall be obliged to undergo. I then began to consider every age; and I found, that in each, the body undergoes some change, depriving it at every change, of some of its beauty, without any one being able to impede the course of nature, which drags us along with rapidity, in spite of ourselves, towards old age and death; often closing our existence even before we reach old age. This thought caused me to shed tears; and I fell asleep. During my sleep, somebody seemed to whisper in my ear: “Do not cry my child; use thy body in holiness during thy life, employ it, without sparing it, in the service of thy God, and in the performance of all the duties of thy state; bear, without disturbing thyself, all the changes that may happen to it, all sickness, all the infirmities it may undergo: the squeamishness of old age, and the pains of death: inure it thyself to

the rigours of penance, and at the day of the General Resurrection, God will restore it to thee perfect and resplendent, unchangeable, impassable, and immortal, and thou wilt enjoy this glorified body in Heaven, throughout eternity." Saying this, Father Basil took his leave.

When the Father was gone, our young gentleman, instead of going up to his room as usual, retired into the garden ; where he remained a long time, walking about alone, and musing on what he had just heard. He afterwards came into the parlour, where he found his two sisters busy at work. " Well, Sisters," said he, as he entered, " what do you think of Father Basil's discourse?" " That is just," said the eldest, " what my sister and I are talking about. But, what do you say of it yourself brother?" " I say, that the Father is in the right ; and that I am not in the wrong. You were always telling me, that the body was nothing, and that I must contemn and entirely undervalue it. You see, on the contrary, as the Father said, the body is an essential part of ourselves, deserving all our cares, and all our attention. It is true, I did not reflect, that the body, in this world, is but a servant : and that the good use we shall have made of it, will be the means of its being given back to us, in the next world, adorned with other qualities, which will make it, if I may be allowed the expression, a body of state parade and magnificence. It is something like the different dresses you make use of. Some you have for common use, which you do not spare, neither do you care for spoiling them ; you have others rich and brilliant, which you care-

fully reserve for feast days, and for company." "Brother," said the youngest, "you have just hit on Father Basil's idea. The day of the Resurrection will be a grand day; and there will be present a brilliant assembly. God grant we may appear there with honour." "Sister," replied the brother, "that will depend on the use we shall have made of our body; we have it in our power to make it a living victim, agreeable to God: it is given us for that end: let us profit by it."

They all did profit by it. The brother entered the army, and fasted every Wednesday and Friday. He was killed in battle; and a hair shirt was found under his uniform. The younger sister became a model of humility and penance in a monastery, to which she retired. The eldest remained with her mother, both leading a life of the most rigid penance. They all died in the odour of sanctity, full of the hope of a Glorious Resurrection.

PARABLE XVIII.

The Poet undeceived.

A POET one day went to a Convent of Carthusians, to see a relation of his; after a long conversation, he at last said to him; "Cousin, I have just finished a poem, which I think will gain me some credit. It has cost me much labour; and I am going to take two more years to polish it, and make it fit to appear before the public. It will be better," continued he, "to defer publishing it, to see what subscribers I can get." "I think," said

the Carthusian, "you would not be against deferring the publication of it two years more, could you have a certainty, that your poem, as soon as it appeared, would be read and admired by all Paris, the Court, and all France, would you?" "Certainly not," said the Poet, "and I should think those four years well employed." "But," continued the Carthusian, "should any one ensure you, that, by deferring it four years more, your poem would be sought after by all Europe, be translated into all languages, and be every where admired, would you not consent to wait so long?" "Very willingly," answered the Poet; so great glory would well deserve to be purchased by eight years labour." "But," added the Father, "if by waiting other eight years, you were sure that the esteem, which Europe would have for your work, would not only continue, but keep increasing even to the end of the world, would you still consent to wait that number of years?" "Without difficulty," replied the Poet. "Yet," says the Father, "that makes sixteen years: and at your age, do you expect to live long enough, after the expiration of these sixteen years, to enjoy the glory?" "No," answered the Poet: "but what does that matter? The glory, that does not outlive a man, is nothing: that only, which remains after, merits our ambition." "You would, then, consent to work all your life for a great glory, which you would not receive till after your death?" "Undoubtedly," replied the Poet; "and this is the feeling of every noble soul, and of every thinking mind." "And if this be the case, my dear Cousin," subjoined the Father, "what hinders

you from acquiring this great glory, and a glory too still greater, which will not leave you after death, but will follow you, and which you will enjoy for ever? For this end, you have only to employ the remainder of your days, not in correcting your poem, but your morals; and in serving God with fervour. And, what no one can promise you for your poem, how correct soever, faith and religion promise you for the correction of your morals, and your fidelity in serving God." "Oh!" exclaimed the Poet, "I thought what you were aiming at: but this is not our present business. You Carthusians entertain only gloomy and revolting ideas. We are in this life; and we have to speak only of the glory of this life: as to the glory of the next, we do not see it." "But," replied the Carthusian, "will you see the glory of this life, when you are no longer here? And, since you must leave this life, and enter into the other, is it not wiser, to acquire a glory that will follow you, and which you will enjoy, than a glory which will outlive you, and which you will not enjoy? But, what is this glory, which your poem may gain you? What is all the glory of the world, in comparison with that which a holy life can procure you? The first is very uncertain, and nobody would dare insure it to you; whereas the second is insured to you by the promise of God, by religion, by faith. The first will always be very small and very limited. Though your name even become famous throughout all France, all Europe, and posterity, how many individuals would there be among this number, that would not be acquainted with your work? Whereas

the second will be universal ; so that, at the last day, not only all those who now inhabit France, and Europe, Asia, Africa, and America ; not only they, who shall live after them, but still all who have existed since the commencement of the world, all, without excepting one, will esteem you, will praise, admire, and respect you. In fine, the glory of your poem will be short-lived and perishable ; and it cannot extend, at most, further than the end of the world. After which, there will be nothing to do with poetry, nor with any thing that employs mortals here below ; and all worldly glory will disappear ; and nothing will remain but that true and solid glory, which comes from God, whose judgment, being founded on truth and equity, will gain the suffrages of all created intelligences : and this glory will be eternal. Are the desires and the hope of this gloomy and revolting ? Are there any that are more consoling, more noble, more ravishing ? What do you think ?” “ I think, cousin, you have given me an excellent, though rather long sermon.”

“ Well,” said the Carthusian, “ let us leave this topic, and return to your poem. You expect, then, to give it to the public in two years ?” “ Yes, if God preserves my life.” “ When you have given the last touch to it, and it shall appear, do you expect it will not be criticised ?” “ Oh ! supposing it be. A good work is sure to be criticised ; and jealousy even often tries to put it down : but I am under no apprehension. If I am attacked, I will defend myself.” “ But,” said the Carthusian, “ if, after taking four years to retouch your poem, you were sure to place it above all criticism, so

that even they who envy you the most, instead of censuring, should be obliged to praise you, would you not wait these four years, before you publish it? "Whither," said the Poet, "do you mean to lead me now, with your suppositions and calculations?" "To true glory," answered the Father: "to that glory, which no one will dispute with you; which the whole universe will give you; and which at the last day, and throughout eternity, will force all your enemies to praise you, and confess that you have done well; and to be vexed with themselves for not having done the same as you." "I readily allow," said the Poet, "that this would be the best, and that the glory we hunt after here, and in the pursuit of which we weary ourselves, is, at bottom, but a chimera, a phantom, which seduces us. But what would you have me do? I am a man; I live with men; I am foolish with the foolish." "And what hinders you," replied the Father, "from being wise with the wise? How many are there, who esteem the glory of this world as nothing, and whose whole time is taken up in endeavouring to merit eternal glory? You live, it is true, with men; but how very soon will you and all now living be in the other world, with all those who have gone before, and with all those who shall come after us, and at length, at the last day, we shall all appear before the tribunal of Jesus Christ. Why do you not imitate those, who, full of these thoughts, labour only to acquire the true glory of the next world, which will be solid, universal, eternal?"

"Cousin," said the poet, "were I only twenty years old, I would become a Carthusian." "Your

business is not," replied the father, "to become a Carthusian, but a good and fervent Christian." "And to effect this, what must I do?" said the poet. "You must," answered the father, "put your conscience in order, make a good confession, addict yourself to prayer, to good works, to the frequenting of the sacraments; you must forget the world, and think of nothing but preparing yourself to appear with honour and glory, at the last judgment." "And what shall I do with my poem?" "You must throw it into the fire, and think no more about it." "I assure you," said the poet, "If I had it here, I would immediately burn it in your presence: but I am going home, and that shall be the first thing I will do when I arrive there." "I shall not trust to that," replied the Carthusian; "send it immediately to me, and come and see me again to-morrow, and we will burn it together." "In a moment," said the poet, "you shall have it: I feel as if a mountain were taken off my shoulders, since I have taken the resolution of giving myself entirely to God, and to think of nothing but my salvation. Adieu, till to-morrow."

The poet kept his word, and sent the poem the same evening. The next day he returned to have it burnt, and to be confirmed in his good resolutions; and from that time he employed himself entirely in exercises of piety. His penance was austere, but it was not long. He died six months after, full of hope and consolation, and thanking God for having undeceived him in time to obtain the pardon of his error. He was buried at the Carthusians, as he had desired.

PARABLE XIX.

Laughable Dream of a Monk.

A MONK had a dream, which perplexed him a great deal. He was not only disturbed by it during his sleep, but it continued to trouble him after he awoke. As this dream remained deeply impressed on his memory, he fancied it had some meaning in it, which he wished to discover; but he tortured his mind in vain, and could find out nothing to his satisfaction. To rid himself of his embarrassment, he went to his abbot, and falling down at his feet, he asked his blessing: then, having obtained permission to speak, and being ordered to sit down, he seated himself and related his dream, as follows.

“I dreamed, father, last night, that the king had invited me to his court. Whether this news pleased me, or not, I cannot exactly say. All that I remember is, that I was anxiously employed in procuring a dress suitable to appear before the king. I therefore provided myself with a handsome gown and cloak, and I put on a pair of fine white stockings, and a new cowl: I then thought myself decently dressed for the occasion. I was introduced into a large hall full of lords and ladies; and I had scarcely been there a minute, when I perceived I had no cowl on: this surprised and disturbed me not a little. I soon after saw that my feet and legs were bare. I could not conceive how I could come to court in this condition; and I durst neither stay, nor retire. Then,

instead of decent clothes, I found I had nothing on but rags, that scarcely covered me. Each moment did my confusion increase, and I did not know where to put myself. At length I discovered I had nothing on but my shirt, and that a very indifferent one, being both very short, and much torn. You may conceive how great was my confusion, in the midst of such an assembly: but what you cannot conceive, nor I express, is the torture occasioned by such shame. No remedy presented itself, but that of exposing myself to still greater confusion, by passing in this condition, not only through the hall, the apartments and courts of the palace, but also through the streets of the town, and the galleries of the monastery, to get to my cell, and shut myself up there. However great the difficulties and shame necessarily attendant on such an enterprise, I was on the point of attempting it, when it was announced that the king was arrived, and entering the hall. I screamed out with fright, and awoke. Though quite out of breath, I was overjoyed to find myself in my bed, and that what had harassed me so much was nothing but a dream. Yet, father, a dream so connected and circumstantial must signify something. I have endeavoured to unravel it; but finding that I could not, and besides, confiding entirely in your discernment, I am come to ask of you the favour of an explanation."

"Father," replied the abbot, "you are deceived in thinking that this dream has any meaning: tho' connected and circumstantial, it signifies nothing. Dreams are only sports of the imagination, inex-

plicable indeed, but to which we must not attach the slightest belief. Though yours has certainly no meaning in it, we may still draw from it a very useful and a very solid moral.

“We are all invited to the court of the King of Kings, and we must all appear before him. This truth supposed, you may gather from your dream three important instructions.

“The first, the care we ought to take to prepare ourselves for this great day. If you were so busy in equipping yourself to appear before a king of the earth, now that you know that you are soon to appear before the king of heaven, what care ought you not to take to purify your soul, to adorn it with all virtues, and to enrich it with all sorts of good works?

“The second, the confusion all will experience, who shall not have taken this care. How distressing will it be for a Christian, and particularly for a religious, to appear, at the last day, before Jesus Christ, before the whole heavenly court, angels and saints, and before the whole universe, in a state of nakedness and shame! But, what will it be, to appear there covered with wounds and ulcers, that is to say, with sins and iniquities, in a state of filth and abomination?

“The third, the humility which ought to accompany all our actions, and be the foundation of all our virtues. You thought you were very well dressed when you went to court; and when you were there, you found yourself naked. How ought we to fear, lest the good which appears in us, should disappear before the rays of divine light; lest our seeming riches be reduced to real

poverty, and our imaginary glory changed into eternal confusion! This thought ought not to discourage us; but, by exciting our vigilance, to keep us humble."

The monk retired, full of comfort. His fervour and humility, during the remainder of his life, proved how much he had profited by the abbot's instructions. Let us likewise profit by it; for it concerns us as much as it did the monk.

PARABLE XX.

Young Flora, or Love-Letters.

FLORA was young, and lived with her elder sister, both enjoying a decent income left them by their parents. Flora left the management of her property and the house entirely to her sister, and employed her whole time in worldly pleasures and gallantry. She gloried in having a great many admirers; who, attracted by the charms of her person, the sprightliness of her wit, and the gaiety of her manners, were constantly paying their court to her. Besides visits, she had every day letters, verses, billet-doux; and these she always made it a point to answer with exactness. She sported with her lovers; and they sported with her. She gave each of them to understand that he was the favourite, the only one she loved, and that she would never marry another; and each of them swore to her constant and eternal love, the least spark of which they never felt. As her only aim with them was to satisfy her vanity, and as she

always kept them within the bounds of respect and decency, so they, with her, expected nothing but to pass their time pleasantly.

A life so idle and so worldly, did not fail to give scandal, and to be the occasion of many sins. Flora was herself sensible of it, felt something of remorse, and sometimes even her visitors were troublesome to her. She made her sister the confidant of her disgust, and her sister profited by this disclosure, to exhort her to lead a more regular and Christian life, of which she set her the example. On these occasions, one would have supposed Flora quite changed: she herself thought so, and was projecting with her sister admirable plans of a new life. But a love-letter which she received, and which she ran off to answer, overturned all these schemes of reform, and re-plunged her, more than ever, into dissipations and amusements, without which, she persuaded herself she could no longer live.

One day, her sister and some female friends came to invite her to accompany them to a sermon. She was, at that time, busy answering a love-letter. However, as she had almost done, and as she did not wish to offend her friends, she went with them, intending afterwards to finish her letter. The subject of the sermon was Lazarus and Dives. The preacher, in his sermon, depicted in lively colours, the punishments of hell, and those devouring and eternal flames, which were the just punishment of the rich man's hard-heartedness to the poor, and of the voluptuous and sensual life which he had led. All this just suited the young Flora, and her sister hoped it would have some

good effect upon her. Though the sermon was beautiful and pathetic, yet Flora's thoughts being full of her letter, she found it tedious, and was not much affected by it. On leaving the church, she ran off to finish her letter; but, as she was in a hurry to seal it, a large drop of melted wax fell upon her hand, and made her scream out dreadfully. In the first motion of impatience, she threw both the wax and the letter into the fire. Her sister, alarmed at the noise, hastened to her. No sooner did Flora see her, than she exclaimed:—"Ah! sister, what must the fire of hell be, since a drop of wax, that has fallen on my hand, gives me so very great pain? No more love-letters—no more suitors—I renounce them for ever." Her sister could scarcely refrain from laughing; but all the time she was employed in trying to assuage the pain occasioned by the burn, Flora continued moralizing. "No, sister," said she, "to hear talk of the fire of hell is nothing; one must feel the effects of this terrible element, to conceive any idea of a torture so dreadful. Ah! what a horror would men have of sin, did they but feel, in ever so slight a degree, that fire, which is to be the eternal punishment of sin."

Whilst she was still speaking, a servant came with a letter for her. "Go, my good man," said she, "and take the letter back to your master: tell him, that I no longer receive either letters or visits: tell him to save himself the trouble of coming to see me, and of writing to me; but instead of coming hither, to go to church, to attend sermons, and to profit by them, as I am determined to do." This was enough: all Flora's admirers,

hearing of her change, went elsewhere, and troubled her no more. From that time she led a life as pious and edifying, as it had been dissipated and scandalous; and died in the arms of her sister, twelve years after, full of virtues, and filled with consolations.

PARABLE XXI.

Precautions.

A PHILOSOPHER was one day asked, what was the greatest and most valuable of arts. "It is," he replied, the art of taking precautions. This is the art of arts; the art of attacking and defending places; the art of gaining battles; the art of reigning, and of governing nations, provinces, towns, and families; the art of preserving the health of the body, and of regulating the passions of the soul:" he might have added, the art of working out one's salvation; the art of avoiding sin and hell; the art of acquiring virtues, and of gaining heaven.

People are sufficiently attentive in taking precautions in the affairs of this world; the affair of salvation is the only one where precautions are neglected.

When a traveller finds in his way a dangerous place, he walks with circumspection, and attends to every step he takes. Were you obliged to cross a field, which, though covered with a fine turf, and beautified with flowers, you knew to be full of hidden ditches and covered abysses, into

which you might easily fall, and whence you could not extricate yourself, should you have the misfortune to fall in: I ask, could you walk in this field without fear, without care, and without looking where you placed your feet? But if, walking there with others, you had already seen many fall in on each side of you, and disappear for ever, would you not be seized with terror, and double your attention? But, should any one of those that walk with you, though warned as well as you, choose rather to contemn the danger, than to take the trouble to avoid it: should you see him walk holdly all about the field, dance, jump, laugh, joke, would you not think he had lost his senses? Would you take him for your model? Alas! your neighbour has disappeared from off the earth, and has entered eternity: your brother is hidden in the tomb; he has undergone his judgment, and he will appear no more: and do you not tremble? Do you not take precautions? Observe the just, how they tremble, and attend to their ways. But, say you, how many others walk along without any apprehension? These, then, are the people you take for your models?

When it is known that a road is infested with robbers and assassins, people take care not to frequent it; or, should necessity oblige them to go that way, they do not venture without being well armed and attended; and at every step, at the least noise, they put themselves in a posture of defence. You, on the contrary, expose yourself in places and on occasions the most dangerous, without necessity, without arms, and with-

out any means of defence. What wonder, if you perish in them?

When the neighbourhood is infected with some contagious distemper, people are careful to use remedies and antidotes. Should it be reported, that the plague is in a neighbouring country, the frontier is guarded, to prevent any contagion from entering; and you, breathing infected air, take no precaution; you have recourse to neither penance, fasting, mortification, nor prayer.— Though surrounded by a contagious atmosphere, you place no guard at the door of your senses; you allow every sort of object to enter: you admit into your house books, songs, pictures, and every thing the most infectious. Doing so, how can you but perish?

When either scarcity or famine is apprehended, people take precautions, and provide against it: and if this fail, they leave their country, to find subsistence elsewhere, that they may not die of hunger. Do you, then, make abundant provision, by prayer and the sacraments; and, if necessary, withdraw from the world, to procure for yourself that heavenly food, which the world does not, or dares not, make use of.

When any part of a town is on fire, all in the neighbourhood are alarmed, and use every precaution. The fire of hell is now actually burning many of your fellow-creatures; it is advancing towards you—it is on the point of reaching you; and you do not tremble, nor take any precaution.

When a ferocious and unknown beast is ravaging a country, and devouring its inhabitants, each one trembles for his safety, and keeps him-

self on his guard. The devil, like a lion in his fury, roves about every where, seeking to devour whom he can; and he is daily surprising and dragging into hell some one or other. Perhaps you are already in his power; and you suffer yourself to be dragged along without a cry, without resistance!

When people have to pass a rapid stream on a plank, or a dirty place in the road by means of stepping stones, how careful are they where they place their feet!—Do you, then, walk with fear and trembling in the narrow way of God's commandments; and as to what concerns faith, rest secure on that solid and immoveable rock, the Church.

P A R A B L E XXII.

The King of Cosmia.

THE city of Cosmia was the capital of a large kingdom of the same name. The island of Æonia was at no great distance from it. But there existed between the Æonians and Cosmians such an antipathy, that, though the Æonians were originally a colony of Cosmians, they had no trade, nor any communication with each other. If a Cosmian, forced by stress of weather, chanced to land on the island, he was immediately seized, and sent to the Petræa, or the Serpentina, tracts of land in the island, so called from being very rocky, and abounding in forests and wild deer, and from being infested with a frightful number of serpents of every description. Here the inha-

bitants had for their subsistence nothing but wild and bitter fruits ; for their lodging, nothing but caverns ; and they carried on among themselves a continual and more cruel war, than they did with the beasts and serpents. The rest of the island was the abode of plenty, peace, union, and all sorts of delights, and was separated from the other by a chain of impenetrable mountains, and was called Fortunata, not only because the inhabitants were completely happy, but moreover, because no one was admitted into it, who did not bring immense riches with him.

There was at Cosmia a whimsical custom, or law, by which, every year, the senate elected a new king, and dethroned the old one. The new king they chose from among strangers, in order that he might be ignorant of the law of the senate : which law the people themselves were utterly unacquainted with. The king, during the short interval of his reign, had the absolute disposal both of the people, and of the riches of the kingdom. But, at the end of the year, when he least expected it, he was stript of every thing, blindfolded, and forced on board a canoe, which conveyed him into the only part of *Æonia*, where it was possible to land. Here he was no sooner put on shore, than apprehended ; and being known to be a Cosmian by his dress, and besides, being poor and destitute, he was banished to *Serpentina*, to pass the rest of his days in misery.

It happened one year, that a stranger, called *Eumenes*, was chosen king. He was a man of virtuous and regular habits ; and besides, endowed with great strength of mind, and consummate pru-

dence. No sooner was he seated on the throne, than he began to reflect on the manner he had been raised to it. He was particularly astonished at not hearing a word said about his predecessor; at seeing none of his family, and at not knowing how he died, or whether he was dead or not, or, in fine, what was become of him. He would often ask his courtiers questions on this subject: but they invariably turned the discourse, and, instead of satisfying his enquiries, always began to extol his kingly greatness and power. These evasions and flatteries only served to confirm him in the idea which he had formed, that there was something mysterious in the business. Unable to succeed in clearing away his suspicions, he applied himself to the good government of his kingdom; he made justice reign, and the arts and commerce flourish; and studied to ease the burthens of the people, and to render them good and happy. On one occasion he even exposed his life, in a war in which he was engaged, by heading his troops, and leading them to battle in person. His presence animated his whole army, he gained a complete victory, and made a peace advantageous to the conquerors and the conquered. The fame of his exploits and virtues extended to foreign nations, and caused him to be respected and beloved at home: but all this splendor did not dazzle him. He would have preferred the smallest hint on the subject of his uneasiness, to all the praises that were lavished upon him. When a king is sincere in his endeavours to come at truth, he cannot but discover it. A senator, charmed with the virtues of Eumenes, perceived

his uneasiness, and having obtained a private interview with him, he disclosed to him, under the seal of secrecy, the mysterious law of the state. Eumenes embraced and thanked him; and entreated him, on his part, not to say a word to any one about his having disclosed the secret to him.

The king, pleased at this discovery adopted suitable measures to profit by it, in order to avoid the *Serpentina*. He did not wait long, before an opportunity presented itself. A gale of wind drove an *Æonian* ship on the coast of *Cosmia*. The news having reached the court, the king was immediately told, that these *Æonians* were enemies of the state, and that they must be treated as such. The king thought otherwise, and observed, that, so far from being, under such circumstances, harshly dealt with, these unfortunate people were rather deserving of their pity and assistance. He gave orders for them to be brought to his court, and gave them an honourable reception. Luckily for him, many of these *Æonians* were chief men in their kingdom. He had private conferences with them, in which, having declared that it was his intention to come and live among them, measures were contrived for transporting secretly into *Æonia* all the treasures he had at his disposal. Every thing being settled to the full satisfaction of both parties, he dismissed the *Æonians*, after making them magnificent presents. By them he sent to the King of *Æonia* a crown of gold, enriched with diamonds, and another almost as valuable to the Queen Dowager. After their departure, without neglecting the care of his king-

dom, Eumenes carefully amassed all the treasures he could, of which he, every week, sent a ship-load to Æonia.

In the mean time, the end of his reign arrived, and the senate came to announce it to him. He was not taken by surprise, because he expected it, and was prepared for it. He suffered himself to be stripped without a murmur: he permitted them to blindfold him, put him on ship-board, and banish him. The Æonian Lords, whom he had treated so well, were waiting for him at the port. They conducted him to court, where he ever after enjoyed the favour of the king, the confidence and friendship of the grandees of the kingdom, and the esteem of the people.

Had you been in Eumenes's place, knowing what he knew, would you not have done as he did? Well, and why do you not? Do you not see, that Cosmia is nothing but this world? that Æonia is eternity; Serpentina, Hell; and Fortunata, Paradise? In one sense, you are a king in this world; at least you are, while in it, master of your heart and of your actions. Reflect then on the manner in which you were placed in this world; on the end for which you were placed here; and on the faith of those who have gone before you, and who appear no more. What is all this mystery? You are not ignorant of it: strive to understand it better, and love instruction in this particular. Fear a miserable eternity: wish for a happy one. Make to yourself friends in heaven: send thither all your treasures, and all the virtues and good works you can: endeavour to merit the favour of the King, and of the

Queen, his Mother, and when death shall come, and strip you of every thing, you will welcome it with thankfulness, because it will put you in possession of a kingdom, that will never end.

PARABLE XXIII.

The imprudent Traveller.

A TRAVELLER crossing a forest, was perceived by a furious lioness, which immediately rushed forward to devour him. Her terrible roarings made the distant woods and mountains re-echo. Fear added fleetness to his feet; and gaining ground on the animal, he left her a considerable distance behind him. But, in running so fast from one danger, he fell into another. Not being aware of a gulph that lay in his way, he was precipitated into it. He extended his arms, to seize the first object that might present itself, and was so lucky as to meet with the branch of a tree, which he clung to, and there remained suspended. Thus he escaped falling to the bottom of the abyss, where he would most certainly have been dashed to pieces. In this situation, though a dreadful one, he congratulated himself with having retarded, at least for a few minutes, his destruction. But he did not yet know all the dangers that threatened him. After having attentively examined the tree that supported him, he saw two large mountain rats, the one white, the other black, incessantly gnawing the foot of the tree, which they had almost entirely separated. Then turning his eyes to the

bottom of the abyss, he descried an enormous dragon, with sparkling eyes and open mouth, waiting only for the fall of the tree, to devour his prey. Thence he cast his eye to the other side of the abyss, and perceived four large serpents, with horrible hissings, darting towards him, to bite him. "Alas! Lord," cried he, sighing, "for what perils hast thou reserved me? and to which of these monsters am I to serve for food? Is there no means of extricating myself, and of escaping these ferocious animals?" Having said this, he perceived that some of the leaves of the tree distilled honey. He tasted it, and found it not only delicious, but quite invigorating. It was a refreshment sent him from heaven, and he ought to have made use of it, to summon up all his strength, and by means of this tree, or of some other more likely to suit his purpose, to have endeavoured to get out of this abyss: the more so, as it was to be presumed that the lioness, whose roarings he no longer heard, had retired into the woods. But, who would believe it? Instead of contriving means for his escape, he clambered up the tree, and, being seated at his ease, he employed his whole time and thoughts in gathering honey, and enjoying its fatal sweetness. Nay, he began to make a provision of it, to serve him for a long time. Whilst he was thus engaged, and busied in forming projects, and in taking, as he thought, wise measures to secure a more abundant supply of it in future, the tree, being sufficiently gnawed, gave a sudden crash, broke asunder, and fell with him to the bottom of the gulf; and the dragon of the abyss, waiting with extended claws and open

throat, swallowed up for ever the unfortunate traveller.

O senseless man! own yourself at least in this picture: and while you have yet time, repair your error, and prevent its dreadful effects. Will you always be the dupe of a momentary gratification, that makes you forget your eternal interest? From the moment of your birth, death, like a raging lioness, pursues you. You have heard its roarings, and more than once has the thought of it frightened you. This earth, on which you sojourn, is a gulf, that swallows up *all*; at the bottom of it is the abyss of hell and eternity. The only stay to your fall is, the life of the body; but this body is continually menaced by the jarring elements that compose it, which, without intermission, work its ruin and destruction. The duration of this body has its fixed term; you cannot prolong it: and this duration is continually diminishing, and, if I may be allowed the expression, gnawed by day and night, till the moment when the brittle tree at last breaks, and in its fall precipitates you into the abyss of eternity.

Is there, then, no means of escaping so terrible a misfortune? Certainly there is; and the only care that ought to occupy you during life is, not to suffer it to slip out of your hands. Jesus Christ offers you his cross, as the Tree of Life, which alone can save you: attach yourself to it, and you will escape all your enemies. Dread the honey, which the world offers you. It is, to be sure, a present from heaven; but fear, lest its sweetness intoxicate your heart,

and make you forget the dangers that threaten you. Take no more of it than is necessary to support your strength, and to enable you to do penance, to give alms, to practise good works, to avoid hell, and merit everlasting life.

PARABLE XXIV.

The Coat of Arms of Martin V.

POPE MARTIN the Fifth took for his coat of arms a blazing fire, which he got engraved on his seal, for the purpose of reminding him of three things :

1. The bonfires that were made at his coronation ; which by their short duration, warned him that his dignity, glory, and life, were soon to have an end.

2. The fire of the last day, which is to destroy the whole world ; that universal conflagration, which is to consume tiaras, sceptres, crowns, and reduce all to ashes.

3. The fire of eternity, lighted by the breath of an angry God ; that fire, which is never extinguished ; that burning furnace, where they, who shall have abused their authority, and the goods of this life, shall burn eternally ; that pool of brimstone, that place of torments, into which each sinner falls at his death.

Ah ! had we but this seal well impressed on our heart, how many errors should we escape ? How many sins should we avoid ? With how many good works should we enrich ourselves.

PARABLE XXV.

The Algebraist.

A PHILOSOPHER, a great Algebraist, having heard a sermon on eternity, was not satisfied with it, any more than with the calculations and examples the preacher proposed. On his return home, he retired to his study, and began to think the matter over. He wrote down his thoughts on paper as they occurred, and as follows :

1. The *finite*, or that which has an end, compared to the *infinite*, or to that which has no end, is a cypher, is nothing. A hundred millions of years, compared to eternity, are a cypher, are nothing.

2. There is more proportion between the least *finite* being and the greatest *finite* being, than there is between the greatest *finite* being and the *infinite*. There is more proportion between one hour and a hundred millions of years, than there is between a hundred millions of years and eternity ; because the least *finite* makes part of the greatest *finite*, whereas the greatest *finite* makes no part of the *infinite*. An hour makes part of a hundred millions of years, because a hundred millions of years are but an hour repeated a certain number of times ; whereas a hundred millions of years makes no part of eternity, because eternity is not a hundred millions of years repeated a certain number of times.

3. With respect to the *infinite*, the smallest or the greatest *finite* is the same thing. With

regard to eternity, one hour, or a hundred millions of years, are the same thing. The duration of the life of a man, or the duration of the whole world, is the same thing, because one and the other is a cypher, is nothing; and because nothing admits of neither more nor less. All this being evident and granted—

I now suppose, that God would grant you only a quarter of an hour's life, to merit a happy eternity; and revealed to you at the same time, that an hour after your death, the whole world would come to an end: I ask you, in this supposition, what value you would set on the world and its judgments? What would you think of the pains and pleasures, that you might experience during your life? With what care would you not think yourself obliged to employ all the moments of your life for God, and to prepare for a good death? Senseless man, do you not see that, with regard to God and eternity, the supposition I have just made, is a reality? That the duration of your life, with regard to eternity, is less than a quarter of an hour; and the whole duration of the universe, less than an hour?—I will make another supposition.

If you had a hundred years to live, and were to have nothing for your support during all that time, but what you could carry home in an hour, from a treasure of gold and silver coin, to which you were to have free access, during that hour; I ask you, in what would you employ the hour? Would it be in sleep? Would it be in loitering about, in idle talk, or vain amusements? Certainly not; but in storing up riches, and even in

loading yourself with gold preferably to silver. Senseless as we are! we are to live throughout eternity; and we shall have, during this eternity, nothing but the reward of the merits we shall have amassed during the short space of our life; and yet we do not employ all this time in amassing merits! But, you will say, one must, during life, sleep, eat, drink, and be allowed a little recreation. I grant it; but what hinders you from doing all these things, as St. Paul admonishes, for the love of God? By doing this, you will make a merit of all.

It must be confessed, that our passions are so lively, and the occasions so seducing, that it is astonishing there should be one just man on the earth; yet such there are: and this is the effect of the mercy of God, and the grace of a Redeemer. On the other side, death, judgment, and eternity, are truths so terrible, that it is astonishing there should be a single sinner on the earth; yet there are such: and it is the effect of the forgetfulness of these great truths. Let us, then, meditate, watch, and pray, that we may be of the number of the just, both in time and in eternity.

Such was our Philosopher's Sermon, that he made for himself; and he was so pleased with it, that he read it every day, and many times in the day. He did more; he profited by it, and led a holy life, conformably to the great truths, which he had always before his eyes.

PARABLE XXVI.

The beautiful Julia.

JULIA was the only daughter of a gentleman in reduced circumstances: on account of the uncommon beauty of her person, she was surnamed the Beautiful. In her were assembled all perfections, as well of mind as of body: her character was unimpeachable. Her charms gained her a great many admirers; but, owing to her poverty, none asked her hand in marriage, except the son of a rich farmer. The name of this farmer was Brechet; but his son was most commonly called the Black, the Ugly, or the Wicked. All these names suited him very well, as they perfectly expressed the qualities both of his body and his mind. He was thick and short; his legs were lank, and bent inwards; he had a high chest, broad shoulders, a big head, dark complexion, and his face was much disfigured. On his left cheek he had a long scar, which he had received in a quarrel: the small pox had deprived him of his left eye, bleared his right, and left on his forehead a large scurf, disgusting to the sight. The qualities of his mind corresponded with those of his body. The young Brechet was vulgar, brutish, choleric, quarrelsome, avaricious, insolent, proud, debauched, a swearer, a drunkard, jealous; in a word, he had all the qualities, any single one of which would suffice to make a husband hateful, and a wife miserable. Such was the man that wished to marry the beautiful Julia. No sooner

was the proposal made to her by her father, than she fainted away, and was with difficulty recovered. When she became tolerably composed, her father thus addressed her: "My dear Julia, you need not marry Brechet unless you like. I do not wish to force you to marry against your inclination: but you must think of getting a livelihood. We live on a very small pension, which will be discontinued at my death; and what will become of you then?" "Father," replied Julia, "I would rather die of hunger, and in misery, than marry such a monster. Heaven perhaps will have pity on me." Saying this, she shed a torrent of tears; her father embraced her, and retired to conceal his emotion, saying to her as he went out of the room: "Do not fear, my child; nothing more shall be said about this marriage."

In the mean time, young Brechet, confident of obtaining Julia's consent, boasted every where of his intended marriage; so that it became the common talk of the country. Passing from one to another, the news at last reached the court. The king's son, who was an accomplished prince, and expected to marry a relation of his, a princess, hearing what was said of Julia, was curious to see her. At the very first interview, he was smitten with her charms. The fairest characters are always objects of envy and defamation; and this Julia experienced; for one of the courtiers, perceiving the impression made on the prince's heart, ventured thus to address him: "It would be a great pity, Sir, should Julia, being so beautiful, have the faults with which people reproach her." "What faults?" said the prince. "It is said,"

continued the courtier, "that she is very inconstant and fickle, that she is always running from house to house, and never at home." As love excuses every thing, the prince answered: "That is by no means surprising: Julia has nothing to keep her at home; there she sees nothing but poverty and misery; and she goes out to divert her thoughts, and to remove her uneasiness. Were she in a different situation, her conduct would be different." The prince, however, reflected on what had been said, and coming again to see Julia, he observed she was not at home when he arrived. Whilst the servant was gone to seek her, he entered into conversation with the father, and declared to him his intention of marrying his daughter, if she supported the trial he intended to put her to. Julia at length arriving, the prince addressed her thus: "I have just been asking you in marriage of your father; but I told him, I wished first to put your love to the test." "My Lord," replied Julia, "the greater the trial the more agreeable will it be to me. Fire and sword present no dangers which I would not face, to testify to you my gratitude and love." "Fire and sword are out of the question," said the prince: "I have been twice to see you, and each time I have found you from home. This, then, is the trial I mean to make of your love: I must find you at home, the next time I come to see you; and if I do, on that very day will I marry you, and take you to court with me. Thus I have settled matters with the king my father: but if, on that day, I do not find you at home, I will think no more of you, and marry another."

“And I,” said the father, “will marry her to Brechet.” “At this rate,” said Julia, my happiness is certain; and for this, were it required of me to stop at home all my life, I would willingly consent.” The prince withdrew, and Julia was perfectly well satisfied.

You will easily guess, that the next day Julia did not go from home; nor did she the second day, nor the third, nor the fourth: on the fifth, she just ventured out and back again; on the sixth, she ventured out for half an hour, and then returned; on the seventh, she went out for an hour, and then hastened back; on the eighth, her father observing her going out, said to her: “Daughter, you go out too much: you forget what the prince said to you, and what you promised him: you do not seem to reflect, that your all is at stake.” “Oh, father,” answered Julia, “the prince will not come to-day; but should he come, from our house we can see a great way up the road; and I have taken care to recommend to the women, who are up stairs, to come and let me know, if the prince’s equipage should come in sight: so I have nothing to fear.”—“Daughter,” replied the father, “the sure way would be to remain at home; it is not safe to depend on others; and, in an affair of this consequence, I certainly would not run any risk.” Julia left him talking, and continued her walk.

Scarcely had she got through the gate, than from the top of the house the women descried the prince’s equipage; but, as they had seen Julia the moment before, they concluded she was not gone out, and therefore took no further notice.

The horses and carriages, however, approaching, they call Julia, but Julia does not answer. They go into her room—into the garden—but no Julia is to be found. All is alarm and confusion; Julia is from home—they hasten to the next house—but no Julia is there. While they are running here and there, the prince arrives; and finding Julia absent, he enters his carriage again, and drives off. Julia returned in time to see the prince's equipage at a distance, as it returned.

All is lamentation and despair: Julia wrings her hands, and tears her hair—her father, frantic with rage, thus reproaches her: “Unhappy girl, why wast thou deaf to my admonitions? Why didst thou run any risk in an affair of such consequence? Thou wilt be the death of me: but this evening shalt thou marry him, that I promised thee.” “Yes, I will marry him,” said Julia; “I have deserved it. He cannot make me suffer as much as I deserve. Send for him immediately, that I may marry him. We are worthy of each other.” Brechet, a notary, and the curate, are immediately sent for: the marriage ceremony is performed, and Brechet takes the beautiful Julia home with him.

How deserving of compassion and tears is the fate of this wretched woman! Her father did not long survive her disgrace: he died four days after of a broken heart. As for Julia, she lived long enough to repent her folly. Every one lamented her fate, though at the same time they could not but condemn her. Nay, she condemned herself, and, in her greatest afflictions, she ceased not to

exclaim : " I have well deserved this ;" and this it was that constituted her greatest torture.

The very day after their marriage, she appeared with her face disfigured from the blows given her by her brutal husband ; because, he said, she did not seem to rejoice on the occasion. Julia's health declined daily, and she became so altered, that she was not to be known again. Daily did she curse her fate, and wish for death ; but death refused her prayer. What was still more melancholy, she became as ugly, as frightful, and as wicked as her husband, and was equally hated and detested. They were two demons, and their house was a perfect hell.

Christian soul, purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ, and washed in the waters of baptism, you are here represented by the beautiful Julia. You are not ignorant that the devil, that horrible and detestable monster, has pretensions to you, and that he flatters himself he shall one day have you united to him. The bare thought of this makes you shudder ; but this is not enough ; you must use every means in your power to prevent this union. You know likewise that the son of God, King of Heaven and Earth, demands you as his spouse ; that it is his intention to conduct you one day to his kingdom, there to share with you the delights of an eternal love. This you earnestly desire, and wish it were now accomplished. But this will not suffice : you must shew yourself worthy of such a Spouse, and testify your love to him, by observing his laws, and supporting the trial he will put you to. The trial is not a diffi-

cult one, but it is essential; and it is necessary, when he comes to the marriage, and to take you with him to crown you, viz. at your death, that he should find you at home, that is to say, in the state of grace. Ah! put yourself into this state quickly: never leave it. Use every means to keep and strengthen yourself in it. Avoid every thing that may be likely to draw you from it, though but for a moment. It is not enough to begin, or to continue for a time: you must persevere to the end till he come.

Be particularly careful not to trust to what you shall do at your death. Death gives no warning. It often comes on a sudden, and without our perceiving it. If, at other times, it announces its coming by infirmities and sickness, he, for whom it comes does not perceive it; and they, whose business it is to warn him, are often themselves deceived, or still oftener they are negligent and timid, and too often their warning comes too late. The number of those who daily die, without the help of the sacraments, ought to make us tremble.

PARABLE XXVII.

The unfortunate Traveller.

A YOUNG man crossing a forest, was attacked by a frightful monster, which on a lion's body carried seven serpent's heads. The animal, on leaving its den, made straight at him; at the same time raising its seven heads, with eyes sparkling like fire; and darting forth its seven tongues, it filled

the air with horrible hissings. The young man, who was powerful and courageous, was not disconcerted at the sight. Having no other arms than a hatchet, which he carried hanging from his waist, according to the custom of the country, he seized it, and rushed at the beast: at the first blow, he cut off four of its heads; at the second, he cut off two; and at the third, he would without difficulty have cut off the last, and gained a complete victory, had not his hatchet, at the second blow, slipped out of his hand, without his having time to pick it up again: for the beast, enraged at the six wounds it had received, rushed furiously upon him, bit him, stung him, tore him, and carried him off. The wretched man struggled, but in vain: he called out for help, begging that some one would at least give him his hatchet; but nobody heard him. The beast dragged him alive into its den, where he served as food for itself and its young ones.

The monster here mentioned, is the devil, and the seven heads are the seven capital sins, against which we must fight courageously with the arms of faith. It is not enough, to cut off six of this monster's heads: if we leave him one, we are undone. What does it avail us, to be exempt from many passions, if we keep and cherish one. It is, generally speaking, only one vice that damns a man. Examine if, in fighting this infernal lion, you have not left him one head: this one head is sufficient to devour you. Your victory is nothing, if not complete. You must persevere to the end; you must fight till death. Do not tire during the struggle; do not let the hatchet slip out of your

hands ; do not leave off prayer, the examination of your conscience, the sacraments, the practice of mortification and penance. The devil would avail himself of your negligence, to inflict on you a thousand wounds ; and should you die in that state, he would drag you along with him into the infernal abyss, where you would be eternally a prey to him, and a sport to all the infernal spirits. Vain then would be your groans ; in vain would you ask for help, and call back the time you might have lost, the graces you might have abused, the means of salvation you might have neglected ; nobody would hear you, and not one would be returned to you. Make then the best use of them, while you have the opportunity.

PARABLE XXVIII.

Agrippina's Expedient.

AGRIPPINA, a Roman lady, observing that her son squandered his money in trifles, and lavished it indiscriminately, was anxious to correct him of so misplaced a prodigality, which she feared would terminate in the utter ruin of the family. To effect this, she made use of the following expedient. One day, having learnt the amount of a large sum that her son had expended, she put an equal sum upon a table in the room where she was sitting. The young man coming in the evening to enquire after his mother's health, and seeing this immense sum of money, eagerly asked what it was ? " It is," replied the mother, " what you have lost to-

day ; and having said this, she went out of the room, leaving her son to his reflections. These were so serious and so efficacious, that he was entirely corrected.

If, in like manner, we should have placed under one point of view the losses we suffer in one day by our negligence ; the graces, the merits, the eternal rewards that we neglect to acquire, by our own fault, we should be astonished : and perhaps our astonishment might induce us to be less prodigal of so many graces, and to employ better a time, on the good employment of which depends the acquisition of immense blessings. How many occasions of exercising, for God, mildness, humility, patience, charity, mortification? Ah! did we but see what we lose each day, and what it would cost us so little not to lose!—But we shall one day see it, when our loss will be irreparable. Why wait for this moment, and not now repair our loss, while we have it in our power?

PARABLE XXIX.

The disgraced Courtiers.

THERE are occurrences in life, which makes so much impression on the mind, that we must be placed in the same situation as those, on whom the effects have been produced, to believe the reality of such effects.

Philip II. King of Spain, while attending mass, observed two of his courtiers, who did nothing but talk during the whole of the sacrifice. On

going out of the chapel, the king said to them: "Is it thus you hear mass? Never appear at court again." This word was a thunderbolt to both. One died two days after, and the other lost his senses. How dreadful then will it be, to hear from the mouth of the King of Ages: "Go from me, ye cursed—go into everlasting fire."

PARABLE XXX.

The affectionate Attachment of Tigranes and Berenice.

CYRUS, king of the Persians, gained a great battle, in which Tigranes, king of Armenia,* was taken prisoner, with Berenice his queen. They were both brought into the presence of the conqueror, who being struck with the charms of Berenice, and knowing at the same time how dear she was to Tigranes, thus addressed him: "What would you give, Tigranes, for the relief of Berenice?" "Sire," replied the king, "I would give my kingdom and my life." "You must, then, indeed, love her," said Cyrus, "and I praise your generosity."

Affairs coming shortly after to an accommodation, Tigranes was reinstated in his kingdom. Being one day alone with his Queen Berenice, he asked her what she thought of the kingdom of the Per-

* Armenia is a large, healthy, and very fertile country in Asia. The ark is supposed to have rested on Ararat, one of its mountains.

sians, the majesty of King Cyrus, the magnificence of his court, the number of his officers, and the riches of his palace? Berenice answered: "Excuse me, my Lord, I saw nothing: I had eyes only for him who offered his life for my liberty." "Ah! my dear Berenice," exclaimed the king, embracing her, "how worthy are you of my love! and how happy am I, while I love you, to have at the same time, a kingdom to share with you!"

The simple narration of this story charms and affects me: but when I apply it to the kingdom of heaven, and the faithful souls, it ravishes and transports me; it raises and depresses me; it confounds me, and animates me with fresh courage. Make, if you please, the application yourself, according to the four following points.

I. The words of Tigranes, and the generosity of his love. Jesus Christ not only offered himself to die for us, but he did really die for our deliverance, not only from a temporal, but an eternal captivity, from eternal death, from eternal punishment: and not only for our deliverance, but to procure for us, at the same time, life eternal, and an everlasting kingdom. He died, not for an amiable spouse, worthy of love, but to render amiable her, who before was frightful, and to make her worthy of his love, at a time she deserved nothing but his hatred. O love inconceivable! It cost Tigranes little to express these generous sentiments, because, while he declared the love he bore his wife, he gained honour before Cyrus and his court. But what did it not cost Jesus Christ to testify to us his love? What did he meet with? Nothing but punishments and reproaches.

II. The impression which the speech of the king made upon the queen. It penetrated her very soul, it filled and inflamed her whole heart: she felt all the ardour, all the tenderness, all the value of a love so generous, and all the glory that accrued to her, in consequence of this public declaration. Oh! how much more ought you to be inflamed at the sight of the Cross! What love! what tenderness! what generosity! and for you, what happiness and glory!

III. The grateful feelings of Berenice. She was so effected by the speech of the king her husband, that, during the whole time she was at the court of the king of Persia, she never forgot it; her mind was always filled with it, to the exclusion of every other thought; no other affection touched her heart: no other object made any impression on her senses. She would see nothing, she would hear nothing, that her whole time might be occupied with the love which constituted her happiness and her glory. Ah! how does this reflection humble me! happy those faithful souls, who have placed an impenetrable wall between themselves and the world, that they may be wholly occupied in retirement, with the love and the cross of their Saviour.

IV. The answer of Berenice to the king her husband. How pleasant, how honourable was it to her, to use the expression! What happiness will it be to a faithful soul, which, on leaving this world, shall be able to say to the King of Heaven: "Lord, in the world whence I come, I have seen nothing: I have had eyes only for him, who gave his life for my deliverance. I have

loved nothing but him: I have thought of nothing but him; I have acted only for him." With what tender, what delicious feelings, will such fidelity receive its reward from the King of Ages, in the kingdom of eternal love.

PARABLE XXXI.

*Beautiful Application of a Passage from
Anacreon.*

AMONG the young religious, whom the Abbot Eusebius was forming to habits of piety, there was one, named Felix, who had a highly cultivated mind, and who, while in the world, had taken great delight in reading profane poets. The remembrance of what he had read would sometimes disturb him in his solitude. Father Pantimus, his head master, not being able to succeed in removing from the mind of his scholar the remains of a pagan education, sent him before the abbot, that he might expel him the monastery as incorrigible. The abbot, a prudent man, seeing Felix bathed in tears, was moved with compassion. He comforted and encouraged him, and told him, that, though he could not expel from his mind such verses, he should, at least, try to apply them to some subject of piety and devotion; and that then, the distraction would be changed into a good thought, and become useful to him. Felix followed this advice, and was very comfortable for some time. But one day, not being able to spiritualize some verses that obtruded themselves,

he went to the abbot, and said to him: "Father I am much afflicted: for two days my mind has been full of a passage from Anacreon, which I can neither expel from my memory, nor apply to any thing good." "What is the passage?" asked the abbot. "The poet says," replied Felix, "that the God of Love had shot several flaming arrows at him, and that he had been able to parry them all without feeling their power; but that this little cunning god at length, changing himself into an arrow, had got possession of his heart." He then adds: "and what means have I of defending myself against a god so formidable."

"Felix," replied the abbot, "hear me. The frequent recurrence of these profane recollections is occasioned by the esteem you hold them in, and the value you set upon them. Do you not see, my child, that all these pagan poetical ideas are nothing but error and falsehood; that this God of Love is only an imaginary being, an unmeaning word, invented by licentious poets, to excuse, to conceal, and even to embellish, if they could, the most shameful of all passions? The true God of Love is the Creator of Heaven and Earth; he, who, out of pure love, created you, and still preserves you: who became man for you; who redeemed you at the price of his blood: who delivered himself up, and died for you. All these benefits are so many flaming darts, against which you have for a long time, known but too well how to defend yourself. You see the wonderful inventions of his love: you know into what this God of Love has changed himself, in order to enter your heart, to incorporate himself with you,

and to be but one with you. He has not changed himself into an arrow, like Cupid, to inflict on your heart a cruel and dishonourable wound ; to pierce it with a thousand griping cares, and to distract it by a thousand contrary affections ; affections base, shameful, and desperate : but he has veiled himself under the most simple elements, under the form of bread and wine, to be your food, your strength, your consolation ; to raise you to himself, and to make you partaker of his divine nature, his happiness and glory. This, Felix, is the true God of Love. Now, then, cry out : “ What means are there of defending one’s self against a God so powerful and so lovely ? ”

At these words, the young man threw himself at the abbot’s feet, and watering them with his tears, he cried out : “ I acknowledge, great God, my too long opposition, but at length I yield to this last dart of thy love.” From that time he thought no more of the profane poets, who sing only imaginary gods, contemptible demons, and shameful passions. The finest passages of those licentious songs, which he had admired, and called divine, now became hateful to him. He henceforth took delight only in the Psalms, the sacred Hymns of the Church, and other spiritual Canticles, which extol the true God, and inspire no other sentiments than those of that pure, tranquil, and delicious love, which now constitutes, and which will for ever constitute our happiness, and promote his glory. The recollection of the benefits of God, and particularly of the Holy Eucharist, filled his soul. When he was in the presence of the Holy Sacrament, or even elsewhere,

he was often heard to cry out: "What means are there of defending one's self from a God so great and so good, who even comes down to us, and enters, and dwells within us?"

PARABLE XXXII.

The King of Castile, or the favourable opportunity.*

SUINTILA, King of Castile, hunting one day, rambled from his guards. After having wandered about for a long time, at last, about dusk, he met two good-looking young men walking in the forest. Their names were Gaspard and Castro: they were cousins, and lived at two neighbouring villages. "Young men," said the king as he approached them, without however making himself known to them, "pray set me right: I am lost in this forest; shew me the road out of it, and tell me where I can have a lodging for the night. To-morrow, I am going to court, where I have a considerable interest. If one, or both of you, will accompany me thither, I promise you wealth and preferment." Gaspard spoke first, and made him this reply: "We can easily shew you out of this forest, and provide you with a lodging; but as for going with you to court, I at least feel no inclination." "Well, my Lord," replied Castro, "accompany me home, and to-morrow morning,

* Castile, (New) a Province of Spain, of which Madrid is the capital.

if my father will give his consent, I will go with you, and entrust myself entirely to your care and protection." Hereupon they separated; Gaspard went home, and Castro conducted the king to his father's. They gave the stranger the best entertainment the house afforded, though they had not the smallest idea who he was; and in the morning the father, after long opposition, at length consented to his son's departure. The king, in company with Castro, had not proceeded a quarter of a league, before he met his guards. Castro shewed his surprise at their saluting him as their king: which the king observing, he turned to him with a smile, and said: "You see, Castro, I did not deceive you, when I told you I had some interest at court." "No, Sire," replied Castro; "but I fear I have been deceived, in giving you the whole affection of my heart, as to my friend, when I ought to have paid you all due respect, as to my king." "I receive respect enough," rejoined the king, "but I do not know whether I have any affection on which I can depend, beside that of Castro: so continue it to me, and follow me." The king loaded him with honours and riches, and always kept him near his person as his confidential friend.

In the mean time, all the villagers were busy in reflecting on the credulity of old Castro, who had, they said, turned his son over to an adventurer. His relations and friends blamed him for it; and he reproached himself most bitterly. On the other hand, they extolled the prudence of young Gaspard, and congratulated his father upon his having such a son. Shortly after, they were

informed by a letter from Castro, that it was the king himself that he had followed ; and when they saw the magnificent present which the king had sent to Castro's father, they altered their sentiments, and changed their reproaches into admiration. Every one now rejoiced with and congratulated Castro, while poor Gaspard was all chagrin and sorrow : and a war that broke out soon after, rendered his situation still more distressing.

A great number of troops being required to prosecute the war, all the young men of the country were enrolled, and Gaspard saw himself obliged to serve as a common soldier. How many hardships had he not to undergo in this war ? But of all his troubles, none was so distressing as this thought, which was always uppermost in his mind : " While I am dying here of hunger, fatigue, and ill usage, Castro is at court, at his ease, in honour, and plenty : and I should now be there with him, had I embraced the opportunity, as he did."

But, as if this thought had not been enough to depress him, his eyes too must add to his torment, and engrave for ever on his mind the sad remembrance of his misfortune. The king ordered a review of his troops : he was seated under a canopy, with Castro at his side. As the troops were filing off, Gaspard saw Castro, and Castro saw Gaspard. " Had I followed the king," said Gaspard to himself, " I should now be with Castro." " Had I not followed the king," said Castro to himself, " I should now be like Gas-

pard." O heart-rending thought for the one! O consoling reflection for the other!

Are we not all one day to appear before the immortal King of Ages? What will be the happiness of having followed him? What the misery of not having done so? The opportunity of following him, and attaching ourselves to him, we yet have; but we shall soon be deprived of it. Shall we suffer it to escape? Ah! let us rather employ well what remains.

Nothing is so distressing, as to have lost the opportunity either of avoiding some great evil, which we now actually suffer, or acquiring some great good, of which we see ourselves deprived. The mind is always recurring to it, and cannot be at rest. On the contrary, nothing is more ravishing, than to see ourselves either delivered from some great evil, or arrived at the possession of a great good, by having embraced the proper opportunity, when it presented itself, of avoiding the one, or acquiring the other.

Our present life is given us as a great and favourable opportunity of avoiding the sovereign evil of hell, and of acquiring the sovereign happiness of heaven. This opportunity once gone by, never returns more. This grand opportunity comprises many small ones. Each day is a favourable opportunity to us of avoiding hell, and of gaining heaven; and each day has, besides, a thousand particular opportunities of avoiding evil, and of practising virtue. In like manner, each state, each profession, each condition, is for us a favourable opportunity. So likewise,

whatever is, whatever happens, whatever we see in this life, is for us a fine opportunity. Poverty and riches, sickness and health, joy and grief, good examples and scandals, pains and pleasures: in a word, every thing is for us a fine opportunity. Temptations even, and the occasions of sin, which we have not sought, are for us a fine opportunity of testifying our fidelity to God. O miserable they, who have suffered so many opportunities to pass by, without profiting by them! They will have them no more. Thrice happy they who have profited by them, and who are no longer in any fear of being exposed to the danger of abusing them.

PARABLE XXXIII.

Peter the Weak.

A COUNTRYMAN, named Peter, who had never travelled out of his native village, received intelligence of the death of his only brother in the chief town of the province: and as his brother had died possessed of very considerable property, and without issue, he was told that he must, as being heir to the estate, proceed thither with all speed, to take possession of it. Accordingly one fine morning, Master Peter takes his stick, and sets off. He had not gone two leagues before he came to a river: it was the first he had ever seen in his life: at home there were no other streams than those caused by sudden and violent showers, which pass away as quickly as they are formed. At the first sight of this broad and deep river,

“ Bless me,” exclaimed he, “ what a deal of water! It must have rained a great deal here, since we at home are complaining of drought. I have heard it said, that the weather is not the same every where. See, how one learns by travelling! But, what must be done?” continued he. “ I shall certainly be obliged to wait till the water is all run away.” That it would soon flow away he was persuaded, because it flowed so fast, and because the river a little higher up, forming an easy angle, seemed to him to become gradually narrower. Quite satisfied, our good man seated himself, and the boatman, observing him from the opposite side of the river, rowed to him, and asked him if he wished to pass the river? “ Yes,” answered the countryman. “ Well, then,” replied the other, “ step into the boat.” “ Oh?” said Peter, “ I am not in such a hurry, as to wish to expose my life in your boat.” “ I have time enough, I can wait.” “ As long as you please,” answered the boatman angrily, who thought the fellow was patiently waited for the river to roll away its waters. jeering him. In the mean time, other passengers came up, got into the boat, and were ferried over. Peter was surprised at their temerity, and still continued waiting for the water to run off, that he might pass comfortably; but the river kept running on.

He waited thus till evening, when he came to a resolution of putting off his journey till next day; and he returned home, not doubting but the river would then be dry. The next day he returned, and the river was still flowing. He came again three days after, and the river flowed as

before. "I am sure," said he, "there is some witchcraft here: I see plainly, this property is not for me." In his pet, he surrendered all his right to his cousin James, who gladly seized the opportunity, passed the river in the boat, got possession of the property, and returned to his village, where he ever after lived in affluence and ease; while Master Peter remained in his hut and in his misery, and received nothing from his inheritance but the surname of "The Weak;" for, from the time that his adventure became known, he always received the name of "Peter the Weak."

Who would imagine that the greater part of men, with respect to their celestial inheritance, are guilty of a folly similar to that of this countryman? Yet, such is the case: examine but sinners, and all those who lead an unchristian or careless life, and you will find that they all wait for the river to flow away. At first, they wait for youth to pass, and the heat of their passions to cool; then they wait till they are comfortably settled; then again, for such a trouble to be over; for such an affair to be terminated: and thus they are always waiting for a suitable time to give themselves to God; and they never find it. They wait for every obstacle to their salvation to be removed, and for such to pass away as do present themselves: and this is waiting for the river to flow away. Obstacles to salvation are continually succeeding one another, and form an everlasting stream, whose source is never dried up. We must pass over these obstacles; we must proceed in spite of them; it is by means of them we must advance.

See, how many pass the river, and continue on

their journey. Imitate them ; begin from this day. If you put off ; if you wish for a more favourable opportunity, you wait for the river to flow away. How foolish ! another will supplant you ; and you will have the mortification of seeing him in possession of an inheritance intended for you.

PARABLE XXXIV.

The Philosopher's Stone.

AMONG several other passengers in a boat, were a merchant named Traffic, and two Capuchin Friars, the one a lay brother, called Eudes. These three were going to a sea port, in order to embark for America ; the former to seek his fortune, the latter to devote themselves to the labours of the mission. No sooner had the boat set sail, than the merchant, to amuse the company, thus addressed himself to Father Anthony : " There needs but very little to make a Capuchin of *me*. I have made three voyages to America, and each time I returned as poor as I went. I have neither wife nor money ; what then hinders me from becoming a friar ?" " Since there is so little impediment," said Father Anthony, " you ought to go through with what you propose." " Certainly," said the pilot. " Hold," replied the merchant ; " I will first make another voyage, and I may perhaps meet with better success. How happy are they," continued he, " who are in possession of the philosopher's stone ! They make their fortune at once, and without trouble." " If there is nothing

but that wanting to make you happy," said the father, "I can give it you, if you desire it." "Desire it!" replied the merchant eagerly; "certainly I do; to be possessed of it, would be the summit of my wishes; pray give it me," he continued, at the same time holding out his hand. This raised the curiosity of all present;—all was silence and attention, in the hope of seeing that famous stone, the imaginary source of all riches. "But," said the father, "first tell me of what sort you will have it." "Are there various sorts?" asked Traffic. "Yes," said the friar, "there are some that change into silver, and others that change into gold." "Oh!" replied Traffic, "give me that which changes into gold." "Right," said the Father, "always make it a point to choose the best. "But," continued he, "you must choose again; for there are some, that change into gold for two years, for one year, or for six months; and there are others, that change for ten, twenty, fifty, or a hundred years." "Give me still the best," said Traffic, "the one, which turns into gold for a hundred years." "And do you expect to live a hundred years longer?" said the Father. "No," replied the merchant; "but what does that signify? The gold itself will last a hundred years; and I can make use of it as long as I live." "But," said the father, "suppose I were to give you one that possessed the property, not only of changing into gold for a hundred years, but of prolonging your life for the same term." "Oh! my good Sir," said Traffic earnestly, "pray do give me that." "Still," said the father, "after that period, you must at length die." "I am well

persuaded of that," answered the merchant; "but then I shall have enjoyed a long life, and a comfortable one too." "By what I see," said Father Anthony, "you are not only attached to life, but fond also of a happy life. I pity you much, and must give you the real philosopher's stone, that which changes all into gold, not for any limited time, but for ever; and which will procure for you immortality." "In what does that consist?" asked Traffic. "It consists," replied the Father, "in doing all your actions for God; in suffering whatever may befall you, in submission to his will; and in directing your attention to his glory and love. This holy love turns all into gold, and that for ever; and will secure to you life eternal." "Ah! said Traffic, "I perceive you are bantering me. This is not the gold I mean: I want something more sounding and more solid." "How now!" said the Father, "do you then think, that what endures for ever is not more solid, than that which lasts but for a moment;—and that the goods, which procure you a happy and never-ending life, are not of more value than those, which so far from being able to avert death, cannot even ensure you one single day of life or health." "All that is very good," said the merchant; "but we do not all choose to be paid in that coin." They had now reached the port; and the boatman came, and demanded of each passenger his fare.

As soon as they had landed, the passengers separated, and the two Capuchins walked off together. Brother Eudes, having now an opportunity of expressing his sentiments on the subject of the late conversation, thus addressed Father

Anthony: "Truly, Father, you have given us an excellent Philosopher's Stone. What use Mr. Traffic will make of it, I do not know; but for my part, I am determined to profit by it at all times." "You will do well," said Father Anthony; "but at the same time, you must pray for Mr. Traffic; for he listened to me with so much attention, that I have great hopes of him." "I understand," said Brother Eudes, "by what you said, that doing our actions for a good end, is changing them into silver: for example, practising good works, and giving alms, to efface one's sins, or to obtain the grace not to fall into them again, is gaining silver; but that, to do these things for the love of God, is gaining gold." "My dear Brother," answered Father Anthony, "the motive of the love of God does not exclude other motives: in doing an action out of a particular motive, such, for instance, as the effacing of sin, you need not stop there, but go farther, and wish to efface your sins for the love and glory of God, and for the sanctification of his holy name; and then all will be changed into gold. Every thing, even our sanctification, and perfection, ought to be referred to God." "Ah! now," said the Brother, "I understand how it is, and see my ignorance in this affair, for want of instruction: but from henceforth I will refer every thing ultimately to the love and glory of God." Discoursing in this manner, they arrived at the vessel, and embarked for America.

Four years after, affairs of the mission obliged Father Anthony to return to Europe. At the first Capuchin Convent that he arrived at, he was sur-

prised at the porter running to him, and saying, as he embraced him: "Ah! Father Anthony, how glad I am to see you again!"—"To see me," said Father Anthony: "I do not recollect ever having seen you before: who are you?" "I am," replied Brother Francis, "porter of the convent." "I know you no better for that," said the Father. "I did, however, sail down the river in the same boat with you." Then the Father, looking attentively at him. "Are you then Mr. Traffic?" "The very person; he, to whom you gave the Philosopher's Stone. This occupied all my thoughts, after I left you; and instead of going to America, I came to this convent, where I gained admittance, and where I daily endeavour to profit by the Philosopher's Stone." The religious all assembled to receive Father Anthony, and Brother Francis related to them his history; by which they were all much edified, and animated more than ever to do and suffer all for the love of God. Let us animate ourselves to this holy, sweet, and advantageous practice: it is true riches; it is the Philosopher's Stone.

PARABLE XXXV.

Mary Anne, or the Orphan preferred.

A GENTLEMAN named Ralph, being left a widow and without children, as he was in the decline of life, retired to one of his estates, there to devote himself to the practice of good works, and the care of his salvation. It was his daily custom,

at a certain hour, to have soup, meat, bread, and money, carried into a large hall, where he distributed them himself to all the poor that presented themselves. Among these was a young girl eleven years old, named Mary Anne, who always kissed the hand of her benefactor on receiving the alms. As she was the only one that thus testified her gratitude, Ralph could not but notice her; and he was careful to give her always a larger portion than the rest. On a closer view, he discovered that, though covered with rags, she was very handsome. "This child," said he to himself, "must be possessed of noble sentiments, from the manner in which she testifies her gratitude, and I will be her friend. But yet, I think it will be proper to try her." The next day Mary Anne came, as usual, to receive an alms. Ralph served every body but her; and she being left with him alone in the hall, he said: "I have nothing, child, for thee—all is given away." Mary Anne, however, kissed his hand as before. "Very well," thought Ralph; but determined to make another trial of her. The day following, he passed her by again; and when all was distributed, and she alone remained, assuming a look of displeasure, he told her abruptly, that there was nothing left for *her*. The child, for all that, did not fail to advance and kiss his hand. Ralph was charmed. "I can hardly find in my heart," said he, "to put her to another trial: however, if she sustain a third trial, there is nothing I will not do for her." The next day, the same ceremony took place: Mary Anne was passed by, and the rest were all served and gone. "Child," said Ralph, "there

is nothing left for you even this time." She advanced as before, and kissed his hand. Ralph being no longer able to sustain so much goodness, thus addressed her: "My dear little girl, follow the servants into the kitchen, and they will give you your dinner." "Sir, it is not so much on my own account that I ask alms, as for the support of a good old woman who brought me up, and with whom I live. I would much rather, Sir, not dine, if you would have the goodness to order your servants to give me something for her." "Well," replied Ralph, "go and get your dinner: I have something to say to you, and you shall take some dinner for your good woman." Mary Anne having dined, he came into the kitchen to her; and being seated, he called her to him and said; "Mary Anne, what did you think of me the two last days, when I gave you nothing?" "Sir," said she, "I did not think any thing." "How can that be?—But you must positively tell me what your thoughts were: I insist upon it." "As you exact it, Sir, I will tell you. I thought, if it happened by chance, that such was the will of God, and that I ought to bear it with patience: but if on the contrary, you, Sir, did it designedly, it was for my good, and that you had your intentions, and that these intentions would be to my advantage." "But," rejoined Ralph, "on the second day, when I appeared angry, and spoke sharply to you, what did you then think?" "That, Sir, confirmed me in the opinion that you did it designedly: I was well satisfied, and entertained still greater hopes." "Is it possible," exclaimed Ralph, looking at his servants,

who were listening to this conversation, "is it possible, that a child of her age should have such thoughts?" "But," added he, turning to the little girl, suppose I had continued to do so for a long time?" "I should, Sir," said she, "have still hoped." "Go, my dear child," said Ralph; "take your good old woman some dinner, and tell her I wish afterwards to speak with her; that she must come hither, and you along with her."

It is unnecessary to enter into a detail of what happened afterwards; the relation would appear too much like romance. Suffice it to say, that Ralph learned from this woman, that Mary Anne was daughter of a gentleman of his acquaintance, who had died of chagrin at the loss of a law-suit, which his wife's heirs had carried on against him to his ruin. Ralph provided for the good old woman, educated Mary Anne in a manner suitable to her condition, loved her as if she had been his own child, and some years after married her to his nephew, making her heiress to his estate.

How affecting is this story! Let us consider it for a moment, and draw from it some instructions. In the goodness of Ralph, we see a faint image of the benefits of God, and of his designs over us; and in the conduct of Mary Anne, we see what ours ought to be with regard to God. God gives abundantly to all; let us thank him. If he gives to some more than to you, still thank him. In all the afflictions he may send you, be persuaded that he has his designs; that they are all for your advantage; and kiss the hand that chastises you. St. Paul gives us an excellent abridgment of a spiritual life, when he tells us to thank God for all

things, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Our ingratitude dries up the fountain of those graces and favours, which the Almighty would otherwise bestow upon us. "Know ye not," says St. Peter, "that a heavenly inheritance is the fruit of your patience?" If then, you aspire at this happiness, be grateful. Gratitude will make God your Father, Jesus Christ your Spouse, and Heaven your inheritance.

PARABLE XXXVI.

The Microscope.

CARDINAL SFRANDATUS, a celebrated writer of the Benedictine Order, relates a curious fact that happened at the death of a German Jesuit. This Jesuit, whose name was Tanner, a man both pious and learned, was going from Prague* to Innsbruck,† in hopes his native air would establish his health. Unable, however, to bear the fatigue of the journey, he died in a village on the road. The magistrate of the place immediately repaired to the house, and in taking an inventory of his luggage, found a little box, the extraordinary structure of which made it appear mysterious and suspicious; for it was black, and composed of wood and glass. But how great was the surprise and astonishment, on the first who looked through the glass at the top, drawing back in affright, and

* A city of Germany, and capital of the kingdom of Bohemia.

† A town of Germany, capital of the Tyrolese.

exclaiming : " I renounce thee, Satan." The same effect was produced upon all that were hardy enough to look through the glass. The fact was, they saw in the box a living animal, black, enormous, and frightful, of immense length, and with threatening horns. The terror was universal, and no one seemed to know what to think of so horrible a monster ; when a young gentleman, who had just finished his course of philosophy, observed to the assembly, that the animal which was in the box was much bigger than the box itself ; that in the present instance, the contained was larger than the container, which was contrary to every principle of philosophy, and could not be according to the order of nature ; whence he concluded, that the animal in the box was not material, but that it must be some spirit under the form of an animal. This observation was received with universal applause, and every one was persuaded that it was the devil himself that was in the box. Of the person who had carried the box with him, it was concluded, with the same evidence, that he could not have had it but for some bad end, and that he could have been nothing but a sorcerer. The report of this adventure spread far and wide, and immense crowds of people came to the house, for the purpose of having a peep into the box ; and each one said to all he met : " I have seen the devil to-day."

The judge condemned the deceased to be deprived of Christian burial, and left an order for the curate to perform the exorcisms of the Church, for the purpose of expelling the devil from the box, and of driving him out of the country. The

sentence of the judge extended no further, but the politicians of the village carried their reflections to a prodigious length. The witchcraft of Father Tanner, according to them, was common to all the confraternity; and, therefore, they thought it right and just, that a sweeping sentence of banishment should include them all, according to that of Virgil: "*Crimine, ab uno disce omnes.*"

Whilst each one was busy in giving this wonder, or rather scandal, his own interpretation, and the minds of all were in inexpressible agitation and ferment, a Prussian Philosopher chanced to pass through the village. The inhabitants did not fail to entertain him with the news of the day; but, when he heard them mention the Jesuitical Conjuror, and the devil confined in a box, he laughed heartily, both at the news and the newsmongers. Being, however, visited by the principal inhabitants, and earnestly pressed to come and see with his own eyes the wonderful thing he would not believe on their relation, he yielded to their solicitations; and on the magic box being shewn him, wondering he exclaimed: "Is it possible, that the late invention of the microscope should not have been heard of in this part of the country? This is a microscope—a microscope, I tell you. But nobody knew what he meant; the term was as little understood as the thing itself: some even began to suspect him for a sorcerer, and would have condemned him as such, had he not quickly destroyed the charm, and dissipated the illusion. Taking, therefore, the box, he removed the cover, in which the lens was encased, and turning

the box upside down, out came a little horn-beetle, and crawled upon the table. The philosopher then explained this optic mystery in a manner suited to their comprehension. New admiration now succeeded the first, and the animal appeared as laughable an object on the table, as it had been frightful in the box. All suspicions now vanished: the judge tore the sentence; the good name of the father was restored, and each one returned laughing home. Busy people, however, were found, who published this adventure, mentioning the box, and the sentence of the judge, but forgetting to say any thing about either the philosopher or the microscope.

This story, how ridiculous soever it may appear, furnishes us with a very important instruction, for the correction principally of three faults:

I. Our haste in judging ill of others. We view other people's faults only through a microscope, which enlarges objects surprisingly. This microscope is our heart; and the lens, our malignity. What are all the crimes, those frightful monsters, we discover in others? Nothing but a horn-beetle in the microscope. Take away the lens, and there will remain, at most, something laughable, or deserving our compassion and indulgence.

II. Our readiness in believing what is reported of others. Rest assured, that they, who speak ill of their neighbour, only report what they have seen in the microscope. If they relate what others have said, it is one microscope on another; and the farther a report is spread, the more it is distorted and augmented, and the more are the microscopes multiplied. Remove the lens from them

all, and what will you find? A horn-beetle in each microscope.

III. Our itching to report the evil we know of our neighbour. Never be so base as to speak of the monster in the box, without mentioning the microscope; or, if you do not choose to speak of the latter, be silent as to the former, and leave it for what it is, a horn-beetle in the microscope. Alas! how many countries, towns, and houses, are there, still ignorant of the invention and deception of the microscope!

PARABLE XXXVII.

Aristhenes, or the Feeble revenged.

A PHILOSOPHER named Aristhenes, while passing quietly along the principal street of Thebes, in Bœtia, received a violent blow from a stone: turning immediately round, he discovered the man who had thrown it, and went straight to him: but, finding him to be a stout resolute fellow, he drew out of his pocket a small piece of money, which he gave him, saying: "Excuse me, my friend, for not giving you more for the service you have just done me: were I richer, I would reward you more handsomely. "But," added he, "see that gentleman before you; if you will serve him the same, you will, I doubt not, receive from him a suitable reward, both for himself and me." This gentleman was no other than the famous Epaminondas, the greatest warrior and the most

able captain in all Greece.* He was going to his palace on foot, accompanied only by two general officers, and preceded by six halberdiers. Our young Bœtian, believing what the philosopher told him, takes up a stone, and throws it against the gentleman's back, and, fool-like, waits in expectation of his reward. He was rewarded according to his deserts; for two halberdiers rushed upon him, and having given him several severe blows on his back and shoulders with their halberets, led him off to the state prison. Aristhenes took care to give him the meeting. As soon as the young man saw him: "Ah! perfidious wretch," cried he, "you have deceived me: behold the reward I receive." "It is such as thy insolence deserves," replied the philosopher; "it was thou that deceivedst thyself for supposing thou couldst, with impunity, insult passengers who did thee no harm, nor even spoke to thee. Did I not tell thee, that gentleman would pay thee for himself and for me too?" The young man owned his fault, and was going to beg of the philosopher to intercede for him; but his guards gave him no time. He was dragged to prison, and his punishment was death.

* Greece, the ancient name of that part of Turkey in Europe, which contains Macedonia, Thessaly, Livadia, the Morea, the Archipelago, and Candia, has been reckoned superior to every other part of the earth, on account of the salubrity of the air, the temperature of the climate, the fertility of the soil, and above all, the valour, learning, and art of its inhabitants. The most celebrated of its cities were Athens, Sparta, Corinth, Argos, Thebes, Sicyon, Mycenæ, Delphi, Træzene, Salamis, Megara, Pylos, etc.

Three things are here to be considered:--1. The stratagem of the philosopher. The weak and oppressed Christian has no occasion to make use of such means, because it is already regulated and determined, that whatever evil is done to him, is done to his King. The only thing he has to do, is to bear all with patience, to rejoice at the prospect of the reward promised him, and to pray for the person that abuses him, that he may, by a sincere repentance and just reparation, remove the severe chastisements, which the Eternal King has in reserve for him.

II. The stupidity of the Bœtian. You, no doubt, esteem yourself much wiser than this man, and you flatter yourself you should never have fallen into such a snare. I believe you; neither have I any difficulty in believing, that you would not do to a nobleman, able to revenge himself, what you do not daily scruple to do to the poor, and to those whom you do not fear: but in this you are certainly more foolish than this stupid Bœtian, since you well know, that all the evil, all the injustice, all the pain, and all the vexation that you cause, to the least of these little ones, you do to the King of Heaven, he having declared, that what is done to them he considers as done to himself.

III. The rigour of the punishment. If the punishment appear to you excessive, remember, that a slight offence, if committed against a king, becomes enormous, and deserves the severest punishment. Take care, then, how you offend the least of your brethren, because it would be offending the King of Heaven himself, who, to punish

you, has prepared for you dungeons of fire, everlasting fire. On the contrary, exert yourself to afford your brethren all the assistance you can, and to procure them all the pleasures and comforts in your power: because all the good you do them, the King of Heaven has declared he will consider as done to himself; and on this condition will he reward you with eternal happiness and glory. Oh! how ought this truth to inspire us with sentiments of mildness, patience, respect, condescension, and charity towards our neighbour.

PARABLE XXXVIII.

The Complaint of the Cretans to Jupiter.

THE Cretans one day represented to Jupiter, how disgraceful and mortifying it was to them, that, their island having served him as a cradle, and his having been for a considerable time educated among them, he had never yet granted them any particular privilege, to distinguish them from the other nations of the earth. They, therefore, entreated him to grant them one worthy of his majesty and bounty, and of the affection he bore them. Jupiter sent Mercury to tell them, that they had only to name the desired privilege, and that he would grant it them. He even added, that, in case a first and second favour should not satisfy their wishes, he would allow them to make a third petition. This gracious offer was received with rapture by the Cretans.

The first petition they preferred, that the in-

habitants of Crete should be, during life, exempt from labour, pains, sufferings, troubles, and evils of every description. Mercury, on the part of Jupiter, told them their petition was extravagant, and that this exemption was the privilege of the gods, and could not be granted to men; and therefore, they must proceed to a second petition.

The second prayer was, that they should, at least, be permitted to exchange their pains and vexations with one another. It was granted, and Mercury appointed a place, where all those that wished to change should appear; telling them, that the fair for this purpose would begin on a certain day, which he named, and that it should continue for eight successive days. Each one, without loss of time, packed up his labours and pains, and repaired to the appointed place on the day specified. When the poor observed, that the rich were of the number intending to barter, they hastened to them, in the expectation of finding something advantageous: but having examined their bundles, their pains, jealousies, apprehensions, &c. they would not change, and they withdrew. The rich, who had often extolled the advantages of mediocrity, observing some of this class at the fair, ran to them for the purpose of bartering: but on observing their frugality, economy, &c. they did not choose to exchange, and they retired. The fair was full of comers and goers, lookers-on, and examiners; but there was no business done. The eight days passed, and each one returned as he came.

The Cretans, seeing that their second petition had succeeded so ill, and knowing that they had

only one more to make, assembled to settle what this last petition should be ; being determined it should be more moderate than the first, and more reasonable and practicable than the second. After much discussion, they at length came to the following determination, viz. to petition that the share of their pains and labours should not exceed that of their pleasures and profits ; that they should not be more wretched than happy ; in a word, that the sum of goods and evils should to them be equal. Mercury came to tell them, that Jupiter had very graciously received their third petition : that he had not only granted what they asked, but besides, that it was his good pleasure that they should have double the good things they had of bad. This declaration was received with loud acclamations, and reiterated cries of " Long live Jupiter ! Long live Mercury !" Silence being at length obtained, Mercury answered and said unto them : " Let those, then, who wish for a change in their condition, make two packets. In one let them put the advantages they enjoy, and in the other the pains they endure : let them have both ready on a certain day, and at such a place. I will be there, and weigh them. If the sum of goods be not double that of evils, I will augment the goods, or diminish the evils, to the proportion granted by Jupiter. Again, if the evils do not amount to half the goods, I shall then have to increase the evils, or diminish the goods, that there may be an exact proportion : this will be nothing but right. There was a universal cry of " Quite right and just," and each

one went home, highly delighted, to make up his packets.

The day being come, they all repaired to the place of rendezvous with their packets. Several, even of the Kings of Crete,* presented themselves with the rest. Mercury, perceiving that each had a large packet and a small one, suspected some cheat, and raising his voice, said: "Gentlemen, it is not reasonable to expect I should weigh your packets, without first knowing what they contain; for, if any one enjoys an advantage which he has left out, I must certainly put it in before weighing. If any one, on the contrary, shall have packed up imaginary evils, or such as he had brought upon himself, these I must undoubtedly take out; for I shall not weigh as a real evil, one which is only imaginary, or in which you take pleasure." This proposal was received without a murmur, and even without the smallest opposition, though some did not feel quite easy.

The first that presented himself was the King of Gortyna. Mercury opened his small packet, and found that he had omitted to put in his independence on every other man; he therefore put it in. He had likewise forgotten the excellent health and strong constitution he was blessed with: this also was added. Other advantages, which the king had not noticed, he put in, and then closed the packet. He next opened his packet

* Crete, one of the largest islands of the Mediterranean Sea. It was once famous for its hundred cities, and for the laws which the wisdom of Minos established there.

of troubles, and there found, first, uneasiness about the ability of the generals of his armies. An imaginary, or voluntary evil, cried Mercury: either make a better choice, or command in person: this he took out. Secondly mistrust in the fidelity of the directors of his treasury. This likewise is imaginary, or voluntary; and he took it out, at the same time adding: give thyself the trouble to make a better choice, and examine their accounts and proceedings. This duty is comprised in the packet of the troubles of government, which thou hast taken care to put in. Thirdly, fear of what the people will say respecting the government. This again is imaginary, or voluntary, repeated Mercury. Make it thy study to govern well, and thy people will know it, and always speak well of thee: or, should any chance to speak ill of thee, it will not effect thy happiness. Having taken out this third, and others of the same nature, he closed the packet and weighed. The packet of troubles was not as heavy as that of pleasures by one fourth. Mercury, not wishing to be too hard with the king, added to the packet of troubles only a quartan ague for two years. The other kings, observing how particular Mercury was in his examination, and what little respect he shewed to the kingly character, took up their packets and retired.

The second that presented himself, was a grandee of the first rank. Mercury, opening his smaller packet, found he had not included in it the privilege of having no one above him but his king; the honour of being descended from a hero, which nevertheless he often boasted of; and the

satisfaction of having well-disposed and healthy children. These three advantages were added, and the packet closed up. Next was opened the packet of troubles, where Mercury found, first, uneasiness as to the fidelity of his wife. "All imagination," said Mercury, and took it out. Secondly, the loss of an expensive law-suit. "Voluntary," said Mercury: "why didst thou, depending on thy credit, carry it on, knowing it to be unjust?" Thirdly, the vexation of being always unfortunate at play. "Voluntary: either play better, or not at all." Fourthly, the chagrin, at being hated by his tenants. "This is all either imaginary or voluntary. Correct thy vices, and they will love thee." After taking out all these, Mercury closed the packet and weighed. The pleasures were more than six times heavier than the troubles. In order to make them nearly equal, he added the sudden death of the nobleman's eldest son. Receiving the news of it on the spot, he hastened to retire. The rest of the nobility, not willing to stand the test, had already withdrawn.

The third that presented himself was a merchant. Mercury, opening the smaller package, did not find in it the pleasure of having trebled his fortune in less than four years; nor that of having got a great name, and aggrandising his family; nor again, that of equalling princes in the grandeur of his apartments, the splendor of his retinue, the costliness of his furniture, and the delicacies of his table. He added these three articles, and shut up the packet. Opening the other, he took out the contempt of his wife, who was a

lady of distinction: "Why," said Mercury, "didst thou marry her?" "The debaucheries of his son:" "Why wast thou so careless in his education?" "His neighbour's good fortune:" "Why not rejoice with him on this account?" "The scoffs and rebuffs of the nobility:" "Why dost thou frequent their company?" "Old age:" "Oh!" says Mercury, "that goes to the small packet:" and he put it in. After weighing, the packet of troubles was found to be only an eighth part of that of the advantages. Mercury added to the first the loss of one of his ships, that was coming from Sidon, and a fit of the gout every six months. The merchant received the news of the loss of his ship, and the gout seizing him at the moment, he retired to his carriage, and hastened home. Matters being thus settled with the king, the nobleman, and the merchant, no other ventured to present himself. Each one had taken up his packets, and, satisfied with what he had got, retired, being unwilling to expose himself to an examination.

From that time the Cretans never more importuned Jupiter, but remained quiet and content. Let us be so too; for this fable concerns us, and reproaches us with three vices.

First, with pride. We forget that we are men, subject to pain and sufferings; that we are on the earth, a place of labour and sorrow; that we are sinners, indebted to the divine justice. An exemption from every sort of evil, finds place only in heaven. If we desire this exemption, let us desire heaven, let us labour to gain heaven, and let us make our sufferings serve to this end.

Secondly, with injustice towards others. We

are always imagining that we suffer more than other people. How much soever we may suffer, how many are there who suffer more than we do? Let us not envy any one. Let us attend less to our own difficulties, and think rather of relieving those of others."

Thirdly, with ingratitude towards God. We are always talking of what we suffer, without ever thinking of the benefits heaped upon us by Almighty God. We exaggerate the former, and diminish the latter. Ungrateful as we are! how much do we deserve divine punishment! Let us, at least, profit by the chastisements that are sent us, and humble ourselves under the hand that strikes us. Let us be contented with our lot, and be thankful to God for every thing.

THE END.

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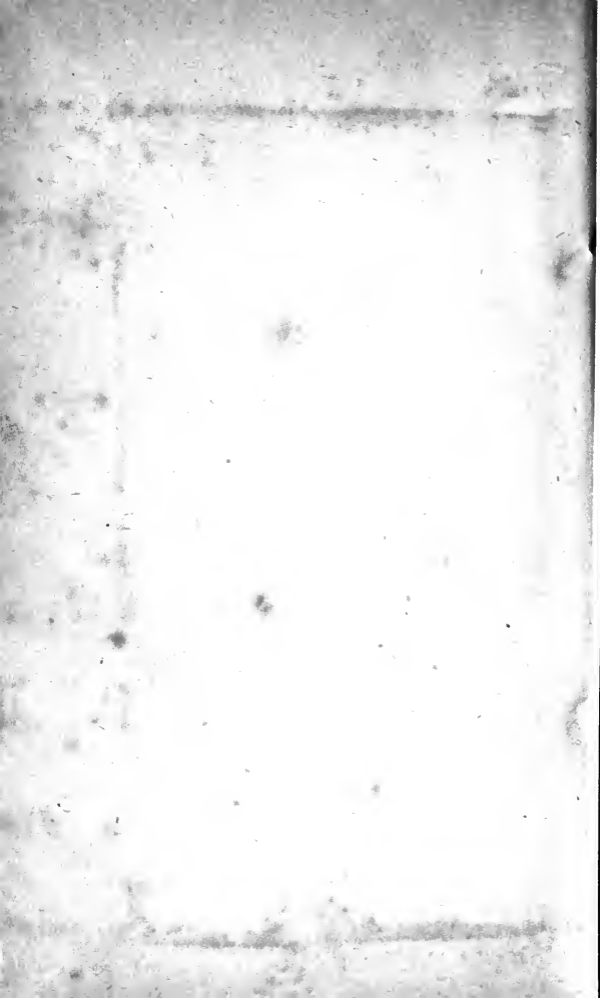
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