MORAL TRAINING

PREFACE BY

FATHER GALLWEY, S.J.

PRACTICAL NOTES

ON MORAL TRAINING

ESPECIALLY ADDRESSED TO PARENTS
AND TEACHERS

WITH PREFACE BY

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PREFACE.

THIS little volume on education appears without the name of the writer to whom we are indebted for it. For one reason this is to be regretted, since the name of the authoress would be a guarantee that this is not the work of a stay-at-home traveller, who is only pilfering from the diaries of those who have borne the burden and the heat of the day, but a volume of genuine jottings by the way. The writer has travelled over every foot of the ground described. Possibly this is one reason why the volume is not bulky. For as it is said that sermons are shorter when the preacher is careful to practise all that he preaches before he goes into the pulpit, so is it natural that a volume on education should be short if all the suggestions it contains are the results of hard-earned experience. The authoress of these pages has spent her best days in the school-room, either forming directly the minds of children or training their teachers in their difficult art. As might therefore be expected, this is a volume well stocked with practical hints on a great variety of subjects connected

with education, both as regards the culture of the intellect and the formation of the moral character. I am much mistaken if it do not become a very popular book, not only in convents and houses of education, but also in family drawing-rooms. Fathers and mothers will, I think, when they have read a few pages of this little treatise on education, be struck with the value of the suggestions which they meet with in every chapter, and will wish that they had become acquainted with it at an earlier stage of their married life.

Principiis obsta, sero medicina paratur,

is a familiar Latin axiom. Watch over the early beginnings of passions and apply remedies in good time. Otherwise you will find later on that your labour is in vain. Children before they can articulate a word are capable of being helped towards virtue or disposed towards the indulgence of their passions. It is therefore a blessing for them if their parents, or those who have charge of them, are from the beginning acquainted with the judicious rules and sound principles found in a volume such as this is, and are from time to time reminded of them.

The preface of a condensed volume ought not to be too diffuse. It would be therefore

inopportune to make many extracts here from the wise lessons which abound in the following chapters. But it will do no harm, I think, to present one specimen of the good sense and valuable hints which parents and teachers will meet with in every portion of this admirable little work.

Treating of the habit of truthfulness and its importance, the writer observes how those intrusted with the care of children are, oftentimes, without being at all aware of the mischief they are working, forming those under their charge to habits of dissimulation and falsehood. "If the nurse is ill-tempered, she is likely to incite the child to untruth and subterfuge by her threats of severe punishment for mere acts of childish mischief. . . . But the case is worse when the school-boy is accused and punished for something he has not done and menaced with still further chastisement if he does not acknowledge having committed the fault. . . . To me the length to which teachers and even parents will sometimes go to convict a child of a lie seems as unwise as incomprehensible." The authoress here speaks of the school-boy, but no doubt has the school-girl equally before her mind. If then only this one page were to come under the eyes of those who have to train children, what a

friend it would prove to many a child who but for this kindly warning would have been terrified into *the first lie.* If the Prince of the Apostles yielded before the cross-questioning of a serving-maid and afterwards shed so many tears over the frailty of that night, how salutary must be the caution here given to parents and teachers by this true friend of children, that they know not what they are doing when "they investigate, examine, and cross-question, looking so stern and angry all the time, as to give the child the impression that they are cruel and vindictive foes trying to entrap him in his own words".

This is but an average specimen of the treasures which this volume contains in great plenty. If then St. John tells us that to one who brings a false Gospel we must not say "God speed," is it not right to infer that to a volume so full of Christian truth and practical charity we ought very cordially to say "God speed"?

P. GALLWEY, S.J.

Feast of our Lady's Nativity, 1879.

CHAPTER I.

EARLY EDUCATION.

The aim of education is to combine the cultivation of the intellect with the formation of the moral, and the direction of the spiritual life, so that each faculty of body, mind, and soul shall be in the highest degree trained and fitted to fulfil the purpose for which God endowed us with it. Education which fails to accomplish this, is not a true but a false education, it has fallen short of its proper mission and left its appointed office unfulfilled. But when the work is faithfully performed, the soul of man is thereby led to the truest wisdom and highest perfection he can aspire to in this world. God is known, served, and loved, and our neighbour also for His sake, in the way too which His Divine decrees have appointed and designed from all eternity for each of us. Our duties are pointed out to us, and we are *prepared* for them, what is evil in us is reproved, all that is good is cultivated and developed, our minds having been first tempered to receive such essential education or training with childlike hearts and calm unsullied intellects. We are taught the

practice of virtue, sound principles are implanted in our minds, the beauty and value of truth are disclosed to us, so that we may seek, cherish, and abide in it for ever. In a word, education develops all the good that is in us, moulds, trains, and exercises it in the best way, and turns it to the best account. There is no exception of classes; no matter in what position we are placed, nor under what circumstances, nor the amount of ability or talent we may possess, good education secures the like blessings for all, and at the same time is suitable to each.

We are apt to attribute too much importance to the amount of instruction the child is to receive, and lay too little stress on the preparation needful to enable the mind to accept it and take it in. The labourer who sows his corn gives us a practical lesson on education. He knows it is not for him to choose the ground he works on, but it is his business to make the best of the ground he has. He procures the kind or sort of grain best suited to the soil, and he is skilled in sowing it well. Still all this is little in his eyes. He knows the most important thing in the matter is, that the ground should be properly prepared beforehand. So to this preparation he applies himself diligently before everything and above everything, and to it, under God, he attributes the success of the crop. Now this is just the point most neglected and overlooked in the education of

children; we do not draw out and predispose their minds for thought, or induce them to study sufficiently, and our method of instruction is not always attractive. This arises from a false idea that children when at school can be compelled to study, and even made learned against their will. In some circles of the wealthy classes boys are often found unable to learn at school; the thoughtless and heedless lives they spend at home, and the desire for the amusements they have been accustomed to, prevent them from applying their minds to study, or from working steadily at their own improvement. Children do not so need diversion, as that we should make strenuous efforts to amuse them—it is often better to leave them to their own resources, and we shall see that occupation brings the sweetest enjoyment; they often prefer work to play, and they play all the more gleefully when the work is over. A child requires cheerful encouragement in all his little plans and projects, which he should be allowed to think out for himself, and to carry out himself as far as possible, particularly if they refer to the comfort or benefit of somebody else. When he has decided on some work within his reach, both good and reasonable, he should have an intelligent and trusty person to put him in the right way of doing it, and with the proper materials, but on condition he finishes the work, and finishes it well, for much of the boy's future career may

depend on those two points. I am inclined to believe that if we asked the good and thoughtful men of our acquaintance what it was they enjoyed most in youth, and also what helped most in their education, they would tell us that it was some study they took up of their own accord, and which they prosecuted silently and with success, or a talent for mechanism which they displayed in childhood and were allowed to cultivate. In either case, and in every case, we shall find, that education only begins when the child, discovering its power of thinking, utilizes that power. Education progresses as the mind expands to the perception of all that is good and noble. Under this method the boy seeks happiness in his own soul, he is content and happy in his own home, and diffuses peace and joy to all around him. He takes the freshness of childhood with him far into his youth, and he bears the freshness of youth for ever in his heart.

We often confound in our own minds education and instruction, so far at least as to rest satisfied that the work of instruction is the whole process of educa tion. No doubt instruction is the principal means we have of conveying to the mind of another the information we possess ourselves, but in order that the information we give may be received and mastered by the mind of the pupil, it must be suitable and made attractive to him. We know from our own

experience how much this is disregarded and forgotten, and how much we have lost in consequence. But it has taught us one lesson, that we should never teach anything to anybody without trying to secure his own concurence and co-operation. To accomplish this we must make a subject as interesting as we can, and explain it simply, inducing the pupil to learn by awakening his attention, and getting him to apply his mind to what is put before him. And when he understands it, to get him to hoard it up according to his capacity and comprehension as a treasure of great value.

The pupil must not only co-operate with his teacher, but he must also do his own work and store his own mind, he must remember that we cannot pack it for him, as we can pack his trunk. He must use his own intellect, and do it for himself. We shall be able to help him according to the good will he bears us, and our personal influence with him. If he has faith and confidence in us, he will take readily and willingly all we give him and make it his own, but if he disesteems and dislikes us, he will reject and cast from him whatever he receives from us, and may even bear towards it ever afterwards a lasting distaste. A child feels before he thinks, and at first only thinks as he feels, so if he feels strongly any antipathy, it grows and magnifies as he broods over it, and as early impressions are the most durable,

it is not surprising to find the prejudices and repugnances of our childhood existing for years, and even overshadowing the rest of our lives.

Instruction must not only be interesting, it must also be suitable to the mind of the pupil. A child's mind can be formed almost from infancy if he has been always told what is true. One truth becomes the basis of another. And as he advances in age he advances in knowledge of simple facts. These facts will rest in his mind, and he will preserve them with faith and trust if he is not overburdened and confused by unfitting and unseasonable instruction. After a time he will be able to discriminate between one object and another, to observe and discern their peculiar properties. In other words, he will begin to think, and if fairly guided, his education will be far advanced, even before he takes a book in his hands, and when he does, his book-learning will come easy to him. A mother's patient love is of great value in first awakening the mental powers of a child. His views and opinions harmonize most readily with hers, and great as her influence may be, she will not, if she is wise, instruct him so much directly on any subject, as she draws out his powers of discernment, exercises his mind, and makes him conscious of his faculities. She then puts before him the main object of life and the end he must try to attain.

The most agreeable and the surest way to get a pupil to apply to his studies, and even to adopt a life of study, is to incite him in his early years to the exercise of his own intellect, and to encourage him not to receive passively from his master the information he requires, but to seek and search for it himself, and then make it his own possession. When he uses his own mental powers in arriving at the knowledge he is in need of, he will remember it more clearly ; and what he acquires in this way will be more satisfactory to him. We find this is the course a practical man adopts when he wants to come to a definite conclusion on a subject of deep interest. He will not be satisfied if we can give him a treatise on the question he consults us about, no matter how much to the point and lucid it may be, unless we first allow him to speak out his own mind and to say all he wishes to say himself. And in doing so if we only help him to express his thoughts and draw him to consider his views, he is pretty sure of forming a true judgment, and one he is likely to abide by. The contentedness that this mode of action gives him does not arise from following his own will, or from preferring his own opinion to ours, but from the conviction that we understand his case perfectly, that what we suggest is suitable to his circumstances, and within his reach and power to accomplish. This contentedness is intensified when

he has formed his decision by the exercise of his own reason.

If it is the most successful system of education to dispose the pupil to master his studies by the employment and exertion of his own intellect and energies, the very worst method, on the other hand, that can be used in the training of any one, and the very worst means that can be used to make a pupil learn, is the power and influence of fear. If a child has deliberately committed a great fault, it is well that the fear of suitable correction should prevent him from ever committing it again. The fear of occasional correction may also be useful in inducing an idle boy to learn his lessons; but once he has learned them, he should get every mark of approbation and every encouragement.

But to bring up and rule a child entirely through fear would be a great act of injustice to him. It would be sure, in the generality of cases, to engender cunning and deceit, and to habituate him to the control of the senses rather than to the guidance of reason. If he were governed only by fear during his study, it would be sure to hinder his advancement in learning. Fear not only depresses and confuses the action of the intellect, but the anticipation of some dreaded evil chills the energies and paralyzes the mental powers. When this dread or apprehension exceeds the fear of God in the heart,

it drowns the voice of conscience, and the child will pretend to know what he has not learned, and cannot learn, and he will act untruthfully and with duplicity as the temptation offers. If however the pupil be not actuated and governed by fear to this extent, still whatever he learns through its influence will always be associated with a feeling of dislike, and most probably will never be an attractive subject of study to him. This brings us back to the necessity of gaining the willing co-operation of the pupil, of which we cannot doubt when we remember in how little one man can help another except with his assent and concurrence. And this is especially the case with regard to everything in the way of mental and moral culture and improvement. Thus it is plainly revealed to us that the first duty of those who have to instruct others is to secure their co-operation.

The pupil who likes to learn, and who gives his mind and attention willingly to his studies, gives but little trouble to his teacher. All that has to be done is to put the right subject in the right way before him. But those who have no taste for study, and are unwilling to learn even what is most needful for them to know, have to be incited and worked on by an effectual influence, an influence of a threefold power. The power of a true, clear, and earnest method of instruction; the power of good example, that enkindles the desire of imitation; and the guiding and controlling power of well-ordered discipline and just rule.

CHAPTER II.

INSTRUCTION.

ALTHOUGH there is much trouble and drudgery in learning, as we all know, I fear there is generally a great deal more than there need be, for we have not only to learn, but often to un-learn and re-learn what was taught us badly at first. This does more harm to the minds of children than is usually supposed, for it spoils their faith and weakens their trust in those placed over them, and to whom they should look up and rely on, without doubt or hesitation.

A child's misgivings are accompanied by pain and fear. A species of mental pain is caused by the fruitless effort and inability to reconcile contradictory statements, or to decide between them, and this uncertainty creates a dread of being misled now, having been deceived before. The child cannot see his way and has lost much of his reliance on those who lead him. With a perplexed and troubled mind he tries to grope on in the dark, and at the time those around him may think him dull and

thoughtless he may be pondering over his difficulties.

Children have an inherent love and desire for truth, they believe implicitly whatever is told to them so long as there is an entire absence of inconsistency in the lesson we inculcate. Therefore, if we teach what is true, as it becomes more and more intelligible to them, they will prize it and gladly store it in their memory for life. And it is not unlikely that in after years they will give themselves most readily to the studies that attracted them most in youth, that helped to develop their tastes and unfold their minds, because their esteem and belief in them were never over-shadowed by a doubt. A child must take all things on faith, and if what he has been taught in childhood looks all the brighter and truer the older he grows, his character is founded and built up on faith, for it has strengthened with his strength and grown with his growth, giving him a simple upright soul, a strong clear intellect, and a brave trusting heart.

But if the structure of his teaching has to be pulled down and then built up again, even in part, it will seldom attain great solidity. For the habit of distrust and disbelief is hard to be cured and often not cured perfectly: it generally leaves some defect and weakness, a sort of flaw in the "settlement" of the building up of the mind. And so it is that children

who have thus been taught or learned to be sceptical in their youth, seldom acquire true or trusting hearts, no matter how profoundly they may study or how well they may be supposed to be educated. Their principles and convictions are ever weak and wavering, there is no sound foundation of truth in their minds. They have no standard before them, no sure ground to occupy, and having no firm spot on which to rest the lever of their reason, it cannot work steadily or rightly. They are neither healthy nor happy minded.

Clearness is the next thing to be observed, after truthfulness, in our method of instruction. We should ever bear in mind that education is only a means to fit us for the duties of our calling and position in life. So to secure its being a blessing and a help it must be rightly directed. Our instruction must then have a distinct aim and object in view, and it must also be distinct in itself, and fit and appropriate for those who receive it. For all readily acknowledge that no matter what amount of erudition a man may possess, if he be ignorant of what is necessary for him to know, his education is a failure.

Now, to prevent such mistakes, would it not be well to allow those we have to teach to forecast their future lives and see beforehand what it would be requisite for them to know, according to their

intended state or profession, and their peculiar tastes and talents, always keeping close to what is good and practical. Then with a distinct aim and a firm purpose before them, they are likely to apply their minds earnestly, and to study diligently, in the hope that each day's labour may lead them further on their road and nearer the object they have in view.

Instruction, when it is clear and simple, will gain the attention of the most heedless, and do much to brighten the dullest intellect. But it is only when we know *thoroughly* what we teach, that we *can* be clear, and the more we understand a subject the more simply and clearly we can define or explain it. It is no easy matter to define anything clearly. Père Lacordaire says: "To make definitions is at once the most difficult of all mental exercises, and the most calculated to make us reflect, and master our ideas". So it is only when we define truly in our own minds, that we know what we teach. When our definitions are strictly correct they are of immense value to ourselves and a great help to those on whose mind we wish to make a lasting impression; for a true definition is seldom forgotten. The intellect not only apprehends it and grasps it as a truth, but generally speaking, it also recalls some similitude as an illustration, or clothes it in some symbolic form that rests firmly in the memory. We can seldom exercise

our capacity of discrimination without calling into action whatever powers we possess of discovering likeness. We know practically that while the mind is analyzing a subject or defining an idea, and when it has disengaged and abstracted it from its surroundings, and when it appears in its intrinsic worth, the memory calls up some material forms by way of exemplification. If the definition is true, this figure or representation of it in the mind enables us more easily to convey our ideas, and to give them a clear expression and explanation. The more accurate and just the definition, the stronger the resemblance to the emblem of it in our minds, and the more clearly and easily we can communicate the knowledge of it to others.

Not only must we be clear, we must also bring our subject to a clear and definite conclusion. This is needful in all cases, but it is absolutely necessary in the instruction of women; the best lecture that could be given will be lost to them if this truth is overlooked. If they have the subject even partially drawn out, but with the truth or dogma it is meant to convey first clearly defined, and its end and aim pointed out, they will take in the whole and store it in their minds, making it their own for life. There is something in the mind of a woman who has true instincts and common sense that makes her look first at the result and the end

proposed. When she has ascertained that, she will go over all that has been said, apprehend it, apply to herself the instruction given, and adopt it for future guidance.

But if it is left to herself to draw her own inference and to form her own conclusions, no matter how plainly and carefully the end may be implied, few women, if any, will hit on it rightly—many are likely to take some far-fetched view, and all will feel disappointed and dissatisfied. For it is as painful to a woman as it is to a child to be left in a state of uncertainty, and this is the case more especially where she has trust and reliance and expects guidance. Men sometimes like to exercise spontaneously their own mental powers, and to draw their own conclusions. They like to follow the argument, and relish having its points repeated frequently as a help to discover and elucidate the truth. But it is just the opposite with women. They usually dread mental labour, and have misgivings of their own discernment, and above all, they weary and are intolerant of much repetition. So it is well to give them the subject clearly stated and developed at first, and they will adopt and fix it to their own special position and practice.

The human mind is so limited, that we find even those gifted with the best intellects *seldom master* more than one branch of knowledge. They

may know a great deal, having a good general knowledge of many things, but they will only know *one thing thoroughly*, and they undoubtedly gain that knowledge not by talent and genius alone, but also by earnest attention. They apply themselves steadfastly and succeed. I must say that I believe earnestness of character is the higher, and surpasses in worth both talent and genius. Talent and earnestness are often united, for talent is simply the power of doing well what has been done before, and this cannot be accomplished without close and earnest attention. When we say a boy has talent for such a profession or calling, we mean that he shows some desire and leaning towards it, and has also a certain aptitude for it. This aptitude displays itself fully in his efforts to learn its established laws, and to acquire a knowledge of the rules and practices of that business or avocation, and according as he shows devotedness and gives attention to such matters we may foresee and predict his future success.

Genius bestows greater liberty of spirit, and enables us to do our own work after our own fashion, and to originate new modes of action. It draws us away from the beaten path into the fertile but untrodden regions of our own minds, there to create on the ground-work of truth new thoughts, conceptions, and designs. And when these are fully realized and

apprehended, genius imparts to us the power to express and delineate them with ability and fidelity, or to carry them into effect with ardour and intelligence.

We observe this to be the case with regard to artists, painters, sculptors, and others who are only considered to possess genius when their works are not alone true to nature, but true in depicting the idea they have conceived, and when they throw the likeness of life, as well as the expression of nature, into the works of their hands. The same rule governs the intellectual worker. No matter whether he speaks or writes the simple truth, or portrays it under the guise of metaphor or allegory, still his thoughts and images, the word-pictures he puts before us, if they have the stamp of genius, must have the stamp of truth, and represent faithfully as in a mirror the workings of the human mind, according to the special view and the peculiar conception he has formed of them, and these again coloured and vivified by his personal thoughts and feelings.

The paramount and prominent office and function of genius is to create; and when we inquire whence this gift proceeds, we find it arises from an aptitude for realizing the cause and nature, as well as for entering into the life and spirit of all it considers. When the intellect is fully conformed and adjusted to the object contemplated, it

is reflected truly in the mind, and genius not merely demonstrates it, but reproduces it, full of soul and animation, shaped and stamped with the character and expression of each man's inspiration.

The second power of genius is to see likeness and find resemblance where it is unobserved and overlooked by the many. This special feature of genius appears distinctly when it is applied to science, and still in a more marked degree when science and practice go together, for then it calls forth the inventive faculty, which is another instance of its creative powers. The man of genius observes similarity in things that heretofore were considered to have nothing in common, and to differ so widely as even to consist of opposite properties. After the recognition of likeness in a case of this kind, he tests their force and efficacy. Being gifted with a free, original, and energetic mode of thought and action, he discovers the secret and hidden laws of nature, and through this knowledge and his spirit of invention he creates a new and twofold power unthought of before, which he tries and applies skilfully to remove a difficulty, or obviate an existing evil, and succeeds in doing so, when ordinary means and previously known remedies had failed. Genius springs from a true insight and just appreciation of truth, and is a

special gift from God, from Whom we receive the knowledge of truth and the help we need in acquiring it, no matter whether it refers to the knowledge of God Himself, or to the recognition of the powers of nature.

We must bear in mind that man does not *create* the powers of nature. He can only discern them as God gives him understanding, and then he applies his knowledge as far as he has ability and as his reason guides him. For instance, man did not create the lightning flash, the electric power, or the force of steam, nor did he give virtue to the herb. He only observed these wonders and utilized them, controlling them and directing them for the use and benefit of man, for which end they were bestowed by God, as well as for His own glory in man's right use of them. Therefore, the laws of nature, the discernment and appreciation of truth, and all true science come from God and lead to God. They display His power and wisdom, and are conducive to His honour.

Now, with all due respect for talent and genius, and even while considering the service and advantage they are to us, we must feel convinced that without a large share of earnestness they would be but of little avail. And when we remember that earnestness is generally accompanied by energy and application, we must own it is a gift of higher value and of greater

worth, even when united to common endowments, than great genius unaccompanied by earnestness and devotedness.

Earnestness is a great help to perseverance, and it fosters enthusiasm—that quiet, gentle enthusiasm which arises from the spirit of sincerity and ardour, co-existing with a high appreciation of what is good, generous, and noble. It also confers upon us that great and wonderful gift, singleness of purpose, or unity of aim, which is able to effect so much. We find men with ordinary intellects mastering hard studies and accomplishing difficult work when they concentrate their powers and apply their minds steadfastly to some special subject, and keep to it perseveringly until it is understood. Their application to some specialty or particular study will be no hindrance to their learning other matters also, for in pursuing one subject thoroughly they must gain much general knowledge, and their habits of attention, earnestness, and conscientious labour will make all further study more easy to them.

It is well to bear in mind that discouragement is the enemy of earnestness, and we should avoid dealing in it if we look to the improvement of others. Encouragement is not only useful, but necessary, for our progress in all manual work. In this sort of work we may easily be disheartened and discouraged, because others readily discern our defects, and we

can see so plainly ourselves when we fail, or how slowly we improve. This is not so much the case with mental acquirements, as we cannot so easily gauge the shallowness of our own minds, or sound the depths of mind in others. Hence it is harder to ascertain our true state, the amount of proficiency we may have attained to, or the lack of knowledge we labour under. Although we may, particularly when young, make mistakes in our own favour from taking wrong views and using false tests, still discouragement will not cure such blunders. Our daily faults and failings are more likely to show us the truth, and our experience in the battle of life will more surely do it.

It is a great mistake to think that children and young people learn from those only appointed to teach them. They learn much, and acquire knowledge more willingly, from their play-fellows and school companions. We find their tone of mind strongly affected and their views of life shaped by their early associates. Now earnestness of character and manner on the part of those who have to instruct others is one of the best reasons for preventing and counteracting anything *injurious* that might come to them in this way. For it gives instructors much personal influence, because an earnest spirit is attractive, infectious, and diffusive, and invites a willing obedience. It enables its possessors to teach well and

impressively, inducing them to seek out the method best suited for every case. The character of each child is trained and studied and his disposition carefully considered, so that it may be governed wisely and worthily directed.

CHAPTER III.

EXAMPLE.

THERE is an abiding power in example which is as persuasive as it is undying. It is our first teacher and earliest guide; whatever we have learned we have acquired in a great degree through the means or through the influence of example, and what we have acquired in this way we have mastered more thoroughly, and with the greater ease and pleasure.

Now everything we learn leaves its own mark on the mind, alters its previous condition in some measure, and helps to form our character and to mould our manners and disposition; so example, and especially early example, possesses a mighty and prevailing power in shaping our lives, and in shading and colouring our existence.

In a general way we admit this easily enough, when we think only of its effect in leading others; yet if we question ourselves we shall find that we are often sceptical as to its power over ourselves, and that many of us are incredulous also as to the influence our own example may have on others. We do not realize that it can have a good or a bad effect on

any one. The *good effect* we may have reason to doubt, and on the bad effect we do not like to reflect. We think, and console ourselves by thinking, that those who are placed under us have no business to imitate us, or learn anything from us except what we wish to teach them. We forget that our words and acts operate on others even against our will, and that all our actions and all the words we utter are borne in memory and live in the minds of some of those who witnessed or heard them, and may have led to their repetition again and again. It is appalling to think how an erroneous opinion, a rash judgment, an uncharitable remark, may be perpetuated, and how it may grow and increase in evil until it meets us at our final doom.

We cannot well exaggerate the dire consequences of bad example, as all our faulty words and acts leave their own records, carry their own results, and make an impress on the soul in some special manner that affects its condition, probably even for eternity. Still, some may adopt extreme views and overrate their obligation to give good example, and their attempts in this way are often overstrained, and generally do much harm to those intrusted to their care. For when they are beset with this anxiety and haunted with this idea, they are apt to say and to do many things, both forced and uncalled for,

merely for effect, and to impress their good example on others. This practice is injurious; it makes them appear weak and false, and renders their instructions useless. Young people discern quickly that such things were said and done for display, merely because of their presence. So their faith and confidence may be sorely shaken in all that has been taught them, or may be taught them in future, even in all that is good and sacred. Simple and trusting souls suffer much in discovering ignoble faults in those they believed perfect and looked up to with respect. This is especially the case in those whose faults betray a want of sincerity and uprightness, and reveal that they were unreal in the part they played, and untrue in the character they assumed. A sad discovery of this kind, made even in early youth, has often embittered a man's life, and overshadowed his days with a feeling of disappointment and a dread of meeting with further deception. We must be true and act truly, if we want to teach truth, "for men do not gather figs from thorns or grapes from thistles".

Father Faber, speaking on this subject, tells us "we must never do anything in *order* to edify others, for the *express* purpose of edifying. We must take great pains not to disedify, but it would be very dangerous to take great pains to edify; the two things are very different."

Good example, of which I speak, is always beneficial, but it increases in worth and efficacy, as it is accompanied by true moral influence, arising from the full faith and trust we have in those who exhibit it. When these are strong the power of example is active and inspiring. We usually find such personal influence in men of firm, fearless, and decided characters, who have good and laudable ends in view. Those who have true and clearly defined principles, and who act on them faithfully, will always have influence with others, who will readily adopt their ideas and opinions and follow their example, not at first through love or liking, but from implicit faith in their honesty, and a strong conviction and reliance on their fidelity and truth.

Those in authority will find their own example to be the most effective means within their reach, not only for the preservation of good order and the observance of duty amongst those whom they control, but also for the inculcation of the practice of honour and probity. Their position gives their conduct a great deal of controlling and guiding force. This is apparent in well-ordered families, schools, and training institutions, where the opinions and convictions of the heads or rulers have been carefully formed, clearly understood, and firmly impressed. Those placed under them carry out their injunctions, adopt their views, and imitate their mode of acting. It

is well that it should be so, for then their spirit and tone of mind pervades the whole establishment, and governs, while they remain quiescent, though always on the watch-tower. Almighty God Himself seems to prefer ruling the world in this wise. He likes to lead us on freely and unconstrained, and to draw us to Himself voluntarily, by the adoption of His will and the influence of His grace.

If the controlling power of those who hold the first place in households and institutions is not felt, and if it is not exerted in the right way by the right person, the task of governing will become a failure.

CHAPTER IV.

DISCIPLINE OBSERVED AND MAINTAINED.

DISCIPLINE supposes, in the first place, the recognition of just authority, with due submission to higher powers; secondly, diligent and efficient training in all things that it behoves us to know and that obedience may demand of us to execute; and, thirdly, the habit of self-control and the practice of self-renunciation in the fulfilment of duty.

A few moments of reflection will show us what constitutes military discipline, and that it consists of these three things. We know very well what is meant by a well-disciplined army. We know that it must be entirely obedient and completely submissive to the field-marshal or the general who commands it, who has been appointed by royal authority. Whether he orders certain rules of action to be observed and carried out, or the enemy to be held in check or contended against, he is instantly obeyed. The slightest indication of his will is noted and followed with the greatest promptitude and precision. Besides all this, every man in the army has been previously and carefully drilled, and thoroughly

practised in all that is necessary for him to know, or that may be required of him. So when the word of command is given he acts at once. He knows what to do and how to do it; he does it faithfully without consulting his own wishes, and regardless of his own inclinations.

Moral discipline has the same influence and produces the same effect. It is ordained by, and holds its commission from the Lord of Heaven and earth. It first recognizes and submits to the Supreme Power of God, Whose laws are written in our hearts and minds. Our consciences receive His commands and urge us, in spite of all contrary desires, to carry out His will. When conscience is rightly formed it becomes a central executive authority in the soul by which our faculties are governed. All that is good and right is approved and ordered, and all that is wrong is forbidden by it. In this way our actions are guided, not by self-will, but are performed, restrained, and corrected by the authority and through the dictates of a right conscience, directed and enlightened by God and faithful to His grace.

Moral discipline is not easily acquired; the drill is hard and difficult to nature, and the apprenticeship is continuous and life-long. We have to learn the proper exercise of our intellect, to direct our affections, to control our senses, and to subdue and overcome our passions; and this not only on great and

important occasions, but still more frequently in matters apparently of little moment.

As a general rule no man falls from the state of high perfection and the enjoyment of God's friendship all at once and directly into mortal sin. We believe he usually fails gradually in "small things," committing slight faults one after another, and so he descends, "by little and little," into the gulf of iniquity. May we not also expect to find the same rule apply to our growth in perfection? Is it not by small acts of self-denial we advance—by looking first to the good of others, by controlling all expression of impatience and ill-temper, by bearing inconvenience and annoyance cheerfully, by enduring pain silently and calmly, and by labouring earnestly and generously at the work God has given us to do—is it not by these and such-like acts we may hope to make progress in perfection.

Though we may begin the practice of self discipline with the slightest exercise of self-control and the most trivial acts of self-denial, still, if we only go on and persevere, God will assuredly give us in time more strength, greater gifts, and higher graces. When we reflect on the glory and triumph of the martyrs we are apt to think they secured their eternal heritage in some cases very swiftly, if not easily, when one stroke of the axe purchased their palm for ever. Probably we overlook the truth in many instances,

and are ignorant of the real histories of such cases. We may justly believe that the last and heroic act of charity was a grace bestowed and a reward conferred for a previous life of self-sacrifice, through which the cross was taken up daily, borne manfully, and carried generously after our Blessed Lord, though unobserved by others.

We shall at once recognize and acknowledge the power of discipline, if we consider and admit the strength of habit, which of itself can control the soul of man and conquer his will, for it is not merely a "second nature," but often is far stronger than nature. Moral discipline is the growth of habit, it is the result and consequence of repeated acts of different virtues, and as we take up and practise each of them faithfully we advance to the perfection of discipline. As the railway facilitates and secures the safe progress of the steam-engine, so discipline guards and guides each act of virtue, and directs it to the right end.

Self-discipline affects in a marked way our temper and manner, and also affects the method of rule or government of those in authority; for whatever control we exercise over ourselves in subduing our passions, in restraining and regulating our senses and inclinations, the same amount we may hope to exercise over those under our charge. Experience especially teaches us the value of self-command and equanimity of manner, for we are apt when first

placed over others to think it wise and even necessary to assume a stern and repulsive bearing, partly in imitation of those who trained and taught ourselves, and partly from the dread of not being able to master those committed to our care.

When we have habituated ourselves to such a manner, and when it is engrafted on our natural imperiousness and irascibility, it is likely to become a moral defect for life; and this all the more readily as we scarcely consider it faulty.

We fancy we put it on for duty sake, forgetting that no one ever cultivates a vice without possessing it from nature. We do not see the harm it inflicts upon our character and the injury it does in spoiling the best part of our work.

The young and the ignorant are very quick in seeing the faults of those placed over them, for they expect of them almost superhuman perfection, and when we think ourselves only zealous for the progress of others, or for the maintenance of good order, they deem us severe and ill-tempered, and as this conviction gains ground, those under our care lose their esteem for and confidence in us, consequently our labour for their improvement becomes in a great degree fruitless.

We may subdue and control our dependants by severity, and govern them through fear, but coercion alone is not discipline, and it does but very little towards forming the mind. Its operation

is evil towards influencing the heart, which is nearly sure to rebel under undue restraint, and the direful reaction that takes place when that restraint is removed is likely to draw off the soul from the good which has been inculcated, and even to throw it into the path of false liberty and indulgence. This course is adopted by way of compensation for past rigour unwisely imposed and unwillingly borne.

It is well to ponder on the might and strength of the Omnipotent God, and then note how sparingly He uses that power in the way of coercive chastisement, and how, when He does so, it is by means of secondary causes. This discloses to us the slight value He sets on what is done through force and by compulsion, and the desire He has that we should serve Him through love, with free minds and willing hearts, as God wishes to rule the world by charity, and to unite all by its holy bonds.

This reveals to us the secret of maintaining true discipline and the blessing to be derived from it. Discipline should be in accordance with reason, justice, and benignity; it should call forth a willing service, with a cordial co operation, and it should possess the power and be imbued with the spirit of union, which should bind together our hearts and fill our minds with faith, trust, and mutual respect. Everything that mars this union or injures it in any way is a fault against discipline. Anything that

shows suspicion or causes distrust, everything like tale-bearing, espionage, or the detective system, is ruinous to good government, it destroys mutual reliance and confidence, and it is utterly fatal to uprightness of character. If we watch and note the method observed in the erection of a great edifice we see the blocks of stone prepared for it, cut, and squared, the angles chiselled and fitted together, and placed one above the other. But all this is not enough. The stones would soon fall out of their places, the walls would give way and tumble down if each stone was not embedded in mortar, and the wall thoroughly cemented together into a firm concrete mass. So it is that society is also formed and built up, no matter how limited it may be, or how far it may extend, or whether it be in the home circle, in public life, or in the intercourse demanded of us by the duties of our profession or calling. We must all lean one on another, sustain each other and be united to each other in Christian charity, which is the source of all peace and happiness, and the foundation of all order as it is of all fidelity and forbearance.

Confidence arising from entire faith and trust is to be dearly prized and carefully guarded. It works wonders in the way of ruling and influencing, but we must ever remember that it cannot be forced, that it is easily checked, and when once broken or

lost is seldom repaired or recovered. Those who trust most, may suffer more from others, but still they enjoy greater peace of mind, and so are amply compensated. They possess a larger share of happiness because they are ever actuated by motives and principles which conscience dictates and enforces. To be trusted is just one of the most important points for those who govern, and they will be trusted if they are faithful to truth and firm in principle—true without prejudices or partialities, firm without harshness or severity—not, remember, for the sake of being liked and of making themselves popular, but for the sake of truth and justice, and for the beneficent effect these virtues have not only on their own hearts but upon those of others. I believe it is far better to be trusted than loved by those committed to our care. The feeling is more lasting, and likely to be more generally felt, consequently more universal in its effects. It gives greater liberty of action, and is more profitable for all parties. Parents sometimes seek to be loved at any cost. They forget that the child loves most and loves longest those whom he looks up to with trust and reverence.

To try to please for the sake of being popular is nearly as bad as to show an ill-tempered or repulsive demeanour, and it is more injurious to those who govern, as it undermines their influence and authority. The desire for popularity is quickly dis-

cerned by those who are under us, and they are apt to meet it with a large amount of flattery. Having laid ourselves out for it, and having sought for it, we cannot well reject it when offered. But once we invite it and receive it willingly and gladly, when once our weakness on this point is clearly ascertained, our moral influence and power of control are at an end. Our places are changed, and our positions are reversed. Those who should be subjects become rulers, and reward or punish us by giving or withholding their praise and approbation. As the case grows worse we have to go down more and more into bondage; having sold our liberty they have a strong hold upon us, and we are at their mercy. We must continue to please them or they will be dissatisfied, and will reproach us. No matter what we do in future to meet their wishes or to gratify them, it will be taken as a right. They have paid for it, and though we are paid in base coin, still it was the price we were willing to accept.

Some may think it prudent to conciliate at first those placed under their care, fancying if they succeed in making themselves favourites, they can rule more easily. No one in authority can ever really know whether he is liked or not, or to what extent he is popular. And what he does to become so may have just the opposite effect. The less concerned he is about this matter, and the less he allows such

a thought to rest in his mind the better, the better for his own honesty and the honesty of those around him.

The best thing, and the great thing, is to try for the sake of charity to act kindly, to think well, and believe the best of everybody, and in all doubtful cases to suspend the judgment and refrain from forming opinions. There is a general agreement that it is better to be deceived than to suspect, but I am inclined to go farther. I think it better not to know all the faults and shortcomings of those placed under us, and thus to afford them opportunity to right themselves, and to give them time to gain heart and courage to recover and redeem their position. They would probably despair of doing so, and make but faint efforts to improve, if they thought they had entirely forfeited our good opinion, and that we had noted down all their errors and registered all their mistakes. Many will not agree to this; there are persons who think that they ought to know *everything* regarding those under their care, and that all will go wrong if they do not inquire and investigate every particular about them. Of course we should take care to prevent the smallest evil, and if we have reason for believing harm has been done, we should take care to prevent its recurrence, and correct bravely and fearlessly the faults we know to have been committed. But

not unfrequently close investigations do more real injury than the fault itself. Suppose it has been proved in this way that a youth has done something wrong, will the accusation and imputation of this fault hinder him from committing it again? I fear not. On the contrary, once he has been branded with it, and has lost his self-respect and the respect of others, it will be harder to cure him of it, and more difficult to prevent him from falling into other errors. It is not unusual for youths to say when warned against some fault which they frequently commit: "My father knows I do it," or "My parents are aware I have this habit," consequently, and for that reason, they make no effort to overcome it. They see that it is not alone that the worst is known of them, but the worst is thought of them, so they do not strive to improve, as their higher aspirations are destroyed and dispelled. Their spirit of emulation fades away with their good name, and hope of future amendment becomes faint.

We cannot be ignorant that besides our deliberate acts, both good and evil, we perform many which are indeliberate or half deliberate every day, and of the merit or demerit of these it is not possible for us to form anything like an exact judgment. If we cannot do so with regard to our own acts, is it not often beyond our power to judge correctly those

of others? And yet it is on such points we are likely to make investigations, and that we think it wise and just to prove them beyond a doubt, and to impress them with the mark of certainty. In this way many an innocent child is found guilty of misconduct, made acquainted with guilt, and mayhap led into it for life.

In saying this I do not mean to approve of the plan of shutting our eyes, and pretending not to see faults committed before us. This would be miserably untruthful, and give the idea that we are cunning and cowardly, and set the example of dissimulation. I believe that errors should be met promptly, and the plain truth spoken to those in fault, but it should be guided by the sweetest charity, including ardent hope. Everything like exaggeration or want of accuracy should be carefully avoided, and everything like contempt or anything even bordering on it should be shunned completely, as its effect is injurious, often rankles, is of no use for correction, and is seldom forgotten.

There is one method of reproof that I have no faith in, and I question if it could benefit any one: I mean the system of correcting by means of unjust criticism and undeserved condemnation, and depreciating whatever those under our care do best and most excel in. This is done to prevent them from being self-complacent, and to hinder them from

taking pride in their gifts and merits. It is more than doubtful that such devices can have this effect, they are disregarded as they are not true—they are likely to produce results opposite to those designed. Such remarks induce the objects of them to debate, and canvass the matter objected to in their own minds, and to fix their attention on the points that tell most in their own favour, so they easily pass sentence in approval of themselves, and to their own advantage. The more unjust and uncalled for such reproofs appear to be, the more injury they are apt to inflict on mind and heart, as then they are likely to beget more pride and self-appreciation. But when our real defects are truly and honestly pointed out to us, we generally see and acknowledge them more readily, and self-love more easily gives way.

Truth alone can teach humility, and it possesses a power that is sure to overcome any difficulty, we may have to contend with in influencing and governing others. It is the source of happiness and reliance to the just and upright, to whom it imparts strength, it adds force to the weak, and overcomes the wily. Everything like deceit or cunning comes from some mental or moral defect. There is some weakness or darkness in the mind that incapacitates it from observing and keeping the path of rectitude. Any evil or ill-regulated desire, any unrestrained

passion, any undue fear of a threatening disaster, possesses a stronger motive power, and can draw the mind away from the right course into all that is false and insincere when it is wavering and untrue to principle and faithless to grace. It is generally found that if a mind is given to disguise and dissembling, the weaker it is, the more wily the character is likely to become. The best way to deal with such a mind in order to reform it, is to meet it with the utmost ingenuousness and integrity, and to act invariably with candour, straightforwardness, and plain common sense. It would be worse than folly to try to overcome cunning by cunning. We should most surely fail in the attempt, and should certainly deserve to fail.

In governing others there are two points we should guard against—first, we must avoid making iron rules, which some persons, when first intrusted with responsibility, think it wise to draw up, and afterwards find them a serious impediment. They have not tested those rules by making sufficient trial of them, they frame them too rapidly, without considering or anticipating the probable variety of cases they may have to deal with. Such rules will not work and cannot work, because they are not accepted according to circumstances, and rather than make them do so, or alter them in the least, their authors will sacrifice the peace and well-being of those they

govern. This comes in a great measure from having drawn up the rules before studying and making sure of the principles on which they are to act. True principles never need be changed, and never should be changed; they suit all states and circumstances. A rule should always emanate from a principle, and unless it does, it must prove a hindrance even to those who drew it up.

Secondly, we should be careful not to impose a great number of small and exacting regulations. They may seem very good and wise, and look very well on paper, but they will most likely be found an irksome and unnecessary burden to those who have to carry them out. They are also likely to draw off the attention from the main business in hand, which should be kept foremost in view. Besides, if we consider the peace and happiness of those committed to our care, we should avoid being over-exacting about our own peculiar whims, and being crotchetty about useless trifles. There is scarcely anything that makes people more disliked, or that is so apt to evoke the spirit of rebellion, for it takes the appearance of petty tyranny.

Of course all things should be done thoroughly well, and one of the best ways of getting them done in this manner is by putting as much responsibility on every one as is due to him, and as he has a right to bear, at the same time giving him all

the aid that is necessary, and all the help he requires.

We must ever bear in mind that although two persons may perform some action equally well, yet no two persons will set about doing it precisely in the same way, as there are no two dispositions exactly similar. So we must make allowances, and give each the scope and room he specially requires, or the light and support that is needful if we wish the work to be done, not only well, but happily and heartily.

Those in authority have to guard against another defect just opposite to over-rigidness, and one we are not unlikely to fall into through indolence and carelessness, or through a false confidence in our own power and position. It is allowing the weak to rule us by giving them too much dominion. This originates in a feeling of pity for their weakness and an unwillingness to contend with them. So we give them their own way, until they will not bear to be opposed in anything, and we allow them to rule us in little things, until at last we find ourselves in a kind of thraldom which we must break through resolutely, and at the cost of much pain, to obtain our release and freedom of action. It is as irritating as it is surprising to find that what was endured for the sake of peace or charity, and suffered through kindness, and perhaps through a half conscious wish

to practise submission and patience, should bring so much trouble and annoyance. But we must expect to find the rule of the weak heavier and more stringent than that of the strong, and that the strong are weakest when contending with the weak. One of the most necessary gifts for those invested with authority is a keen sense of responsibility. I do not at all mean a cowardly shrinking and drawing back from the duties imposed on us by God, but the accepting of those duties as His agents, and in a spirit of dependence, regarding ourselves in the fulfilment of them as the servants and labourers of Him to Whom we must submit our work, and give an account of our stewardship.

The ever-present consciousness that we are answerable for the amount of authority confided to us, and the way in which we have exercised it, and that we shall be obliged to give evidence against ourselves with regard to our bearing towards others, even in the smallest matters. All this prevents us not only from being despotic or arbitrary, but also protects us against our own weakness, waywardness, and caprice.

Those placed over others would do well to be careful, and not to express their ideas thoughtlessly, or to communicate their half-formed opinions too freely, for the words of persons in authority are nearly always quoted, sometimes inaccurately, and often with wrong emphasis. This is most painful, and

occasions much mental suffering, and often produces a strong feeling of isolation and estrangement. But all this may do us good in many ways. It may detach us from the things of this world, and incline us to recollection and prayer, it induces us to turn to God, and to place our trust in Him. It teaches us reserve, which comes from the remembrance of having been misinterpreted already, and the doubt of being misunderstood in future, it draws us into the habit of silence, that leads to peace and much interior happiness, and gives us unwittingly a strange and controlling power over others.

CHAPTER V.

LIFE, INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR.

LIFE is a wonderful gift from God, one for which we owe Him eternal praise and thanksgiving. Yet the grace to use this gift rightly is a still higher favour and greater blessing even than life itself. For we learn from our Divine Lord's words, that it would be better never to have been born, than to misuse this great boon, or turn it to a wrong account. It is, therefore, a matter to us of the most serious concern to reflect and examine how we have spent the time God has given to us, and for what end we have lived.

That there is a special meaning and object in the life of each one of us—that God had a Divine purpose in calling us into existence. We cannot doubt that it is our duty to serve Him, to serve "Him only," and *that* in the way He has marked out for each of us.

The study of human life is full of the deepest interest, whether we consider in it the gift of immortality, that wonderful capacity, or endowment, by which God has granted to our souls a never-ending

life, the power of living everlastingly, happy, possessing Him, and possessing Him eternally, or whether we consider it merely as the span of our existence, which has been given to us that we may gain that eternal life by a faithful and willing service in this world.

As we are formed of two natures, we live, as it were, two lives—one sensuous and exterior, the other spiritual and interior; though we abide in and greatly appreciate the possession of both, still we usually value one more than the other, and therefore more especially cherish it and cultivate it. So one or the other has the mastery, and rules our conduct, according as we are faithful or unfaithful to grace, and as we obey or disobey the dictates of conscience.

The exterior life, which should be directed to God and devoted to His glory, is itself a most instructive subject for reflection, and one which brings before us simple truths we are likely to overlook, just because they are simple and common-place, and yet they reveal much of God's ways towards us.

First we see before us the various and successive phases of man's existence, and the duties to be accomplished in each; duties which, if negligently done, or overlooked in one stage, are seldom overtaken or entirely repaired in the next, and still more rarely at any late period. Each phase of life has its own special work, and has its own special difficulties.

Hurtful as it is to be dilatory and procrastinating, still we must be careful to avoid being over eager in anticipating what has to be done, for order, "Heaven's first law," should always be observed.

As we reflect on the different states and conditions of human existence, the discovery that strikes us with most surprise is the limited nature of our bodily powers, and the fewness of our days of physical labour, in comparison with the continuous action and ceaseless durability of the intellectual and spiritual life. We are amazed to find our hours of toil and servile work are much shorter than we imagined, and that the time we spend in this way, no matter how hard we may labour, and though we may devote to it our best years from youth to age, still scarcely amounts to one-sixth of our earthly existence. For instance, if we look through the life of a good, intelligent, hard-working man, who has lived three score years, we find he has given over twenty years to sleep, nearly twenty years to childhood, school, training and apprenticeship, and that he has given ten years at most to his laborious employment. To do this he must have devoted eight hours a day to it for forty years. From this calculation we must deduct Sundays and festivals and allow, say, ten days each year to health and recreation. These facts, though they teach us how carefully and faithfully we should utilize our corporal energies, point out

more forcibly the supereminence of the intellectual and spiritual life, and the importance it is to us that they should be duly cultivated and directed, for they rule and guide our bodily powers, concurring and co-existing with all our actions of mind and body, conferring upon them their worth and value, even rendering our hours of rest meritorious.

The time of childhood and the season of growth seem at first sight disproportionately long, considering the usual tenure of human existence; but when we remember what they do for us, or at least, what God intends them to do, we recognize His Divine Providence, we discover in this His decree, as in all His ordinances, one of goodness and mercy. Childhood and youth are the most important period of our lives; they are the seed time, the appointed time for planting and pruning. Whatever our life has been, and whatever it shall be to the end, whether filled with all that is frivolous and worthless, or with all that is good and generous, the seeds have been sown in childhood. If we look back to that time, and recall to mind what influenced us most, even in passing events and trifling circumstances, we shall find that our characters were then drawn out, and our dispositions moulded firmly. There are some qualities and characteristics which, if not secured in early youth, are rarely acquired in after life unless with much effort and difficulty, such as forgetfulness of

self, a strong appreciation of justice and honour, and decision of character.

Even as very little children we learn lessons in life; as we grow in years we grow in experience, and as we advance our character gets more pronounced and matured, still it clings to its first outline, and is true to its early impressions. If we had anything like a clear remembrance of ourselves when we were very young, and anything like a true knowledge of ourselves as we stand at present, we should easily discern a marked resemblance in tendency and disposition between the boy and the man. But unfortunately, we are generally thoughtless when we are children, and seldom note or observe ourselves at any stage of life, and rarely know ourselves in youth or age; so we live on haphazard and in the dark.

While reflecting on this subject, it occurred to me that it might be a useful experiment, and one likely to help us to discern and interpret character, and also to test the truth of the theory, that early impressions affect the whole conduct of life, if a good intelligent mother would note down, clearly and conscientiously, what she observed in her child from the age of three to the age of nine years, indicating and exhibiting his disposition and temper, his feelings and opinions, habits and tastes, and the circumstances which called them out. If the mother sealed and put aside a paper so prepared for about thirty years, and then

allowed it to come into her son's hands unaltered. would he not find in it a key to his past life, his failures and successes, his habits of mind and body, would he not make the discovery all the more clearly if he were a thoughtful, truth-loving man?

I have selected middle age for this experiment, for it is more than likely that any revelation of the kind, presented earlier, would be slighted, or have little or no effect on his future conduct. For the period of life between youth and middle age is but too generally engrossed by external objects. We live outside ourselves, and expend ourselves in the imitation, and sustain ourselves on the estimation of others, and are occupied with all that is exterior and ostensible.

But when we come to the meridian of life, we become more reflective, somewhat like a traveller who find himself on the summit of the hill, which he has reached with a great expenditure of time and toil. He stops and looks around him, and on the road he followed, before he pursues the uncertain and indistinct path that winds down the opposite side.

The interior life is the department of our existence which is most overlooked and neglected; nevertheless, this unexplored region exists, although its importance is rarely realized or admitted. It holds whatever portion of happiness and peace we possess, and guards and preserves them, for if peace and happiness are not found in our inmost souls, we are

destitute of them entirely, no matter how we may appear externally to enjoy them.

This inner life is the life we live in our own heart—at home with our own thoughts—occupied with our hopes and desires. Whatever we like best and value most, at every season of our existence, we hoard up here for the time, and hold discussion with ourselves about it. It is here we foster our wishes, and mature our intentions, and above all, it is here we converse with our own souls. The subjects we entertain, and the thoughts that occupy us, reveal to us what we are, and the end and object we have in life, and they also manifest to us our repugnances, tastes, and inclinations. In the inner life alone can we learn what we *really* are, or acquire anything like self-knowledge, or observe correctly the faults and weaknesses of our character; but to do this successfully we must "watch and pray".

As every human existence is twofold, there are as many varieties and diversities in the interior life as in the exterior. There are no two souls alike, nor two minds identical. Therefore, to form a fair judgment of what these lives are, and the difference that exists between them, we shall class them under three heads, the inner life of the wicked, the natural life, and the supernatural life. Our interior life, whatever it may be, is our real life; it is the store-house of our affections, and the centre and source of our thoughts and

desires. These thoughts and desires are the *acts* of our interior life, they combine to form and move the will, and the will produces the outward development and the overt deed. And in this way our external or material life, is shaped and fashioned in the interior, and it is either good or bad, perfect or imperfect, as our interior life happens to be.

From the simplicity of the life of the just, there is not generally speaking the marked difference between this inner and outward life as there is in the life of the wicked. The two-fold life of the wicked not unfrequently appears to divide into two distinct lives, in which the exterior and interior differ so widely as to contradict and disclaim each other, and to seem to pursue opposite ends. For there is no one whose outward life is such a contradiction to his inner life as the man who is mastered by some unjust and evil disposition, or overcome by some unworthy passion, while trying to appear at the same time upright and honourable, and to pass for a good man to all his acquaintances. Such a man does all he can to conceal the evil that is in his soul, and that has taken root in his heart. His greatest care and constant effort is to seem what he is not, he is a "whited sepulchre," his words misrepresent his thoughts, and his life is a living lie, without peace or order. Human respect and the opinion of the world alone have any power over him; his reason and conscience, unaided by

God's grace, are unable to restrain and guide him—they are over-ruled or blinded by passion and unmortified inclinations and temper. While he tries to persuade himself that he is happy and enjoying his liberty, he is a miserable slave to some evil habit, enchained by some wretched propensity, his heart is not only devoid of all true joy and peace, but filled with vexation and bitterness. As he advances in years, unless prevented by some great grace, he will grow in duplicity, and become more and more discontented, morose, cynical, and unhappy.

There is not the same contradiction or dissimulation in the life that is merely natural. The man who leads this kind of life, if he has earnestness, is animated by some strong and special desire, which supplies the principal aim and motive of all his actions; this may be the care of his family, his own advancement in the world, or his success in some literary or scientific pursuit. When we see him engrossed with this, his favourite object, either actively engaged about it, or in silent communings with his own mind, and when we look at him again, in society, or in his own home, surrounded by his friends, we could almost persuade ourselves he cannot be the same person, he seems so different in the two characters. Yet he is a sincere and straightforward man, one in whom there is no deception, for

his outer life does not contradict his inner life, but is directed and controlled by it.

He may be prosperous and successful in his undertakings, he may have a good deal of natural enjoyment, while he is hale and strong, and so long as suffering and affliction keep aloof from him. But when their hour comes, when he has to struggle with grief and anguish, he finds he has mistaken his path and has striven for an unworthy prize. He has trusted his happiness to, and anchored his heart in, creatures, and he has let his earthly possessions absorb his hopes. These, of their own nature, are incapable of fulfilling his trust in them—they must fail him in the end, but many of them will, of their own accord, fail him long before the end comes, and cause him pain and deep sorrow. In vain he asks help from human wisdom, or comfort from human counsel; it is from God alone that can come strength to uphold him, or love and mercy to sustain and console him. He has deceived himself, leaning on the arm of flesh, and resting confidently in his own powers, but even these forsake and desert him, and fade away in a few years also, and then he discovers that his life has been a failure.

The supernatural life is simply that led by the Christian, and the only true interior life; every other kind of inner life is death, or leads to death eternal. This true interior life brings with it, and confers on

us the gift of wisdom—that wisdom which discerns the value of everything, and estimates all things at their real worth. It teaches us the right knowledge, and gives us a high and just appreciation of God, as the beginning and the end of all things, the Creator and Preserver of all creatures, and the Eternal and Omnipotent—full of love and mercy. When God gets His true place in the heart, and rules the soul, then all things else on this earth are comparatively valueless, or valued rightly, and are placed in the position they ought to hold in our hearts before Him.

This interior life brings peace and calmness of mind and joy of spirit. When the heart seeking God sincerely, and above all things created, is cleansed from past sin by true repentance, and has sins of to-day warded off by prayer and vigilance, when it only wishes for what God wills, and only desires what He ordains, then the love of God takes possession of it, and it gives itself entirely to Him. And as the soul loves Him, it becomes united to Him, and so begins to live the true interior life, which leads to a happiness the highest to be found on earth, which will never desert us, never disappoint us, so long as we are faithful.

As the soul grows in this love, she has continually with her the remembrance of God and walks in His presence, holding personal converse with Him and silent communings, consulting Him first in all matters

and waiting on Him in peace to know His will, and then carries it out before Him and under His eyes, for His sake and for His greater honour and glory.

We all lead an inner life of one kind or another, and it would be well for us to examine and consider what sort of an interior life we are leading, and what we would wish to have led at the hour of death, and to try and follow that life now.

There is a peculiarity about the inner life that it is well to note, and one we cannot fail to observe if we study the subject, and that is, its dislike to inspection and scrutiny. Though the inner life differs widely, in different persons, and though it changes with each character, and varies with every disposition, still it displays this one trait almost invariably, or renounces it with difficulty and most unwillingly. This propensity in the inner life to remain unknown and unnoticed amounts in general to a feeling of dread and abhorrence of all investigation, and a strong repugnance to disclosure and discovery. This tendency is got over and conquered, in a great degree, by a higher motive, to fulfil our duty to God by the help of His grace. Still we find ourselves very unwilling to go into this matter further than we can help, or than conscience obliges. There are corners and crannies in almost every heart that the probe may never reach, and they may remain

overlooked and unheeded for life. To watch over the movements of the soul, and to keep a guard over it, is disagreeable labour and arduous work, which human nature is sure to shrink from and to avoid as far as possible. If we are doubtful on this point, we can easily convince ourselves of the truth by considering what strangers we are to ourselves. How very little we really know of our own minds and character, or the hopes and aspirations we harbour in our hearts; and are there not many wishes and desires we are only half conscious that we entertain at all? If we have been reticent with ourselves on some points, on how many have we not kept silence with those around us? And how little they know how, and with what subjects, we are engrossed, and entertain ourselves in our own minds. And is it not true that our most intimate friends and nearest relations will live and die without having a true idea of what we really are, or the kind of life we enjoy, and the kind of life we suffer in our own souls?

We do not observe this secrecy and disguise through any spirit of artifice or deceit, but partly through natural reserve, and partly through heedlessness and self-ignorance. We do not observe ourselves, and we take no note of what passes in our interior, unless we are under the influence of strong feelings. These, even with our strongest efforts at concealment, will assert themselves sooner or later,

and they are sure to reveal themselves in our conduct. But all these circumstances should only convince us that we lead a twofold life, no matter how we may discredit or disregard the fact, and that we are ruled by one or the other, the natural or supernatural, the exterior or interior.

CHAPTER VI.

UNSELFISHNESS.

I AM inclined to believe that if we do not acquire the spirit of generosity and unselfishness very early in childhood we seldom acquire it at all, at least to that degree which amounts to forgetfulness of self in our considerations for others. If we once are self-absorbed, and have acquired the habit of looking to self first on all occasions, of inquiring solely what self likes and does not like, of seeing only to one's own advantage or interest, and of overlooking that of others; if we once acquire this habit I believe it is almost impossible to get rid of it, except by that great and wonderful grace, the gift of Divine charity, when the love of self is then consumed by the love of God. Nothing short of this will cure thorough selfishness, not only that dire and fatal form of the disease which makes us stop short in self and look no further—to live in self as our centre and last end, but even the milder form of the malady of looking first to ourselves in everything.

We may know and feel convinced we have this habit (which knowledge is a great grace), we may contend against it, and try earnestly to overcome it, in which there is much merit. As long as we find ourselves unable to act unselfishly without a conscious effort, it is clear the disease still lurks within us. As the spirit of self-sacrifice is the highest form of unselfishness, so a sure evidence of selfishness, and one we can easily discern, is the practice of indulging in self-commiseration for any trouble and labour we may have to go through in the service of our neighbour, to whom God enables us to be of use, and for which we owe Him deep gratitude.

It must be acknowledged that children in general are naturally inclined to selfishness, and the way in which many of them are brought up but too often strengthens and confirms them in it. Parents and nurses give too readily to the child whatever he wishes, in the hope of winning his love, or merely to keep him quiet. He soon knows his power and uses it. He sees that it is by cries and constant importunity he will most surely get what he wants, he is unconcerned as to the amount of trouble he gives to those around him, as he finds by experience that the greater it is the more likely he is to attain his wishes. If he is reared in this way we cannot be surprised to see him finally become more en-

grossed with himself, and forgetful and inconsiderate about others.

Yet children can easily be made ashamed of the first symptoms of selfishness, and they can even be preserved from giving way to it, by being taught to act generously even before they come to the use of reason. They can be trained at first to bear others in mind—to consider their wishes—to look to their interest—to try and give pleasure to them, and then by degrees they can be led on and encouraged to think of others before themselves, and to act disinterestedly and nobly.

To accomplish this we must not allow them to grow self-important or exacting, but keep them to their true position, not only obedient to parents and those placed over them, but yielding, unassuming, and courteous to all with whom they associate. Upon this much of their future happiness and much of their enjoyment even in this world depends. Very young children can be taught without any difficulty to give way to others, to stop their games and relinquish their places to grown-up people. And when they see themselves and their playthings thus put aside, it shows them they do not hold the first place, and that others should be considered before themselves. When they are a little older it is easy to induce them, from time to time, to lay down their books and put aside their occupations,

no matter how interesting, to play with their younger brothers and sisters, and if they are sick or ailing, to devote themselves to them, their comfort and service, declining all amusement. They are conscious that they are fulfilling a duty, and pleasing those they love, in acting thus; and this makes them not only content but happy. Self is quickly forgotten in the deep joy at finding they are of use, and can be a comfort to those dearest to them, and of service to their neighbour; they discover at the same time, that the true secret of happiness consists, not in living for oneself, but for others, and in the way God appoints for us.

To my mind an only child is much to be pitied, particularly the only child of the wealthy and worldly. The sympathies and generous feelings of such children are not usually drawn out and exercised at a very early age. And they are but too often brought up and impressed from infancy with a sense of their own importance. They are trained to think first of themselves and before all others, which is apt to make them selfish for life, or at least inconsiderate and inattentive to those around them. When made aware of this failing and convinced of it, they will perhaps act and nobly and disinterestedly on the next occurrence of temptation, but it always costs them an effort to be kind or considerate in every matter unconnected with themselves.

The children of the poor are taught unselfishness in a hard, but good school, where they learn it truly and thoroughly. The poor man's child knows and fully understands, almost before he can speak, that his father is the main-stay and prop of the house, the support of the whole family, and that all they have is procured by his daily labour. He is, therefore, of the first importance to his family; his children, especially, look up to him with grateful admiration and loving reverence, for his days of hardship and long hours of toil, gone through uncomplainingly and borne cheerfully for them.

We must admit that strength of purpose and the spirit of endurance, and even bodily prowess, are all strongly appreciated by human beings of all ages, but to the young they are peculiarly attractive and inspiring, and lead to the desire of imitation. The tiny child regards his father's constant labour and unsparing exertion and drudgery with love and wonder, and he is proud and happy in trying to follow and imitate, as well as to help and comfort him. He will gladly offer his father, and joyfully give, anything he has, and exults when it is accepted and his whole ambition is to be able to assist his parents and to lighten their burden. No matter how much petted and loved he may be, he never puts himself first in his own thoughts—his parents have the first place there, and they leave no room

for self in his heart, so he grows up forgetful of himself and full of consideration for others.

If we observe children of all classes with regard to their habits of generosity, either in association with their school-fellows, or living in their homes, surrounded by their relatives, we shall find, as a general rule, that the children of the poorest (when good and industrious) are always the most unselfish and generous. They are ready to divide everything they have, and they are pained and grieved if their offer is declined. But poor parents are wiser than rich ones in such matters, they take with pleasure whatever the child presents to them even in infancy, be the gift ever so insignificant, and so it becomes a joy to the child to divide with them; thus a generous tendency is encouraged, and the habit grows. When we call to mind how good the poor are to each other, their generosity may well fill us with admiration, for the charity they show each other is something marvellous, they give "not of their abundance," but even of "their whole living".

It is grievous to think in how many ways the workhouse interferes with and prevents the blessing of home training, and the exercise and expression of filial affection and sympathy, in poor families. It habituates the poor inmates to the practice of selfishness. The poor children there must look to themselves, and they continue to do so. They

try to get what is best, and seek themselves as far as they can, and so grow callous and indifferent about the feelings and wants of others. They have no home ties or family duties, no one to care for, and no one to care for them.

Boarding schools may have the same baneful effect on the children of wealthier parents, unless they are first carefully reared at home and unless their natural affections are exercised and well directed to those to whom they are due; unless, also, principles of generosity and disinterestedness are inculcated, and early habits of self-abnegation and devotedness to others acquired.

CHAPTER VII.

DECISION AND RESOLUTION.

Decision of character is acquired in childhood. It not acquired then, it is to be feared it will never become a firm habit of mind afterwards. We have more opportunities of practising it while we are children than we have generally in after life. If we look through our past years we shall find we made more decisions while we were young, than we have made, or were called on to make, throughout the rest of our lives, and we shall also be amazed to discover how much of routine there generally is in the life of middle age, and how little we have had of liberty of action since we left youth behind us. We have made one or two important decisions, and these have chained us within a circle of duties, which we have to go through each day and each year—duties which we cannot alter or leave unperformed without being imprudent or unfaithful.

Whereas in childhood there were many things left to our decision, we had to select our games, whither we should go, and what we should do during play-

time, we had pleasant projects proposed to us, and gifts and rewards presented to us, and (within a certain limit) liberty of choice was given to us about many little things. But above all and before all, we had our own plans and inventions to try and carry out, silently and resolutely, for we had more time then than we can now call our own.

I do not at all mean to say that we acquire decision of character by getting everything we wish and by being indulged. No, what I mean is that we must get the habit of using the will promptly, and we cannot get this habit unless we have something real to exercise our decision on. It is clear there can be no theorizing in the matter. A good theory is an excellent thing to have, but it will not of itself teach us decision. We may be able to form opinions and judgments for ourselves on many subjects by study and mental application, but this is different from deciding. It is not improbable that those who are able to take various views, and see the subjects put before them in different lights, are just the persons likely to suffer most from indecision, unless they have been trained in childhood to decide clearly and promptly. It may be observed that the decisions we make in childhood are of no importance, as they are merely about trifles. I grant this, but they were not trifles to us then, they appeared of

much consequence, and they called out and exercised our decisiveness all the same.

When we enquire what decision of character is, we find that it implies a firm will influenced and animated by a well-formed judgment, trained and habituated to active exercise and to prompt energetic action. As bodily activity is attained by early training in athletic and gymnastic games, and this training consists in frequent practice, so something of the same process is necessary for the creation of the mental vigour that is required for the exercise of decision. The mind must have, not only a certain freedom of action, but it must be made to act, even though the action may result in or be freighted with some little difficulty.

It is an interesting and curious study to observe children selecting their yearly premiums, or a large family, young in years, getting their choice of some little Christmas gifts. The eldest usually has the first choice, and as he is often the favourite with his parents, he knows he can easily obtain what he wishes at any time; he fancies it looks manly to seem indifferent, so after looking over everything carelessly, he ends in taking something that attracts his eye at the moment, but is not of the least use to him. If he adopts the habit of acting in this way for some years, he is nearly sure to grow into an undecided and irresolute man. All the while the

mind of one of the younger boys is thoroughly exercised, and he is growing into a different and opposite character. He is aware that he is not the favourite, and expects no preference, but he knows what he wants, and why he wants it. He has made his selection silently in his own mind shortly after he entered the room, and as he expects to find others of his way of thinking, he has little hope of getting it. He waits anxiously for his turn to come, when we see, by the direct and determined way in which he walks up and takes the object he has chosen, that his decision was firmly made beforehand. From the caprice and indecision of his companions, it is more than likely he may get even the first prize he selected. He has learned the value of knowing his own mind, and it is a lesson he will not forget through life. Indeed such a boy who has received some good early training, and who has had to think for himself, and to make his own way in the world from his boyhood, will be found as he advances in years a most decided character.

We must remember that decision of character is a blessing, or the reverse, according as it has been inculcated or nurtured, and as it affects the conduct of a man. If, when school days are ended, a youth has made his own way in life, although he may have gone through great toil and suffering, and had much

to contend with, still if he has met with a large share of kindness, even in the good wishes and encouragement of those around, he will, (if faithful to good early training), be firm and determined, and at the same time noble and generous, always ready to help those he sees struggling with difficulties as he himself had struggled, and to protect the weak. This disposition, (which is characteristic in him), is founded in charity and fellow-feeling towards those who suffer as he had suffered.

Such a man is also likely to be gifted with presence of mind in no small degree. On a sudden catastrophe, or an alarming accident, he is calm and resolute, his intellect and conscience tell him his duty, his heart is full of desire to do it, and hope to accomplish it. From the habit of thinking of results, his mind takes in at a glance all he has read or heard of courses taken with success on a like occasion, and with swift undaunted judgment he determines what had best be done, and does it promptly and firmly sustained by the consciousness that he is doing what he believes is right.

But if this man had been brought up in more unfavourable circumstances and was of a harder nature we should have found him a very different person. If he had been treated with indifference and neglect in childhood, and with harshness and injustice in youth, and if he had to work his own

way through opposition and difficulty without religious principles, as helps to kindness and sympathy, we should have found him at nature age self-sufficient, overbearing, and intolerant of control, and an unfeeling as well as unhappy man.

Decision without virtuous principle hardens the heart in pride and evil. In the training of young people the spirit of obstinacy and stubbornness may be evoked by uncalled for opposition and unreasonable thwarting of their laudable projects and designs. When once this spirit is called up, who shall say when it may be allayed, or if it will ever be properly subjugated?

True decision of character does not emanate from one virtue only. In every act of decision many virtues are exercised, and all more or less swiftly as occasion may demand. If we analyze the process the mind goes through in carrying out one such act, we shall see what these virtues are, and how necessary it is for us to acquire them and possess them thoroughly, so as to practise them instantaneously when required. First, there is the thought or the wish which occurs to the mind, and suggests the action. This thought is followed by the consent or concurrence of the will. The consent of the will is followed by the determination and resolution to put its decree into execution. After this resolve we have to discern and select the best means of

doing this and of accomplishing our purpose. Lastly, after we have decided on the means, we require courage, energy, firmness, and perseverance, to use them effectively, and at the right time and place. We see in this how much the mental and moral powers are called out in a single act, and as this our decision may in many occasions involve the eternal interests of our own souls and those of others, it is of the utmost importance to form and execute it properly.

Now the will is the acting power that forms the decision. But as the will is easily led by passion or inclination, unless ruled by reason and conscience, it is but prudent to provide ourselves with well formed principles for immediate action. For instance, if inclination suddenly should propose some project, without giving us time to reason, but merely to say "Yes," or "No," and at the same moment grace should warn us it was wrong; if we recalled and acted on the principle and oft-formed resolution, "Never to go against our conscience under any circumstances," we should find ourselves preserved from present danger, and our will strengthened to take the right course in future. Again, if the case were reversed, and conscience summoned us to act contrary to our natural tastes and tendencies, and we felt a strong repugnance in obeying, still if we recalled the firm resolve that

"by God's grace we would do our duty at any cost," we should find our will fortified and made resolute. In this resoluteness of purpose resides decision.

The habit of raising the mind at the moment of doubt or uncertainty, to a standard principle of virtue, always gives strength and courage. In every moral difficulty, virtue is ever a firm support, and a sure guide, for virtue is always consistent, and in moments of peril it makes us brave, from the consciousness that we are doing what we ought to do, and that we can "do all things in Him Who strengthens us". For if we have a firm desire to do God's will we may have as firm a confidence in His help.

After having made the firm resolve, the next thing to do is to look for the way and select the means for carrying it out. Prudence, knowledge, and experience come to our aid here. Prudence points out what we ought to do, and what we should avoid; it enables us to judge of the best thing to be done, and the best way for doing it, always keeping the right end before the mind. Whatever knowledge we have on the subject should be diligently recalled, that decision may be more prudent, especially if the subject seem to present many and divergent views. Some may not be fitting or suitable to the occasion. We must adopt simply what seems proper or right in accordance with special circumstances.

Experience here will stand to us as a powerful ally. There is no mode of instruction which gives us such practical lessons as experience, and no school we attend so early and remain at for so long a period, viz., to the end of our lives. Yet how little we learn, unless we are naturally observant, or have had our attention drawn to the consequences of our acts from our childhood. The old German proverb, "Don't cool your child's first pudding, and you save it many a scald later," brings before us how soon experience can teach us, and how well it would be if it were allowed to teach us from infancy. But if we look back on life we shall be surprised to find how scant our store of knowledge is, except in warnings of what we should avoid. Labour, pain, and difficulty are the teachers of the practical man. The principle lessons they teach us are of our own deficiencies and failures; and if we have learned these lessons we have learned much, for they point out the faults and mistakes we are most likely to fall into and the evils we should most carefully shun. This may seem a one-sided view, for surely most of us have succeeded in some things—a charge, a duty, or an undertaking has prospered under our hands. No doubt; but how much of this success can we honestly and justly impute to ourselves? How much has God done for us in cases *we* claim the full credit for, though we know in our hearts

He did all? Our experience of God's bounty and generosity in this way is something wonderful, and it would be even far greater if we gave Him all the glory. We must acknowledge also the help we receive from others. We know we should never have succeeded in many things, except for those who worked with us; our efforts would have done little, but for their co-operation and willing concurrence.

This brings us back to the point that experience is a light borrowed from the past, which brings before us not only the shoals and quicksands we have already stranded on, but warns us of the rocks and reefs which are still before us and which we should strive to avoid. It also manifests to us the extent and the quality of our natural powers. If we have done a difficult thing once and accomplished it well, we have more courage to do it again, and practice will make it comparatively easy. It will teach us what it cost us, where the greatest strain was, and whether we could bear much more for a continuance. By observing and testing our own powers when duty and necessity call them into action, we get a fair idea of the work we may hope to do, and of the bounds within which we must in prudence content ourselves.

Practice does more than give experience, it produces and teaches system, and with a good system

half our work is done. But a system to be good must be progressive, else it will restrict efforts, and chain them down to mere method or routine. And while priding ourselves on our constancy and stability, we shall find in the end that we have been in reality limiting the circle of our usefulness and efficiency, and so far frustrating the designs of God and resisting his demands. System should expand with duty and grow with experience, if we would be good and faithful servants, and desire to advance by the right path.

After having selected the means for carrying out our resolve, we come to the duty of applying them. Now this is the point of the greatest difficulty, and at which most decisions fail in part or wholly. Up to this, all we have come to is merely an internal decision; it may involve a well arranged plan, a wise and good intention, or a noble design, but it is as yet shut up in our own hearts, or at most made known to a few sympathizing friends who have encouraged us: when we come to act it is quite a different thing. We know beforehand, if it be a matter of importance, that many will disapprove and contemn our determination, that some will thwart and oppose it, and that others will ridicule and criticize it—and all this in addition to the prospect and expectation of real and substantial difficulties to be met with in the undertaking itself. Our courage and energy, our firm

ness and perseverance, are fully called out and exercised if we are faithful to duty. It requires courage to encounter and conquer human respect in any of its varied phases and forms, in its fear of disapproval, and desire to conciliate. It requires energy and strength to contend against undue contradiction and unjust opposition, and it also requires firmness and perseverance to hold unflinchingly, and to maintain persistently the right, straightforward course of action, which conscience dictates and duty prescribes.

Undecided characters are wanting more or less in all these gifts. Generally speaking they know what they ought to do, but they have not the resolution to do it. They do not fail so much in the decision as in the execution. They will raise difficulties and objections, they will put off and delay. If the work is once commenced, it is begun in such an indirect, roundabout fashion, that it is never accomplished in the right way, or conducted to the right end.

Although courage, energy, firmness, and perseverance are necessary for true decision of character, few possess them all, or at least possess them equally, and at the same period of life. In youth courage and energy are most likely to abound, while firmness and perseverance are the growth of years, and seldom appear in a marked way before mature age. It may

be that experience proves to us how limited are human efforts, or we are engaged in a certain state or calling in life, and we know we ought to give our attention to it and fulfil its duties. So we concentrate our energies on some definite object or special aim, and then pursue it steadily. Out of this singleness of purpose or unity of aim, grows stability of character, which with even small abilities can, with God's help, achieve much good.

Now an important question suggests itself. If decision is such an excellent thing to possess, is it well to exercise it on *all* that comes under our observation, and are we obliged to decide about *every subject* we hear talked of or discussed? It would be a great mistake, and a great waste of time and thought, to occupy ourselves with useless topics, or with matters whose true bearings we do not know accurately. On all subjects that bear on the character and conduct of others, we should suspend our judgment, unless positive evidence and the proved fact declare the existence of evil—for we are in justice bound to believe or presume persons innocent until they are found guilty, and in doing so we are saved from the sin and the remorse of judging falsely or rashly, or indeed from judging at all, which is the best and wisest course.

As to the amount of deliberation to be given to our actions, our duties, and the obligations that de-

volve on us, we must be guided by prudence. If we know and feel sure we ought to perform an action, and our conscience tells us it is fitting and incumbent on us then and there, we ought not to deliberate further on it, but fulfil the duty, whether agreeable or disagreeable. If we have a choice between two actions, both equally good, St. Francis de Sales tells us to choose the one we prefer, to prevent us from losing time through indecision. But in difficult and important matters we must use great circumspection, and give due time and care to deliberation.

In a case, for instance, where the responsibility of the decision rests entirely on our own shoulders, but at the same time that it is advisable to us to consult others, we are liable to fall into two mistakes, both arising from the same defect—want of due reflection and consideration—but quite opposite in their way of influencing us. First, we may come to some hasty decision, induced merely by feeling and inclination, adopted and adhered to regardless of counsel and advice, and the dictates of prudence and the light of reason warning us of our rashness in following our own will. Prayer, the examination of our motives of action, and the guidance of conscience in such cases, would save us from error and give us light to follow the right path. The second mistake is just the reverse of this ; it arises from neglecting the exercise of our own powers, so far as not to form

any opinion or come to any decision on a matter, and also in failing to gain an insight or to acquire any knowledge of it, until we obtain others' counsel and receive their advice, and then without farther reflection we take up and adopt as our own the judgment of some person who has only given a cursory glance at it, and puts forward a one-sided view. He may fancy he has no responsibility in the matter, and therefore has taken no pains to study the case or to ascertain its true bearings; so his ill-formed and partial opinion leads us to a wrong decision, because we followed it blindly and unwisely.

In all deliberation on matters of consequence, method is of great value. It helps us to a right judgment, and simplifies the process of deciding, and even removes difficulties in the way of it. If we observe a man of vigorous and conscientious character, who has been habituated to decision from childhood, in the act of making up his mind on some important point, we find him submitting himself to strict mora discipline, and practising much mental labour. He first considers and realizes his own responsibility in the matter, and then he tries to acquire a clear and perfect knowledge of it, so that he may know what he ought to do, and how it should be done. He collects all the information that can be had, and gives his full attention to each particular that presents itself, and forms his opinion so far, until he has

examined the next point that comes before him. And from a connected manner of thinking he sees distinctly through the case, and makes his stand when he comes in view of a clear conviction and just conclusion; but he suspends his judgment, and defers making his final decision until he hears the opinion of those he should consult, and on whom he has reliance. It may seem that this should have been done sooner, but a practical man—who wishes to do the right thing and tries to do the best thing—finds a greater help in the opinion of others when he has studied the matter fully himself. He thus sees the value of their suggestions, and he is able to apply them to the best advantage, according to his needs and the help they give; but always bearing in mind that he alone is responsible for the decision. He knows the labour it costs to form a true judgment, therefore he gives due consideration to all that is proposed.

CHAPTER VIII.

TEMPER, CRITICISM, AND SYMPATHY.

PEACE forms a great part of this world's happiness, for there is no real happiness without it. It came with the glad tidings of our Saviour's Birth; it was His parting gift to His Apostles at His Resurrection. Therefore it is a matter of much consequence to us to consider what constitutes peace, what tends to disturb it, and how it is to be cultivated and preserved.

True peace is the perfection of order. It is the tranquil reign of reason over human passions and vices; the human soul obedient to God's will, and submissive to all His decrees and dispensations; the human heart resting in God and united to Him in love, and, for His sake, full of charity and good will for all men. We are told by the Spirit of Truth, "There is no peace for the wicked". All sin is the enemy of peace; grievous sin is its destruction, depriving us of true interior peace and sanctifying grace. Every disorderly and uncontrolled passion has power,

so far as it is indulged, to trouble and disturb our tranquillity; but the passion of anger is the one that is most universally destructive of it. Not only is it the most turbulent of all the passions, but it is the one most easily and most frequently excited, for it is the combatant that stands forth in defence of all the others. If our inclinations are opposed, or our wishes contradicted, unless we have learned to overcome our irascibility and to conquer our impatience, our ire is at once provoked and our peace invaded.

The government of temper is therefore a matter of great consequence to the preservation of tranquillty, and we cannot learn to subdue it at too early an age. The passion of anger being part of our nature, is born with us, and is the passion we are most prone to in infancy. A child may form habits of ill-temper before he comes to the use of reason, and bear them through life, blighting and embittering his existence, unless by God's grace he has struggled successfully against them after he became conscious of their existence. It is only fair to him to preserve and guard him against this evil by early and easy lessons of forbearance. For instance, an infant makes his wants known by cries and tears; but, if allowed, he will continue to cry for what he requires long after he ceases to be an infant. When he is able to speak plainly enough to ask for what he requires, and when he understands what is said to him, it is well to

explain to him that his wishes will be complied with as far as it is right and possible, when he says what he wants, but not when he cries for it. Once he has practised this lesson in self-denial, his moral training has well commenced, and he has even already learned much. At the same time, while we get him to relinquish the old method of expression and to adopt the new, he must be treated very gently and patiently, so as to effect the change gradually and sweetly, and with true affection.

A child's temper can often be controlled by a kind, serious look from the age of twelve months, and more perfectly subjugated as he advances to three years of age. He can then, in most instances, be made ashamed of giving way to an outburst of anger, and he can also be taught that to do so is wrong. When a child gets into a passion he should if possible be taken away at once from the presence of other children, and have no witness of his conduct but his mother or nurse, who should observe unbroken silence, not as thorough sternness, but from sorrow and surprise. To correct or contradict him at a moment of wild excitement would be worse than useless, while to pet or caress him would do him a lasting injury. If he cries violently it is well to soothe him in a kind and gentle manner in order to quiet him. The silence soon awes and subdues him, and when he reflects a little he is likely to

feel shame and remorse, and to ask forgiveness humbly acknowledging his fault. Once a scene like this is over, it should never be alluded to again, and then the impression will probably be lasting.

Besides indulging in violent and convulsive fits of passion, which may occassionally occur, children are apt to get obstinately bold and stubbornly refractory with all placed over them except their parents. A boy five or six years old will not allow his nurse to dress him or undress him; he will not take off his hat or put on his boots. In such a case the nurse should not threaten to complain of him or scold him, should avoid everything like a conflict or collision with him; but she should reprove him seriously and calmly, and explain to him fully that it is his parents' desire that a punishment should be inflicted on him, or any of their children, who commit a deliberate fault and persevere in it. So in accordance with their directions and the penalties named by them for disobedience and boldness, she cannot allow him to see them after dinner with the rest of the children. At first he may seem indifferent and say he does not care. She should take no notice of this, but continue to picture to him how sad and lonely he will feel by himself in the nursery, after his little brothers and sisters have gone away to enjoy themselves, and how grieved his mother will be at

his absence, particularly when she guesses the cause. After advising him to repent while there is yet time, she should direct her attention elsewhere and address him no longer. He will then probably begin to feel the pain of being in disgrace, which will make him reflect and see his error and desire to repair it. And so he will overcome himself before it is too late by asking pardon, and by submitting freely to all that is required of him. Even if this trial fails at first, be assured it will succeed eventually. This may seem a very simple and commonplace method for training children and for making them amenable and obedient, but it has great advantages. The child's excitement is not increased by any violent opposition, but, on the contrary, he is taught to think, and to discern the truth that, sooner or later, punishment follows all wrong-doing, and that it is better and happier not to incur or deserve it. Once he is convinced of this, his moral culture readily advances; he will in future, with God's grace, conquer and restrain himself, following that injunction of our Divine Lord, "Let him deny himself," which is the sure road to peace. There are some who seem to read this precept amiss, and to think it is quite the same thing, and just as good, to oppose and contradict children, as to get them to deny themselves. So a child is often allowed to take his own course when naughty, and even exasperated more and more

by contention and reproaches, until the demon of anger is called up in his young soul, and then, when he is as bold as he well can be, he is punished severely, the nurse or teacher feeling satisfied that the severity of the chastisement will prevent a repetition of his conduct, forgetful of the force of early habits, and their own obligations to guard the child's soul from evil, and to help and induce him to overcome himself.

A horse may be trained by mastering him thoroughly once, but not so the human soul, that must be guided by reason, and the strongest and most coercive measures are of no use without it. Therefore, when a master loses his temper whilst correcting his pupil, the latter has always the best of the contest. No matter what amount of suffering he has been made to endure, he is not subdued or humbled. He considers himself the victor, and he believes that he stands on a higher level. His master may be gifted and learned, but he will lose all strong and healthful influence over him. If influence in such cases is regained, it will be at the cost of much labour and of many difficulties and of much self conquest.

Example has a powerful effect on temper, and the example of ill-temper in those we love is most infectious. For we imitate them more readily, and in doing so we overlook or palliate the fault; we

make no effort to correct it, as we lose sight of the harm it does to our souls. If we observe those who have been brought up with and accustomed from childhood to live with passionate and irascible natures, we shall find that their tastes and sympathies generally go with those who are "rough and ready" in manner and speech, and that they are likely to attribute hot words spoken in anger to courage and candour, and to mistake proud resistance to just authority for bravery and resolution.

Children, it must be owned, are prone to annoy each other, and to tease even those they love. Such a tendency should be carefully watched over and checked. But it is when they display this propensity through feelings of dislike, and from a spirit of revenge, that their characters sustain a serious injury. To decide what course we should take in such circumstances is often a difficult matter. There are, I believe, two principal motives which induce children to worry, annoy, and give trouble to others. One is the desire for notice, and the other the love of power. Children, accustomed to obsequious care, are impatient of any seeming neglect; and if they have not attracted attention by being good, they will secure it by being naughty and troublesome. Those who love power soon discover their capabilities for disturbing the peace and comfort of people

around them; and as it is the only means within their reach of affecting others, they like to test it and exercise it, particularly on those they do not love. If a boy discovers a way of annoying his master, he exults over it, and he is sure to make use of it when he is out of temper. In both these cases it is all important that his teacher should show great forbearance and calmness of manner, and as far as possible take no notice of the boy's efforts. If a favourable opportunity should offer, it would be well to send him on a message that he would be glad to deliver, or to occupy him in some way agreeable to his taste, which at the same time fully engages his attention. The evil inclination will, in all probability, soon pass away and give place to better thoughts. So in a little time, if the boy reflects, he will be ashamed of his unkindly feelings and of his unworthy attempt, and its complete failure will make him not likely to try it again.

Yearning for notice is the great moral disease of the present day, even among well-meaning people. And I believe it is the principal cause of divisions and unhappiness in homes and households. But it is still more baneful in its effects on the weak and erring, as it is but too often found that an insatiable craving for notice is the cause of most of the offences and many of the crimes committed in our country, especially among women, because it is the mainspring

of jealousy, and "jealousy is hard as Hell". The extent to which this passion is now unblushingly indulged by all classes, and seemingly without any effort to control it, or any reasonable excuse for displaying it, gives rise to the fear that it is a growing evil that is likely to increase mightily and fearfully, and to draw innumerable miseries and suffering after it. What! if it can be attributed in a great measure to our present mode of early training?

Our ancestors were wiser than we are on some points, particularly in not humouring or yielding to the caprices of their children. They knew that *love* only is the true price of love—that bought love seldom lasts, and that the beauty of filial affection lies in its fidelity and disinterestedness. Children now-a-days are not sufficiently impressed with this truth, or with entire trust in their parents' love for them. They do not always take it on faith; they must needs have evidence of it. And while the mother vainly thinks she is growing in her child's affection by gratifying every whim and indulging every fancy, she is in really contracting and hardening his heart in selfishness and alienating his love from her and centring it on himself. It is not unusual to find, when persons of weak and vain minds receive undue attention, that they do not ascribe it to the true cause—viz., the kindness and affection of those

from whom they receive it—but are far more likely to attribute it to their own worth and importance, and to value themselves accordingly, looking on the favours offered to them as so many proofs of their own excellence. If such demonstrations cease, or if they do not grow and multiply with their years, they will be filled with bitterness and vexation, as if they were deprived of a necessary condition of their comfort; and if such marks of approval are shared with others, and conferred where they are justly deserved, then the demon of jealousy is evoked. Pride and anger rule the heart, peace is disturbed, and charity is injured in proportion as the passion is indulged. In the human heart jealousy is no sign of love, except self-love; it never co-exists with pure, unalloyed affection, and is always a proof of self-seeking. With God the case is just the reverse. He has a right to be jealous; He is Himself essentially His own end; He is also the last end of all His creatures. It is a proof of His love for us, and the ardent desire He has for our happiness, that He claims our hearts, and wishes they should rest in Him for ever.

Sacrifice is the test of love, and where there is true natural affection we always find generosity and forgetfulness of self; and though the loving soul may meet with neglect, unkindness, or injustice, still so long as true love remains in the heart, jealousy does

not take possession of it. No doubt disappointment, grief, and anguish may strive to preclude and banish hope and confidence, but the trusting heart will suffer many a hard struggle before it doubts. The discovery that it over-estimated at one time suggests the idea that faults may now appear exaggerated; excuse after excuse is made before the standard of appreciation is lowered; but as this goes down love decreases, and as esteem fails affection wanes also, and will probably decline altogether, leaving only sorrow and pity after them. In all this we see no jealousy or place for rivalry, and so long as the heart does not admit it, there is every likelihood that forfeited esteem may yet be redeemed, and dislocated affections revive. Just impressions and right influences will regain their true force and efficacy.

If we observe and examine the spirit of jealousy which is now so prevalent in nurseries and school-rooms, drawing-rooms, and institutions, and wherever the human family is congregated, we shall find that it comes principally from a craving for notice; that true affection is seldom really expected in many cases, or even sought after in the same degree as manifest signs of preference before others; and we shall also discover that the very worst stamp of ill-humour, and the most galling kinds of asperity of manner, can be traced to the early indulgence of

self-will and the gratification of vanity and self-esteem in childhood.

There are few propensities of the heart of man so diversified in their origin and character, and so variable in their mode of expression, as that of ill-temper. If we study its many shades and forms we shall see that these change with each one's temperament, and with his dispositions for the time being, that they alter not only with the individual, but with the changing circumstances of life, as they are influenced by the manner and tone of mind of our associates, and above all by the variances in our position and pursuits. For we sometimes find those who were blessed with placid tempers in youth, become impetuous and hasty when over-weighted with responsibility ; and those gifted with amiable dispositions not unfrequently grow wayward and fretful if they are flattered and indulged in their caprices. But early lessons in self-denial and self-restraint will guard us against these evils, and with God's grace help us to keep our peace.

It is probably a mistake to think that people, when under the influence of anger (unless it be very violent), always speak incoherently and distractedly, and that no heed should be taken of their words. Is it not more likely that they express their thoughts truly as they occur to the mind at the time, though probably in an exaggerated form ?

Therefore it is well to meet their complaints reasonably, but gently, viz., as the opportunity offers at some *future* hour, when all excitement has passed away.

The indulgence of ill temper is a defect that is sure to bring its own chastisement in this world, and that even more swiftly than vices of a darker dye. For it exacts in retribution the sacrifice of our own peace and happiness, and it does this far more surely than it disturbs the comfort and tranquillity of others. It also imposes on us the duty of reparation for the harm it has done before we can find rest. In other words, it is like the act of cutting the bridge under our own feet, although we have to build it up anew before we can get home again in our own hearts, or feel at home in the hearts of those around us.

There is no perfection of God, next to His mercy, that wins our love and confidence, or attracts our hearts to Him so much as His infinite patience. Surely He is the same "yesterday, to-day, and for ever". In our faith in His unchangeable goodness, is the measure of our trust in Him, and our trust in Him the measure of our love. Now a firm resolution to honour this Divine attribute by observing evenness of temper at all times is a great help to preserve our peace. No one can foresee what trials of temper he may encounter in the day, nor

all his temptations to impatience, but the determination, with God's grace, to remain calm and to preserve our equanimity under all circumstances, comes to our aid, and suits all occasions. Probably we shall often fail in this effort, and fail oftenest when we think we are most succeeding, for passion, pain, and anxiety will frequently exercise their influence over us in some degree involuntarily. But still, if we make a good fight, with God's help, we shall conquer in the end and abide in peace and bring peace with us everywhere.

The refraining from all severe personal criticism and the avoidance of all unnecessary fault-finding, will prove a powerful remedy against all defects of temper. I do not mean that we are merely to avoid speaking of the faults of others, for this is clearly everybody's duty, but we must abstain from commenting on them in our own minds. We must not allow our thoughts to dwell voluntarily on their errors, mistakes, or incapacities, unless we are charged with their instruction, and then only with the charitable intention of setting them right. We are not inclined to animadvert on the actions of those we love; on the contrary, we are always ready to defend them, and to have some justification to offer for them. We excuse or suspend our judgments about their defects and shortcomings, and we find it hard to condemn them; so, as a rule, we may

be pretty sure that often when we find ourselves censuring others in our minds, they are out of favour with us, and have offended us in some way. The more we entertain these injurious views and impressions, the more irritable and resentful we are likely to become, and to appear so in our manner and words. Therefore, we may often take such temper as the test and evidence of our want of charity, and the thoughts we indulge in will indicate where we are weak and faulty and likely to fail. In our words, it is much easier to avoid fault-finding than criticism, because we can refrain entirely from the first; but great watchfulness is required to guard our expression and frame our remarks, and to divert our discourse in the latter case. We cannot well exclude criticism totally from conversation, as we should so hinder the free and happy interchange of thought and opinion, which is the enjoyment, as well as the advantage of all friendly and rational intercourse, and deprive ourselves of the easiest and most agreeable means of improving our mind and receiving instruction. But criticism, when it grows at all captious and censorious, should be at once held in check, for human respect or timidity on this point will quickly lead us into much evil.

As we advance in life we usually become more dispassionate, and more tolerant of the faults of others, for we see but few that we have not fallen

into ourselves. Therefore, if in middle life we still find ourselves given to harsh criticism, we may justly believe we are ruled by some evil passion, or have ceased to dwell peacefully in our own hearts. Finding no happiness to satisfy ourselves there, we live outside ourselves in the affairs of others, inquisitive but incredulous about their merits, depreciating their worth, and disturbing their peace as we destroy our own happiness.

With regard to the young, we must give them more latitude, without foreseeing or predicting so many evils, though we must allow they are usually very severe critics. But this is not so much from ill-nature and unkindness, as from the want of experience, and the spirit of inquiry and vivacity that belongs to and accompanies them from childhood. The tendency can be discerned at a very early age. When we give a child a toy to do what he pleases with it, we shall probably find, after rejoicing in its possession for some days, and showing it to all his friends, that he will take it all to pieces. He does this not through caprice or for mischief sake, but from the desire to see of what it is made and how it is constructed, for he has serious intentions of making another like it, but with, what he considers, his own improvements.

We may observe the same dispositions in him ten or twenty years after. In place of the toys

of his childhood he is likely to pull to pieces all who cross his path, to comment on their appearance and bearing, their habits and abilities; but above all, to criticise their work, and their method of doing it. All this often is, and always seems very ill-natured, and should be discountenanced, but it often comes from the wish to test his judgment, and to measure his own mind with those of others, and to get information easily by drawing out their opinions. It sometimes also springs from self-conceit and exalted ideas of his own cleverness. He has no patience with what he considers the slowness and incompetency of those around him. He is strong in theories, but he has had no practical knowledge as yet. He has not given himself to any steady pursuit, and he has done no work; he has no idea what work involves, and what it costs to accomplish it. By-and-bye, when he applies himself to some undertaking, and tries to carry it out thoroughly and to the fulfilment of his design, he will discover difficulties in its execution that were out of sight and unanticipated, and his own experience will teach him to be more tolerant in his criticisms and more just in his estimate of others.

The tendency to criticise can be trained and directed very early in life. Children can be easily impressed with the truth that to delight in fault-

finding, to indulge in censure evinces a miserable temper, and increases it. It always indicates a small mind to look for defects in everything that comes before us. Dispraise is like the work of destruction, which is easy to the dullest intellects. A few strokes of the hammer or of the brush rudely and unskilfully given to the finest work of art, will deface or disfigure it. So the weakest and most uncultivated mind can disparage and condemn what it is not only powerless to accomplish, but incapable of appreciating. On the other hand, the young cannot be taught too soon to admire all that is good and beautiful, and to discern what is excellent and noble in every thing and every body around them. Sincere admiration for all that is deserving of it has a powerful effect in enlightening the mind and enlarging the heart. It makes us partakers, in some measure, in the best and greatest gifts from the pleasure they afford us, and the good impression they leave on the memory, and the approval of them creates the desire to imitate and attain them.

If it is important to direct children in the exercise of their powers of criticism, it is just as necessary for their future peace and happiness to guide and cultivate their feelings of sympathy. To succeed in this, we must begin by calling up, almost from infancy, amiable and humane emotions and desires,

so that the right bent may be given and established in the child's mind before the contrary tendency has been developed. Everything unkind, revengeful, or spiteful should be opposed and hindered. That children are often inclined to act unamiably, and even cruelly, especially when they are out of temper, cannot be denied. They display this propensity in tormenting their pets, and the weaker animals when they are out of danger themselves, and have no fear of being hurt, for cruelty and cowardice nearly always go together. Even one deliberate act of wanton cruelty may leave a lasting and evil impression on a boy's character, and may make him harsh in his nature, lowering and darkening the aspirations of his life, unless he is made ashamed of it, and regrets it sincerely.

Sympathy, in its first stage, takes the form of self-pity, and it will probably remain in this form if it is not rightly directed and properly exercised. A child soon learns to compassionate himself. We often find that he weeps less bitterly at the time he falls and is hurt than at the moment he receives commiseration. The tears will readily come to his eyes when we pity him, and he will understand why we do so, and feel grateful to us. But he will be surprised at first, and look wonderingly at us when we want him to give his compassion to somebody else. It may never have occurred to him that

other people suffer also, or that their pains may be greater than his. But when this fact is explained to him, and when he realizes, in some degree at least, what they are enduring, he will pity them heartily.

But this lesson only brings him to the second stage of growth in sympathy, and one in which even those gifted with the most tender hearts may stay for life, unless they possess the virtue of charity. Such persons feel acutely every calamity that occurs, and they are really pained and grieved at the troubles and afflictions of their neighbours. But as such matters affect them sadly, and as their hearts are wrung by scenes of woe, they are persuaded they ought to avoid the pain which is so inflicted, and therefore, to spare their own feelings, fly from th sight of sorrow or suffering. In fact, they pity themselves for their excessive sensitiveness, and they believe that too much sympathy for others is injurious to their own happiness. Unfortunately, this is sympathy with benevolence left out. Most likely they received too much when young, but were not encouraged to apply it, or extend it fully or faithfully.

We must remember that true sympathy is not mere sensitiveness, but the essence of charity and a God-like gift. It is the power of understanding other men's minds, of reading their hearts, of entering into their feelings until we make them our own and

then of acting towards them as we would wish them to act towards us. It is a faculty of the intellect as well as an emotion of the heart, which leads us to deeds of humanity and kindness, which begin in forgetfulness of self and are perfected in self sacrifice.

Sympathy is as necessary for the well-being of most children as air and light, and it is an injustice not to give it duly to them. I am inclined to believe that the most unfeeling and cold-hearted of human beings to be found—those whose first thought is to condemn, and whose first word is to contradict, are just those who received least sympathy in their youth. We should therefore give a goodly measure of it to every child, and more and more when he is sick and afflicted. It is not well to make large demands on his kindness for others while he is suffering. Such demands at such a time often harden the heart, and irritate the temper. But when he is better, it will do him good to see some one afflicted like himself, about his own age, patient, though in pain, and he should be induced through charity to consider what his little friend is enduring, to sympathize with him, to enter into his feelings, and to realize his weariness and depression, until he forgets himself in the sufferings he sees before him. Pity will be awakened when he contrasts the comforts he enjoys with the wants of his fellow-creatures. He will

probably desire to supply these wants—a word will suggest the disposition, and then whatever he wishes to give that belongs to himself, or whatever he is willing to sacrifice of what is intended for his pleasure and pastime, he should be allowed to give it at once, freely and heartily. The action should never be related before him. If he should express his thoughts about it, or confide his feelings to his parents, they should receive his confidence kindly and cordially, and preserve it faithfully, rewarding him afterwards for his charity and generosity in a way he will appreciate. Even one incident like this in a boy's childhood leaves a happy impress on his character, and inclines him to be a large-minded, kind-hearted Christian.

True sympathy, not only brings happiness to our own hearts, but diffuses peace around us. It removes all asperity in our manner, calls up kindly feelings, and inspires due consideration for others, which is the test of good manners as of good taste. Good breeding consists, as does humility, in taking the lowest place in our own esteem, in preferring others before ourselves, in thoughtfully and kindly considering their feelings in everything we say or do, and in sacrificing our convenience to them in all things except where duty and principle forbid our doing so. We find ill-breeding the reverse of all this. The really vulgar-minded man, no matter what his position

may be, pushes himself forward beyond his place, and values himself above his merits. Instead of showing any delicacy of feeling for others, he is unmindful of their peace or ease, and unconcerned when he wounds and offends them, and even enjoys the sight of their annoyance and discomfiture. He looks only to his own comfort and satisfaction, and never thinks of accomodating himself to any one.

The value of sympathy is seen especially in every-day life, and in the home circle, where genial manners, mutual respect, and kind thoughtfulness for others, preserve and cultivate peace and charity, and maintain union and cordiality even between those who are most dissimilar. No man beginning life can foresee who his companions are to be, or with whom he is to associate during the years of his sojourn on earth, but if he has been wisely trained, he will not expect to find all people acting in accordance with his wishes, and some may offend his taste. The views and opinions of others may be opposed to his, and their manners may jar upon him. If he has been allowed to grow up unsympathetic, self-engrossed, and self-important, such things will seem unbearable to him, and the more he makes grievances of them, the more miserable his life will be, and the greater the probability he may fall into the line of conduct of which he complains in others, and thus he may become disagreable and vexatious to

all his aquaintances. If he had due consideration, and looked beyond the surface, and studied people better before forming unfavourable opinions of them, he would find qualities in them worthy of esteem, and much in himself to condemn. The importance of *manner* with regard to a man's well-doing is proverbial, but its power in destroying or promoting peace and charity is often overlooked. For, sin excepted, I believe the greatest amount of unhappiness in this world is caused by discourtesy and incivility. But sympathy, as charity's most active agent, is the best restorative of peace; it softens the hardest hearts, and makes excuses and allowances for faults and defects, it discovers hidden virtue and silent merit, and preserves and promotes kind and cordial intercourse in families and among friends.

CHAPTER IX.

TIMIDITY, DIFFIDENCE, AND RESERVE.

THERE are few characters so hard to interpret, or so difficult to comprehend as those under the influence of timidity. They seem made up of inconsistency and contrariety, and act in every change of circumstances in the very opposite way to that we are led to expect.

Timidity and diffidence are often mistaken for each other, and at first sight they exhibit some resemblance, as they are both attended by shyness and fear; but fear arising from different sources. They denote in reality dissimilar dispositions.

Every human heart on earth is liable to suffer from the passion of fear in some form or other, and that in the same degree as it values some possession, and desires to hold and preserve it, though it be beset with danger. The more we love ourselves the more we dread any harm that may befall us, and the point on which we value ourselves most is just the one on which our fears can be most painfully excited if it is impugned or assailed.

As the passion of fears belongs to the sensitive

appetite, and is swayed by the imagination, we can not be surprised that very impressionable natures, when possessed with a false idea as to the importance and worth of the approbation of their neighbours, should desire to retain it, and dread especially the loss of it, and that they should dread still more incurring disapproval. This brings before us two distinct classes who suffer most from timidity. The first is actuated by the desire of praise, but is checked by the fear of not receiving it. Those of the second class do not expect praise, but feel keenly all disapprobation, and are easily depressed by the dread of incurring it. The timidity of the first class may be fairly attributed in a great degree to vanity and over self-consciousness, as it springs from the apprehension of not succeeding in the opinion of others according to our expectations and the esteem we entertain for ourselves. A timid person of this kind does not stop to question, and perhaps does not doubt, his own powers, but he is dubious as to what others may think of them. His misgivings enfeeble his energies, and induce him to draw back when he might do good service to his neighbour, inducing him to remain inactive, rather than run the chance of subjecting himself to unfavourable comment.

Timidity of this sort is not a permanent quality of the mind, as a confirmed characteristic. It alters with circumstances and changes with positions, and

can be laid completely aside at times. For instance, when a very timid person is placed over others in a post of authority, where he is sure of his ground, and the extent of his power, and where he sees no likelihood of being controlled, he will most probably be found far more imperative in his method of governing, and more peremptory in his manner of asserting his rights and declaring his will than others placed in the same position would be. It may be that he doubts his power, as it is new to him, and likes to test it by way of making sure he possesses it, and while he assures himself of holding it, his fear of being depreciated is relieved, and subsides accordingly. Another peculiarity of timid people, is their difficulty in conquering a repugnance, or overcoming an estrangement. They seem to succumb to such things, and to get passively possessed by them, without making any effort at resistance, even though such feelings have arisen without any real cause of complaint but have been awakened through wounded vanity, and created by some supposed slight or imaginary offence. Having habituated themselves to be guided by feeling and not by reason, it is most difficult to convince such people of the true state of the case. They will only see the matter in the way they wish to see it, and they persuade themselves they cannot do what they dislike to do. If children were made to do the right thing because

it is the right thing and what they ought to do, and never excused on the plea of timidity, they would be saved from many faults and innumerable foibles in after-life.

Of those who belong to the second class, and who suffer from timidity through the dread of blame, and the fear of disapprobation, the number is beyond counting and of world-wide extent. For dispraise is not naturally agreeable to any one, and all are inclined to shun it as far as fidelity to duty and uprightness of conduct permit. This shrinking from censure is occasioned not only by the pain caused by being found fault with, but also from a dread that those who disapprove of our actions, and animadvert on them, may inflict injury on us. Much of our peace and happiness in this world depends on the disposition of our fellow-beings towards us. Therefore, it is a matter of great consequence to avoid giving rise to an unkindly spirit, and to cultivate with all feelings of goodwill.

The passion of fear, to which we are all subject, is especially felt with regard to our fellow-mortals, and we cannot look narrowly into our hearts without discovering the natural dread we have of each other. Even in the most trusting dispositions we find there exists a feeling of apprehension lest others should prove undeserving of the esteem we desire to cherish for them, but when they verify our expectations, and

show themselves worthy of our regard and confidence, we then fear for ourselves, lest we should exhibit some weakness or defect that would lower us in their estimation. We shall see how true this is, if we watch the growth of acquaintanceship with a perfect stranger, but one with whom we are likely to have much intercourse in future. On seeing him for the first time we regard him studiously, trying to discern his dispositions and to measure his worth, questioning our hearts if we should consider him as a friend or look on him as a foe. As we get to know him better we see much to admire, and much that harmonizes with our own feelings, yet we withhold our friendship from him until by some unmistakeable proof we are satisfied as to his merits and goodness and discern his excellence.

Even when we have experienced for many years his unchanging regard and unfailing fidelity, still we seldom open our hearts and minds to this our best friend except in their most favourable aspect. How much we never confide to him at all? And how little in reality do we ever trust him with, except what tells to our advantage and appears to our credit. This is from the fear of losing his esteem, or of incurring his disapprobation if he had any knowledge of our errors, and was conversant with the failings of our character. If we have apprehensions and misgivings about one who has been faithful to us, and

animated with the kindliest feelings towards us, how much stronger our dread must be of those who have given us no assurance of their goodwill, and of those who have manifested disapproval. From all this it is plain that a fear of our fellow-man is inherent in the human heart, and that it is universal, though unequally felt, as some are more sensitive of its power than others.

As the timidity of the two classes often presents the same appearance, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between them. But the remedy that most surely and rapidly effects the cure in either case, will indicate the source of the disease, and will reveal to us its real nature. They are overcome by different kinds of treatment. And by observing what appliances afford relief—the means by which timid persons are reassured, we can easily discover the form of the malady with which we ourselves or others are afflicted. Praise is the surest and most instantaneous means of removing the timidity of the vain. They receive it as a right and as a tribute to their worth. The feelings of self-complacency called up by commendations remove the fear of disapproval, and lull to rest the dread of criticism. The thirst for admiration thus excited becomes an incentive to action, and timidity declines and dies away as flattery promotes self-sufficiency and maintains self-confidence. The timidity that springs from the consciousness of our own de-

ficiencies, and expectation of censure, is overcome by the virtue of fortitude and the practice of purity of intention. The approbation of our friends is, no doubt, both agreeable and encouraging to us, but its influence over us is not sufficiently strong to induce us to act. It must be sustained by a sense of duty, and the conviction of our own minds that a particular line of conduct is just and right.

At this point timidity tends to and seems even to merge into diffidence. It is not at all easy to distinguish them unless we trace them to their source, and discover the kind of dread that rules us when influenced by timidity, and the nature of the fear that governs us when controlled by diffidence. As timidity is caused by the fear of our fellow-beings and the apprehension of their disapproval, diffidence is created by the dread of our own dissatisfaction, the terror of self-reproach, and the sentence of condemnation pronounced by our own judgment on our own actions. The first comes from those outside us, who make up our small world, but as these change, and as our surroundings alter in our walk through life, so timidity comes and goes, and often departs altogether, without leaving a trace behind.

But with regard to diffidence the case is reversed. Our fear in this state does not arise from anything or anybody external to ourselves. It comes from the seat of judgment within our own souls, and the un-

favourable opinion there pronounced against ourselves. The disesteem of others is generally felt acutely by the diffident man, but he feels still more intensely that he has caused that disesteem. For this reason he is keenly sensitive as to the effect his words and conduct may produce on those around him. If he considers himself in fault he condemns himself severely, and the expressions of disapproval he may hear or observe among his acquaintances, do not give rise to his sentiments of self-reproach, though they certainly embitter those sentiments as furnishing painful evidence that he has judged himself truly.

As we do not part company with ourselves through life, carrying our natural tendencies and dispositions with us wherever we go, so we shall generally find that diffidence is an abiding and permanent quality of the mind, though it may appear under different forms as it is called forth by dissimilar circumstances. For instance, the stronger our self-love the more painful it is to us to observe our short-comings and to be convinced of our errors. Sometimes we are apt to lose courage, to give way to depression and despondency, and to leave our work undone or half done. But if we conquer our cowardice and dejection by trust in God, then our diffidence in self only makes us confide more fully in Him, and while resting entirely on Him we gain strength and fidelity to serve Him bravely and resolutely.

But long before we reach this happy stage, diffident souls, when natural sensitive, pass through mental troubles that are unknown to those differently constituted. Their sufferings do not arise from scruples or doubts of any kind, but come from a decided and distinct judgment pronounced against themselves, and from a clear discernment and severe condemnation of their own faults and negligences. I am persuaded that a diffident person is more inexorable towards himself, and more harsh and merciless in condemning some of his own acts, than he is in censuring the worst acts of his neighbour. This is often imputed to wounded pride and the vexatious chagrin caused by the sight of his own failings, and still more by the exposure of his deficiencies before others. There may be much truth in this, for self-love never dies a painless death. But I must say that over and above the general liability to feelings of hurt vanity and human respect, there is in diffident persons an inherent proneness not only to self-distrust, but to self-condemnation for omissions and blunders that are entirely unperceived by others, and observed only by themselves. If this disposition becomes morbid, the person affected by it is likely to give way to fits of despondency and keen remorse about the veriest trifles.

There is one distinctive mark which seldom fails to indicate truly characters influenced by diffidence,

and that is their proneness to retirement and desire for seclusion. And in counter-distinction to this, we usually find timid natures fond of excitement and variety, and given to loquacity when leaders of their company, and sure of approbation. The latter prefer talking to thinking, as they live outside themselves, and much in the opinion of others. Whereas, the former rise and fall in value as they are weighed and measured by their own judgment. The diffident man may enjoy exceedingly pleasant society and derive great pleasure from agreeable conversation, but he knows he will be summoned to a close self-examination for every word he utters, and that the pain of self-accusation and self-reproof will probably exceed the enjoyment he has experienced even in the most agreeable company. So he avoids diversions and festivities, and prizes only the companionship of those he trusts and esteems, and whom he has no fear of disedifying or misleading, and the social intercourse with true and tried friends, with whom he is at ease, as they understand him better than he understands himself. At this point we find diffidence lapsing into reserve, and assuming its principal characteristics.

Reserve of mind and manner can be attributed to different causes, though the one usually assigned is the motive of prudence. We are induced to acquire this habit when experience has taught us the worth and wisdom of self-command in restraining

our feelings and emotions, and when grace has led to the practice of self-denial in curbing our thoughts and wishes, and in repressing the expression of our ideas, until by the light of conscience we have judged of their fitness and propriety.

But the tendency to a reserved character is often acquired in early childhood, long before we come to the years of discretion, or have had any experience of its value. We generally come by it in one of four ways. First, by the example of those we love. Reserved parents have usually reserved children if they are affectionate also. Secondly, reserve is acquired from having suffered from the want of reserve in those we have trusted. A mother chills her child's affection and estranges him from her when he overhears her relating to a group of visitors what he said to her in secret, and he is filled with wonder and disappointment when he sees her laughing over his childish ideas and fancies. He had opened his heart to her as she encouraged him to tell his thoughts and feelings, and he loved all the more as he trusted her and had reliance on her fidelity. But now his faith in her is rudely shaken. He does not complain, his love is too true. To whom could he complain of her, and in whom else could he confide? So he begins at once to be reticent, and to shroud his thoughts in his own heart, and grows up a man of reserve.

Communicative mothers often feel acutely that they do not possess their children's confidence, forgetting that they themselves are nearly always to blame in failing to cultivate feelings of sympathy and trust according to each child's disposition. When reserve becomes apparent, mothers are apt to twit their children on their habits of secrecy, and to ridicule them for their love of mystery, and they do this in the hope of curing them. But such a course of action has the opposite effect, and generally confirms them in their habits of reticence for life.

The third way the reserved character is formed in children is from misunderstanding them. Parents often come to a hasty judgment about the disposition of their children, and adhere to it without questioning its correctness or testing its truth. A child bears a strong resemblance to some member of his family, and is at once declared to be like him in all respects. He hears qualities and propensities imputed to him that he knows he does not possess. He finds that there is no use in his trying to disprove such statements, his words are unheeded. It is not his place to contradict his parents, and so he becomes silent about himself and uncommunicative with regard to his real feelings and impressions.

But the child most likely to grow into a thoroughly reserved character is the one most overlooked in the family. His tastes and opinions are supposed

to be the same as his brothers, and there is no special inquiry made about them. He finds it his place to listen to the views and plans of others, which he is allowed to adopt as far as he is able, but he is not expected to express his own ideas, and no one seems willing to hear them, or to care for his confidence. As he lives on he is more and more convinced that there is nothing in his mind to interest those around him, and that probably they would not understand him if he revealed himself to them. So he suppresses his feelings and locks up his thoughts in his own heart, and acquires a habit of silence with regard to himself which he is but rarely, if ever, induced to break.

Habits of reserve are generally accompanied by much personal influence, which can be attributed in the first place to the absence of inquisitiveness about those around us. The indulgence of curiosity of this kind is destructive to that esteem which must coexist with healthful controlling power over others. No doubt the reserved man is the one most likely to be trusted and relied on, and to receive more confidential information than persons of a different character.

The influence of the reserved man, in the second place, comes from his disinclination to communicate his ideas, and this gives a two-fold force and value to his opinions. First, he is

supposed from his habits of thoughtfulness to have consider a matter thoroughly before he pronounces judgment; and secondly, that judgment is taken only to express a portion of his thoughts, the best of which he is supposed to reserve, shut up from others, but within his own reach, and to be utilized as prudence may require. The belief that he possesses a hidden power at his command and holds untold resources within himself, scares and intimidates some who regard him with a feeling akin to superstition—so far as we may consider superstition to be a dread of a secret unknown power. While others are attracted to him by their faith in him, and revere him for his discernment in understanding them so thoroughly as to see what is best and wisest for them, and so they submit to his guidance with childlike confidence.

CHAPTER X.

ON TRUE PRINCIPLE.

We may define true principle in conduct as law reduced to action, and persevered in faithfully and unremittingly to the end. We may also represent it as the Maker's stamp on the soul that marks it as His own, attests its being genuine, and confers upon it the likeness to Himself in truthfulness. God imprints His law on every soul, and in proportion as we are faithful to it, He gives us clearer light to discern it, and more strength to act up to it steadfastly, and in this way it becomes the ruling power over our actions, and directs them to their perfect accomplishment.

Principle is not merely the knowledge of what is true, or the conviction of what duty demands, it is also the source of the fulfilment of that duty, the performance of the right act, and in the right way. For we all admit that if a man knows thoroughly well what it is to be upright and honest, just and truthful, and yet acts deceitfully and unjustly, he cannot be a man who follows true principle. And the more fully he understands the Divine law, but fails prac-

tically to fulfil it, wilfully declining his true obligations both to God and man, the more unprincipled in conduct he must be. It is clear that if we know our duty and neglect and evade it, we are, because of our knowledge, all the more unfaithful.

It is of the first importance to us to consider what true principle is, and also to examine whether we act upon it. This study is of the deepest interest to us, as our characters are formed and our lives influenced by the principles that guide us.

Before we define more fully what principle is, we shall first declare what it is not. It is not merely a decision we have come to, or a resolution we frame for ourselves, which seems good and suitable, but still may be laid down and taken up at pleasure. It is nothing we can make or form for ourselves, nothing we can design solely out of our own mind and judgment. It is not a maxim or truism that we take up from another and adopt and modify for our own use. It would be quite disastrous to come to such an erroneous supposition, for no matter how wise a maxim may be, yet, generally speaking, if it is only a maxim, it is only wise in the circumstances to which it directly refers, and which called it forth, or on similar occasions. A maxim is apt to mislead us if we apply it generally, and the desire to do so will probably cramp our minds and fetter our energies. Principle is not a method of our own in the per

formance of our actions, a system and form of life, or a habit of mind and manner we have grown into for many years, and now think it would be inconsistent to give up, and so cling to it rigidly, no matter whether it is suitable to ourselves or others, agreeable or the reverse to those around us.

True principle is nothing of all this. True principle is based on the law of God, and takes its source from the light of truth given to us by Him. We must ever bear in mind that the law of God is written on our hearts by His own hand from the beginning of time, giving us light to discern between good and evil, and a just knowledge and certain consciousness of what is right and wrong in our own actions. This primeval or natural law rules, or ought to rule, every human soul gifted with reason, but it becomes more deeply impressed and more distinctly declared, and all the more binding on us, as we grow in the knowledge of revelation, and of the precepts and ordinances of Holy Church. God's law is unchangeable as God is immutable, but in His mercy and compassion for the weakness and waywardness of man's heart, He enlightens more, and marks out more definitely the true way, the path of justice for the faithful soul, in proportion as it has more dangers to encounter, and is beset with greater evils and errors. He guards it more carefully with His shield of truth as it needs more continual protection and guidance.

We know that the mountain-pass so long as it is only frequented by wise and prudent travellers, is often left for years in its first simplicity, but when it becomes crowded by those who are reckless and foolhardy, who are careless in following the beaten track, and therefore lose themselves in thorns and thickets and fall over cliffs and precipices, it is then more clearly marked out, protected by parapets and supplied with beacons and guides, to preserve future travellers and prevent them from encountering similar disasters. The road is the same still, it goes over the same ground as it did at first and leads to the same end, but it is clearer now and more distinctly defined, that all may keep to it and follow it securely.

It is in this way that Almighty God has been pleased to act with His creatures from the beginning of the world, either through Himself personally or through His Church. The law He first impressed on Adam He imposes more strongly and implicitly on Moses, and He again reveals it in the fullest manner and enforces it in the most perfect way by the preaching and example of His Divine Son, Who came not to destroy the law but to fulfil it. And the doctrine of the Saviour has been faithfully proclaimed by His Apostles, who have inculcated it all the more strongly, and enunciated it all the more clearly as His interests were opposed and His truth impugned. We see unyielding and firm devotedness

in all the Apostles, but St. Paul exhibits it to us in a very marked way in his dauntless declaration and announcement of that truth, which he sets forth more and more clearly, and more and more bravely, as he prosecutes his mission and conflicts with Gentiles and unbelievers. Yet he came after our Blessed Lord, and was the last of His Apostles,. and never taught personally by Him, but was instructed by His disciple and enlightened by the Spirit of Truth. So it is with the Church. Guided by the same Divine Spirit, she holds steadfastly the same truth and the same law, but she declares it more emphatically and expounds it more fully when she is called on by the wants of the faithful to do so, and as they stand in need of light and support to follow the sure path to Heaven, and to contend with falsehood and the evils of the day.

We know that the mere knowledge of the Divine law is not principle in the individual, and that it only becomes so when it is put in practice and observed undeviatingly. As we are faithful, God gives us and makes us more and more conscious of a strong moral sense of right and wrong, which enables us to discern more clearly, and fulfil our obligations more perfectly. This gift, like all his graces, can be wasted and forfeited when we are heedless of it and reject its warnings. But if we respond to it carefully, it points out to us what is good and evil, and warns us what

we ought or ought not to do. And in this way it becomes a sure guide to conscience in the direction of our actions.

Now we must bear in mind that it is law that governs us, and that conscience dictates to us the law, for we are apt to confuse these two things. Conscience is the executive power, the judge that carries out and enforces the law; it exhorts us to just actions and enjoins just actions, and it condemns and pronounces sentence on our unworthy deeds and our unfaithfulness to duty.

No doubt we sometimes speak of the laws of our conscience, and it often makes laws of conduct for us in this way. There is something we desire very much, but our conscience condemns it and contends with the desire, declaring against it until its accomplishment is prevented. This sentence is laid up in our memory, and when a similar desire presents itself it is overcome and put away by the recollection of the former sentence, which acts as a law without further discussion or reference. And as cases of this kind multiply and are stored up in like manner, they protect us against ourselves, and ward of much evil that we should otherwise be likely to fall into if we were unmindful of grace and our interior monitor.

We find in the exercise and practice of true principle that Almighty God gives us three powerful aids, all accompanied with special graces, which are in-

creased as we correspond with them. First, we have the law of God imprinted on our hearts, revealed to us by God Himself, expounded by His Apostles, and enforced by His Church. This law directs us in the way we should walk, enlightening us at every step, and showing us how to please God by seeking and following His holy will in the path of truth.

Secondly, God bestows on us, besides this general knowledge of what is good and evil, and what He commands and forbids in ourselves and others, the gift of moral sense, the faculty of discerning what is right and wrong in and with regard to our own acts. It is the lamp of conscience, and like conscience it cannot extend to or be exercised over the doings of others (except so far as our own duty has some connection with them), for it throws light only on our own actions, and points out what we ourselves ought or ought not to do. The fact that this faculty does not extend to the duties of others, explains why it is we are so likely to wrong and misapprehend our neighbour when we judge his intentions and assign motives to him, though we cannot know his mind or read his heart. And we see how good and just Almighty God is in forbidding us to act in such a way.

The gift of moral sense is that personal and innate consciousness of what is right and wrong which we feel in our inmost hearts, urging us to all that is good

and dissuading us from evil. It is sometimes called the voice of conscience, and we may well regard it as conscience itself in reserve, and before it comes into act.

Then, thirdly, we have conscience in its true form and right capacity, that judges and passes sentence on every deliberate act of our lives. Now it is just what conscience dictates, when it is guided and enlightened by the two aids mentioned above, that reveals to us the true principle which should actuate us on every occasion, and rule and direct us at all times.

We must remember that we may be influenced by a false and a wrong principle when we wilfully blind or pervert our conscience, and follow in its stead passion or prejudice. Conscience is very easily blunted, and grows callous when slighted or sinned against, so we may easily drift into a wrong way if we do not watch over ourselves. We may go on in this wrong course for years, if not for life, deceiving ourselves all the while with false views and ideas, because they enable us the more easily and unscrupulously to follow our own will.

There are also doubtful and scrupulous consciences, and there may be doubts and uncertainty as to the principle on which we should act. The doubtful conscience of one who loves truth and is humble, is soon set right by consulting an experienced

and competent judge, and taking his opinion. A doubt arises in the mind when two impressions exist, and two views present themselves, and the contrary reasons for each are so equal that the mind cannot decide, without help and counsel, which to adopt.

The scrupulous conscience is by far a greater difficulty in our way when trying to maintain true principle, for a scrupulous conscience is a diseased and unhealthy conscience, in fact no conscience at all, but a self-willed, weak, and unstable judgment which takes its name, and whilst it is dubious and vacillating about its own views, it has still less faith and but little confidence in the opinions of others. I believe, with the exception of those who have been afflicted with scruples as a spiritual trial, or those who are truly humble, that scrupulous souls have a deep stratum of natural suspicion and distrust in them that often remains for life, or at least is seldom entirely removed.

At first this distrust is turned against themselves, and displayed in all their actions; but after some years, when they are partly cured and the disease has grown somewhat chronic, it appears in a marked way in their intercourse with others. Their suspicion is painfully exercised on those who are engaged with them in their duties, or who have to assist and co-operate with them in their undertakings. Nothing appears right but what they do themselves or see with their

own eyes. All others are sure to err in some way or to be deceived. This seems a wonderful change and a strange reaction in those who a short time before were so timid and distrustful of themselves on all occasions. But the character still remains the same, the object of distrust alone is changed, and the tendency to doubt continues. The encouragement that timid souls beg for and receive, the assurances that they have acquitted themselves well of their duties, and the praises they have sought, have not cured them of the habit of doubting, but only of doubting themselves, and this is especially apparent to those who are placed under them. But to those who are placed over them, and those to whom they look up with respect, this distrust of others and confidence in self does not appear. On the contrary, to these the scrupulous person seems a humble and docile soul, only in need of support and guidance, until his will is resisted and his designs unexpectedly contradicted, when opposition brings out the true character, which displays much self-esteem, much tenacity of opinion, and also great uncertainty of aim and purpose, with still greater instability in action.

Divine grace and the practice of the virtues are essentially necessary for our perseverance in true principle, as well as for the preservation of a right conscience. They give us light and strength to discern God's law and to do His will. Some of these virtues

we do not always value enough, or prize as we ought, because we do not know their worth or study them sufficiently. In saying this I do not include the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity, for we have been instructed from infancy in these Divine virtues, and we would adhere to them in preference to life itself. We know we could not acquire these virtues by our natural strength, but that God gives them to us, as He alone infuses them into every baptized soul, and that these supernatural gifts may be impaired or even wholly lost by sin, though they are always recoverable by repentance. For the time being, mortal sin destroys the charity of God; repentance will restore it. These virtues grow in the soul as we preserve them faithfully, and God, in His mercy, increases sanctifying grace in our hearts as we prize it and pray for it, and augments with it the gifts of the Holy Ghost and all supernatural and moral virtues. The early instructions we receive on all these points, as well as on all matters of faith, impress them deeply on our minds, and make us comprehend their great importance to us through life, and their matchless worth and boundless power in obtaining salvation.

Now if good instruction is of such avail, and of such vital consequence with regard to the theological virtues, we cannot doubt that good instruction on the moral virtues must also be of very great use to us. I do not mean to advocate the habit of theo-

rizing about the virtues, as this might mislead and prove hurtful. We might thus rest satisfied in discussing and analyzing them, and overlook the more important point of putting them into practice. The kind of instruction which generally proves useful to us in childhood is simple explanation of the virtues, with a clearly defined method of exercising them. This may aid children to the love and practice of them. The better we understand the moral virtues the more we appreciate them, and the more strenuously we yearn for their more perfect acquisition. We cannot be earnest in ruling our lives or in governing ourselves wisely without calling the moral virtues to our aid and finding in them every support.

We discover this to be the case when we decide on a rule of life, or form resolutions as to our conduct under certain circumstances, and thus make compacts with ourselves as to what we shall do or omit to do. A practical knowledge of the moral virtues assists us to form these resolves rightly and suitably to our state, from the knowledge we have of our own character and dispositions. It also gives additional weight and power to them, for we are aware we are not acting solely on our own opinion, or resting on our own judgment. We have meditated on the virtues, and desire to embody them in our rule of conduct and to build up our lives on them. By

doing so we can scarcely relax in our good purposes without soon perceiving it, for we have then a true and fixed standard before us, that shows at once where we have acted properly and when we have fallen away. In this way the practice of virtue supports true principle, establishes it in the mind, and displays it in action. For the rule we act on, if it is just and right, must emanate from principle, and it is clear that the higher and truer our principle, the more excellent our lives, and the more upright our conduct will be.

CHAPTER XI.

ON THE MORAL VIRTUES.

THE knowledge and appreciation of the moral virtues will be found not only a help in the road to perfection, but also a safeguard and protection against faults and delinquencies. We must all admit that the disorders of our lives (the defects we have fallen into and the evil we have done) have been committed usually while we were under the influence of false impressions and erroneous opinions. And may we not justly believe that with God's grace we might have overcome these faults and avoided that evil, had we taken His law to heart, and reflected on the value, the power, and the beauty of the virtues which He willingly bestows on us when we desire and pray for them, and which He increases as we faithfully practise them?

We must now consider what virtue is, and what it effects in the soul. But before doing so we should understand and ever bear in mind that the essence of Christian perfection consists wholly in the love of God and of our neighbour, or, in other words, in true charity. Now charity will increase and reign in the

soul so far, in the same degree, as we contend against our passions and vices, and to the same extent as we subdue them. The virtues are the means that God gives us to effect this great work, to uproot and clear away all that may offend Him, and then to decorate and fit the soul for His dwelling-place.

There must be no respite in this spiritual labour. It must be continuous, for a virtue to fulfil its office duly must be habitual and constantly in action. Its work in the soul only ceases at the hour of death. Passions revive, and vices crop up time after time, and have to be held in check and cut down again and again. The good to be done, the generous acts to be performed, and the duties to be fulfilled, present themselves hour by hour as we journey through life. Duty is nothing else but the distinct act enjoined and demanded of us by the virtue directing us at the time of its performance. Therefore whenever we neglect the duty, we fail in the virtue.

When duty has been faithfully discharged, and when the soul is filled with charity, then virtue appears in a perfect state in this world. We can but define it, then, as God's power communicated, God's law established, and God's will enthroned in the human soul, and all these acknowledged, enforced, and obeyed by man's reason, conscience, and will.

Virtue is a supernatural strength given to us by God, first to overcome and surmount the obstacles

and difficulties which the evils of our fallen nature raise between us and Him, and in the second place it is the practice of all that is good, and the performance of all that is well-pleasing to Him. And, in the third place, it is the reign of order and the reign of justice in the soul of man. Virtue is not only the weapon, but it is also the prize in the warfare of life. It is the triumph of grace over the passions, and it is even more—it is the beatitude of the soul, the possession of peace and the God of peace Who abideth in the peaceful soul, reigning over it absolutely and supremely.

Although all virtue springs from the same source, and is one in essence, yet it diversifies itself and comes to us by various paths, so as to meet the many wants of human life. Each want is provided with its proper remedy, and that remedy bears a special name, and has a distinct office of its own to perform. The moral virtues divide themselves at first into four principal channels, called the cardinal virtues of Prudence, Justice, Temperance, and Fortitude, and these subdivide again into several rills and rivulets, bringing health and strength to every soul that wills to partake of these blessings, and desires to receive them.

Before saying a few words on each of the cardinal virtues it will be well to remind ourselves that perfection is not inherent, and does not subsist in the moral virtues as it abides in the theological or Divine virtues

of Faith, Hope, and Charity. Still charity will soon grow shallow and weak, and will soon decline unless it is replenished and reinforced by the practice of the moral virtues.

There is a peculiarity in the practice of the moral virtues that does not exist, at least to the same extent, in the practice of the Divine virtues. The moral virtues are very apt to degenerate, and do degenerate into vices when carried beyond, or not carried up to, the proper limit. For each virtue is ever attended and beset by the contrary vices—that of excess on one side and of failure or deficiency on the other. True virtue must hold the middle course, and keep the just mean between them. If it fails in this it not only ceases to be a virtue, but it becomes a vice. It either overruns and devastates the soul when, from the admixture of violent and unchecked passions, it breaks through the proper limits and goes beyond the bounds which are laid down by prudence. And, on the other hand, through want of fidelity and correspondence to grace, its current is soon interrupted or restrained, and flows no longer freely or clearly from the fountain-head. For in proportion as we reject Divine assistance virtue grows weak, and sinks lower and lower, until it is lost in the mud out of which we have been made, and then it becomes "of the earth earthy".

The just mean which the moral virtues should

maintain and keep to, and the precise limit to which they should go, cannot be ascertained by mathematical rules, or the wisest maxims of worldly wisdom. For they vary constantly with time and place, and all changes of circumstances may affect them. Now reason, when enlightened by grace, will direct us how to act as we should, and keep us in the right path. But reason without grace will not be able to do so, for a soul habitually in a sinful state, and willingly persevering in a sinful state, must be unable to guide itself, and incapable of sustaining itself steadily in the right course. Because when reason is unaided by grace it is easily dethroned by pride, or tilted from its seat by passion. And these powers of evil assume its place and rule in its stead in a chaos of disorder and tumult. All the passions when uncontrolled rebel against reason and desire to conquer it and enslave it, but pride is pre-eminently successful in doing so. It has more power in the conflict and gains the victory more easily. We can attribute this to the fact that pride very often usurps the authority of reason in its combat with the other passions, at least by hindering public and overt acts of them. But when reason is unsustained by grace it has no help or assistance in its encounter with pride, and it is quickly overcome and vanquished.

So circumstanced, reason is no longer master; it is

not free to exercise its powers and faculties, it cannot consider calmly, or judge fairly or dispassionately even in the most commonplace questions. Reason comes to us from the bounteous hand of God; it is the greatest and highest of His natural gifts to man. We debase and vitiate it when we allow it to be overruled by our passions and evil inclinations, though we may try to persuade ourselves we are then exercising it freely and fearlessly. But it is only free and unconstrained when guided and enlightened by eternal wisdom and eternal truth.

The first of the cardinal virtues is Prudence. It is founded on reason, and it is a virtue of the intellect and not of the will. In this it is unlike all others. It, in fact, regulates and directs all the other moral virtues, and is necessary for their perfection, for virtue is only virtue when it is guided by prudence. Therefore it is the most important of all.

St. Augustine says that prudence is "the knowledge of what to seek and what to avoid". It is a virtue that enables us to do what we ought to do well and wisely, with forethought and discretion.

Prudence considers the means, compares and selects the best, and then urges the will to adopt them; consequently there are three constituent parts in prudence. First, deliberation or the due consideration of the means which are within our reach for the just accomplishment of the act we contem-

plate. Secondly, judgment, as the selection of the means best suited to time, place, and circumstances. Thirdly, the adoption and employment of the right means and the faithful performance of the action.

The faults of excess against the virtue of prudence are cunning, wiliness, and over-solicitude. The faults of defect against this virtue are precipitation, impetuosity, and thoughtlessness.

The means of acquiring prudence are, prayer, reflection, and experience. Besides making earnest petitions for prudence at the usual time of prayer, we should try to gain it at the beginning of our principal actions, or during the progress of them if forgotten at the commencement. We must see how necessary this practice is for us when we reflect on the serious consequences and powerful influences which those actions have on our own lives and on the lives of others, that they will either bring us joy or grief as they have or have not been guided by prudence. Even a prayer of one instant will often save us from a rash and reckless act or an unjust and evil deed. It will even render meritorious an act in its continuance which though not bad in itself, has been commenced through pride, vanity, or some imperfect motive. By a special grace we correct and purify our intention and offer the action to God with submission to His will. Our vicious nature is thus overcome,

reason asserts itself, and God accepts and blesses the action.

It is the intention that stamps the value on the action even before it is fully consummated by word or deed. God will recompense it, as the intention is good or evil. We have sometimes hazy views and ideas on this subject, as if what is said of the great worth and merit of intention were something unreal or imaginary. But let the stress and importance the laws of our country lay on this point convince us of the vital power of intention. Take the case of one man having killed another, and the perpetrator being brought to trial. If it is proved that the act was done with premeditation and deliberate purpose, the law will condemn him to death for murder. If it is proved that the act was not premeditated, but was done at the moment of passion and without reflection, the law will sentence him to imprisonment for some years for manslaughter. If it is proved that the accused had no intention of giving the blow, but that it was inflicted by accident, the law will declare him innocent and set him free. Thus we find that the law deals with the intention far more than with the act, which is only so far considered as it reveals the thought entertained at the time. Matter-of-fact men, who make these laws and execute them, in this way declare that it is the intention as it stands in the mind of the

culprit even before the deed is done, to which the malice of the act is attached, and to which the punishment is accorded; and to give a just sentence in this matter judge and jury must investigate and weigh his motives to the best of their ability. When thus people of the world so freely recognize the importance of intention in judging the merits or demerits of our actions, of what consequence must not our intentions be before God, Who can read our hearts through and through, and Who is the witness as well as the judge of every thought and action of our lives. We should therefore work faithfully this mine of merits by directing every intention to God, for prudence is only perfect when it looks to God alone.

The second cardinal virtue is Justice. It disposes the will habitually to give every one his right.

I believe justice to be the first if not the only cardinal virtue that we acquire in early childhood, and I also believe that we have innumerable opportunities of practising it at that age. It is unnecessary to go into lengthened details to prove this. I need only recall the daily and even hourly appeal for "fair play" from our little companions. The exactness with which we were required to adjust the differences of opinion, and disputes about the rules and arrangements of our games and plays, and the equitable distribution that we

were expected to make of the toys and good things that were intrusted to us to share with them. But our sense of justice was still more strongly and warmly called forth if any of our young friends were unjustly accused and punished, and our indignation on these occasions might convince us now that we had this virtue naturally before we were blessed with it supernaturally, as St. Basil tells us that "we have justice and a sense of fair dealing instilled into our hearts by nature herself".

As this virtue is strengthened by having to contend with the opposite vice, or from having suffered from its violation in any way through others, so those who have at any time been unjustly treated—particularly in youth—have ever afterwards a very high appreciation and admiration for all that is impartial and evenhanded.

The virtue of justice is exercised towards God by submission, obedience, reverence, worship, gratitude, and love. Towards our neighbour by being fair and upright in our actions, sincere in our words, and faithful to our promises, and unprejudiced in our thoughts and opinions of him. In exercising justice towards ourselves we must ever bear in mind we have nothing but what we have received, and of which we must give a strict account. So we must not misuse God's gifts by wasting them thoughtlessly and unreasonably, and neither must we leave them

fruitless and idle, like the unprofitable servant, but turn them to the best account, employing them according to the Divine Donor's will, and for His honour and glory.

The faults of defect against the virtue of justice are so well known that it is needless to enumerate them, but the faults of excess are more likely to be overlooked. Under the plea that justice cannot be carried too far we may become unrelenting, merciless, or inexorable, thus proving the truth of the saying, "the highest justice is the highest wrong". We must remember that virtue lies in the mean and not in the extreme.

The virtue of justice is acquired by prayer and practice. It is increased by the habit of accuracy and by the suppression and suspension of all rash and harsh judgments upon others. And it is cultivated by an undying spirit of gratitude both to God and man for every blessing and every mark of goodness and kindness shown to us.

The perfection of justice ensures the possession and observance of honour, as well as its high appreciation. For honour, no matter how we regard it, as natural or supernatural, if it is real and true, is the crown and perfection of honesty. We give honour to God because it is due to Him; to man as we owe it to his position, worth, or excellence, and if we receive it ourselves we must take

care to deserve it, so as not to take it under false pretences. Though a man creates and preserves his honour still he does not hold it in his own hands once he possesses it. It is lodged to his account in the judgment of his neighbours. And if he is an honourable man he must try and be worth the amount for which he is credited.

If a man is honoured for his profession, station, or office, it is clear that he is bound in justice to respect his state also, and not only to refrain from all that would not be consonant with it, but before God and man to be in truth what he is supposed to be, and to fulfil faithfully his duties and obligations in the most perfect way in his power.

Even natural or instinctive honour brings with it many advantages. Well-disposed people must value it, as it often strengthens and supports them in a good and straightforward course of life, it also protects them from great falls and all reproach. The Almighty seems frequently to permit it to act like a grace in this way, and to make use of it as a foreshadowing of great gifts and blessings. God is the Author of nature as He is the source of grace, and although man by sin has spoiled and deformed His work, still good natural character often gleams with a ray of original beauty; and this glimpse of His first design must be pleasing to Him and attractive to His love, for on such characters we find Him building up

an edifice of heroic sanctity. All who know anything beyond the surface of human life or the histories of individual souls must be aware that a true instinct of honour often protects them from great offences, besides saving them from little deceptions and small insincerities.

A child brought up with a sense of honour will do nothing mean or deceitful. As a boy he will avoid everything underhanded or unmanly; and when he becomes a youth he will be careful to preserve his name without blemish, and shun all that would bring disgrace on his family or shame to his father. In renouncing all that is base and disreputable he preserves his soul from many stains. Although, I allow, this may not be done through the highest motive, or even through the right motive, still it is no small advantage to avoid sin and the habit of sin, and all the scandal that it causes.

Bnt let us suppose this soul to have been nurtured in and imbued with supernatural principles of the highest honour, and we shall find him not only acting justly and "giving honour where it is due," but doing so for the love of God, and for His greater honour and glory he will not only avoid everything displeasing to Him, but he will seek His will in all things, desiring to accomplish it, and "to fulfil all justice".

The third and fourth cardinal virtues are Temperance and Fortitude, two powerful and mighty gifts of

God—potent helps to enable us to conquer all *excessive* desire for sensible enjoyments, and to surmount all *excessive* dread of sensible suffering, which are our two weak points, and the twofold frailty of human nature. The virtue of temperance enables us habitually to hold in check and to moderate our appetites and desires, particularly in all these things that appertain to the senses. It gives us power and strength to control our natural inclinations, and to limit our wants to what is right and lawful. When we have emancipated ourselves from undue claims, and have curbed all the disorderly and unworthy tendencies of our earthly nature, we prove ourselves faithful soldiers of Christ, prepare ourselves to be received as the children of God, and to be blessed with the Divine Spirit; for as we renounce ourselves and obey God's law, we grow in grace.

The virtue of fortitude gives us supernatural strength to encounter labours, difficulties, and dangers in the service of God, and in the cause of justice and truth. It gives us courage to surmount the obstacles and hindrances we may meet with in the work we may have to do for our neighbour, from the spirit of opposition, from unreasonable views and prejudices, from unfriendliness and misrepresentation. It gives us patience to bear all trials meekly, whilst we toil on steadily and perseveringly, doing what we know is right, with peace of mind,

and entire faith and confidence in God. Fortitude gives us courage also to overcome the difficulties that the weakness of our own hearts creates, and puts between us and the duty we owe to God and ourselves. It helps us to conquer human respect, when from the dread of displeasing our fellow-men, or from an overweening desire to please them, we are tempted to omit what we are bound in duty to do, or to do it badly or carelessly. Fortitude gives us strength to master our timidity or human fear, that dread of failure which makes us shrink from, or perform reluctantly and listlessly those duties we think we do not do well, or excel in. It also enables us to conquer all cowardly fear that would deter us from undertaking and carrying out good works for God's honour from the apprehension of the drudgery and anxiety they are likely to entail on us, and even without having any assurance of their succeeding according to our expectations. Fortitude gives the spirit of endurance and perseverance in a life of labour, with an intrepid devotion to duty. And it gives us resolution and submission to bear the cares and sorrows of life patiently and bravely, with confidence and trust in God's love and mercy.

Fortitude comes to our help in physical as well as in mental suffering; it brings patience and resignation in sickness and bodily pain. We all

admire patient suffering, and we reverence it still more when we see it endured constantly with calm cheerfulness. This brings before us a picture of holiness and of true conformity to the Divine Will which we would gladly possess, but perhaps despair of acquiring. I believe the habit of silence is a powerful means for the acquisition of this virtue and the practice of patience, though it may be very different from, and fall far short of, the possession of the virtue. Still I think it is a remote preparation. I mean the habit of silence, not only observed with others, but maintained with ourselves in regard to what we may have to suffer. Of course we should be frank and open when free speech is required of us by duty or simplicity, but otherwise we shall find generally that silence on this point is a blessing.

When we speak of our pains and what we have to endure, we usually do so to obtain condolence and sympathy. Now, sympathy is dearly prized by us, the boon we most value from our friends, and the one we most gratefully receive from them. But to be of any worth or comfort to us, it must be bestowed freely and spontaneously. When we elicit and invite it, it nearly always disappoints us, and it makes us weak and unhappy the more we desire and crave after it. We are sure not to receive always the kind we wished for, or all we expected. So we

are apt to grow morbid and querulous, just as we are liable to become egotistical and over-exacting.

If we would keep our minds tranquil and healthy, it is well to take up good and useful subjects for reflection and consideration, and to occupy ourselves with them when ailing, as far as we can do so continually and agreeably. The habit of distracting the mind in this way brings much relief, and helps us to pass many a weary hour calmly and patiently, that would press the more heavily if we gave way to self-pity and painful recollections. It would be well never voluntarily to look back on an hour's pain once that hour is past. It will depress and unnerve us, and so render us less able to encounter the trials we may yet have to meet. It will be far better for us to let each day bear its own burden of pain to the throne of God, and leave it there offering it in union with our Divine Lord's sufferings in a spirit of reparation and submission, and with entire resignation to his most holy will.

The evils of defect against the virtue of fortitude most to be dreaded in our every-day life are faint-heartedness, self-commiseration, and human respect. The faults of excess are not so frequently committed, but we ought to remember that if we are powerful we ought to be merciful, and that "'Tis excellent to have a giant's strength, but tyrannous to use it like a giant".

CHAPTER XII.

ON BEING TRUE AND TRUSTY.

FATHER FABER remarks in his *Spiritual Conferences*, "There is a peculiar clearness about characters which have learned to be true after having been deceitful". I am now convinced of this truth, though at first I own I had some misgivings, for I have known several instances, and that in the most surprising cases, and in characters inured to habits of cunning and deceit for years. The humiliating consciousness of having had these defects, and the grace of repentance, with the yearning desire to be trusted and found worthy of reliance, forced them, as it were, to renounce everything like deception and untruth, and to keep a guard over themselves, watching carefully every word and action, lest any new fault committed might revive old habits, and plunge the soul again into all its former misery. In these dispositions it becomes transparently truthful. Such a soul is as faithful to the truth somewhat in the same degree as the man who has pledged himself to total abstinence is faithful to temperance. Self-distrust is strong in both cases, accompanied by a dread, if not a

conviction, that the slightest failing, if not speedily corrected, may end in irreclaimable relapse. Although we learn here that the habit of truthfulness can be acquired at any age, and even under the most unpromising circumstances, so that no one should ever despair with God's grace of gaining it, still, we all admit that it is of the first importance that this habit should be inculcated from infancy, and that the guileless soul should be carefully kept undeviatingly in the direct and straightforward path, and preserved in childlike ingenuousness for life. Yet those intrusted with the care of children in their early years, are often not only wanting in that jealous watchfulness, so requisite on this point, but they not unfrequently lead those in their charge to pretence, dissimulation, and falsehood.

Much of the unhappiness of the world is caused by people assuming a false position, and trying to maintain it under difficult and adverse circumstances. How many could trace their errors in this direction to the false impressions they nourished while in the nursery as to their own consequence and future importance? If the nurse is ill-tempered she is likely to incite the child to untruth and subterfuge by her threats of severe punishment for mere acts of childish mischief. He remembers the promised infliction when questioned about it, and he prevaricates to escape it. If it succeeds in saving him, it is

not unlikely that he will avail himself of the same ignoble shield when again terrified by her threats.

But the case is worse when the schoolboy is accused and punished for something he has not done, and menaced with still further chastisement if he does not acknowledge having committed the fault. But if he acknowledges it he is told all shall be forgiven. He sees that his denials are not believed, and that they only exasperate his master, and make him more severe, and as the weak, young child looks at the cold, hard man, he thinks he may as well say he did it, and escape punishment and his persecutor. So he tells the lie, but he will never forget the injustice he was subjected to, and it will cost him a hard struggle not to resent it for years.

To me the lengths to which teachers and even parents will sometimes go to convict a child of a lie seem as unwise as incomprehensible. They investigate, examine, and cross-question, looking so stern and angry all the time, as to give the child the impression that they are cruel and vindictive foes, trying to entrap him in his own words. If he told the lie, he is now likely to tell many more, and if his additional untruths help him out of his difficulty and save him from punishment, he congratulates himself on his cleverness and cunning. If he is found guilty, and publicly charged and branded as

a liar, he loses all self-respect, and despairs of ever being a truthful character, or of ever being considered one. Now, the question arises, Is a child to be allowed to tell untruths and commit faults without any correction? Certainly not. If you are quite sure he has told the lie, and that to your own knowledge or on conclusive evidence, and that you have reason to believe he told it intentionally, then correct him, but it ought to be clear to him that you correct him, not for vengeance' sake, but for his good and improvement. Let him see that you believe the worst is over with him and that you feel sure of his amendment. Anything that would harden or degrade him should be avoided, as well as all undue severity. If a child thinks he has been cruelly or over-severely punished, he is liable to become obdurate, to lose all sorrow and regret for having committed the fault, and all desire to atone and make amends for it. He thinks he has paid dearly for it, and to the full amount. So he considers he is at quits on that head at least with his fellow-beings, and he will probably grow callous and reckless. Therefore a character that commands trust and reliance is a possession of special importance to those who have to correct others. It ensures the belief that they will do nothing unjust or oppressive, but still, what duty requires will be done fairly and firmly.

A gentle word, a kind look does wonders on such occasions to soften hearts, and lead them in the right way. We must not be afraid to yield too soon when there is any sign of repentance, or to meet the poor delinquent more than half way. Once he sees his fault, he should be treated with the utmost frankness and confidence ever afterwards, to guard him against a relapse, and to help him to regain his self-respect. If a child has only been suspected of untruthfulness, or some such fault, or if the charge came to our ears through tale-bearing, we should pass it by without notice. If he is aware of the accusation, we should be doubly prompt in declaring our incredulity, and in removing all suspicion from his character. It need not be thought that this mode of action will injure him if he is really guilty. When there is no reliable proof, the person suspected should always have the benefit of the doubt. Besides, children often say what is not true unconsciously. They have generally a very strong imagination, and they partly believe what they wish to believe. A child is also quick at seeing what he is expected to say, and he says it fancying it must be the right thing. Finding himself doubted or suspected would do him great harm. We must trust him if we want him to be trustworthy. If he is brought up from his early years with a respect for his word, and with fidelity and loving reverence for all that is true and

honourable, he will, with God's grace, live according to God's law, and die a truthful man.

We have generally a clear perception, and a certain consciousness when we are untrue to God, to His law, to His will, or to His service. And we have therefore painful remorse when we fail in duty, and are unfaithful and unprincipled. But oftentimes we seem to have confused ideas as to the observance of truth in our words, from the various views and representations we think it admissible to express on the same subject when speaking to different people. And we seem still oftener more uncertain and undecided how far we ought to be true to each other. Yet union and good faith among friends, concord and a good understanding among acquaintances, and with society at large, depend on our fidelity in such matters.

Our best course is to be ever loyal to our friends, never to utter a word about them that they could not hear with satisfaction, and always to give ourselves the habit of being just as true to the absent as we would be if they were present, and as true to the present as we would wish them to be true to us. Of course we can be true, and entirely true, as long as we are not untrue. We can be passively true. We are by no means obliged to say all we know or all we think on any subject; we are truthful so long as what we do say is truth. But we must take

care that what we say truthfully to one person is not contradicted in any way by what we say on the same subject to somebody else, unless we have changed our opinion, and then it is well to acknowledge having done so. It is right to be careful that what we say should be consistent, so that if all we have said on the same subject should happen to be repeated, it should all be in keeping and of a piece, each statement conveying the same meaning in a greater or less degree, as it may be deemed wise and prudent, but always in accordance with truth. And any alteration in such statements should be duly accounted for. This is more important than it may appear at the first sight, for it must be owned that contrary and inconsistent statements, repeated from the same person, have often shaken faith and trust in members of the same household, and chilled the confidence of friends, thus occasioning both pain of mind and bitterness of heart.

Those who mean to be true to others and consider themselves true, we find usually divided in important matters into two classes, and these classes are so distinct and so completely separated, that they have little sympathy with each other, and but too often misunderstandings exist between them. One class acts from and adheres exclusively to principle. The other class aims at and piques itself on fidelity to party. The first class possesses more power and

more facility of action in using it, but has fewer friends. As it keeps up the cry, "Measures, not men," it is apt to adopt the spirit of the saying too literally, to overlook men too much, and not to be mindful enough of the individual interests and feelings of even its adherents and supporters. It is so absorbed in its efforts to accomplish the good it has in view, that it disregards all else; and though it has right on its side, supports the truth, and possesses trust, still it is not popular or attractive, except with the thoughtful. The second class rests on popularity, and the union of opinion among many in favour of one leader, but this union of opinion does not, unfortunately, always extend to the kind of service he is expected to render, and the peculiar work he is to accomplish. So that, although he may have strong adherents and many followers, they often restrain him by their opposing wills and opposite counsels, all of which he is expected to consult and to comply with. And therefore he cannot effect much, though within his reach, as he has little or no freedom of action. If the merits of both classes could be somewhat combined, if the first possessed more thoughtfulness and a kinder consideration for others, and if the second had more resolution and less human respect, more would be achieved, and far greater advantages secured by both parties.

We need God's help in being true and truthful,

and very special graces to be so faithfully and perseveringly. From our own nature we could never attain to it, we are so weak and inconstant. Our will is so easily swayed by feeling and fancy, our understanding so frequently darkened by passion and overshadowed by prejudice, besides being but too often biassed by self-interest. So we depend on Divine assistance to acquire and maintain impartial and unprejudiced minds, just and kind consideration for others, moral courage and stability, with unfailing attention and fidelity to our hourly duties. All these things bring their own blessings with them, at the same time we must own that the practice of them is not without its difficulties.

If we consider the influence which partiality and prejudice have over the soul, and the power they exert in shaping and colouring human life, we shall see they are mental conditions worthy of close study and keen watchfulness. We shall also learn that the best thing we can do, if we wish to be truthful, is to acknowledge humbly our liability to be affected (if not governed) by both of them on many points. It is probable that at least two-thirds of our dislikes and antipathies have been caused by them, and unless we are on our guard these are likely to grow and strengthen with our years. This often occurs without any sufficient reason, so that peace of mind is rufiled and disturbed, and life itself em-

bittered and clouded by a miasma of our own creating.

We can see the evil effect of prejudice even in trivial circumstances and in transactions of little consequence. For instance, a man going on a journey is apt, when seated in a railway carriage, to look out on the groups of passengers, and unless he is very much pre-occupied, or very wise and amiable, he is likely to see some one in the crowd to whom he will feel a kind of repugnance, and this merely from the expression of the face, or the tone of the voice, or perhaps from a resemblance to some person he dislikes. But should the man by any chance get into the same carriage, he feels quite annoyed, and will probably take up his newspaper or remain sullenly silent, fancying himself an injured person until he gets out again. So for a mere fancy and freak of the imagination he disturbs his own peace of mind, forfeits much enjoyment, and mars the sociability of the rest of his companions. If prejudices entirely groundless can inflict such punishments, should we not try and conquer them in circumstances more important, and forbid them to rest in our minds, no matter what they may spring from or to what they may tend? They are sure to distort the truth, and to make us unhappy and unjust.

Partiality is even more universal in its influence than prejudice. It is not so generally and frequently

called into action, but when it is, it is likely to take a firmer hold on the mind and leave a more lasting impression. Though we acknowledge that we are subject to various prejudices which we call into being ourselves, or imbibe from others, and that these succeed each other constantly, fresh impressions now obliterating and now strengthening those that have gone before; still when we hear it said that such a man showed no prejudice on such an occasion, or that he acted free of all prejudice, we consider him a fair-minded, just man. But this was only what we expected of him. If we hear still further that he is not only unprejudiced, but entirely impartial, he at once rises in our esteem, and we look on him with reverence and admiration, as a noble character possessed of rare virtue.

In matters where we are unconcerned and indifferent it may be easy to be impartial, but to be so where our feelings and predilections are engaged is most difficult to human nature. We may be sincere and straightforward, state our opinions candidly, and speak our thoughts frankly, and yet give no sign or promise of being impartial, but most likely betray all the more clearly how far we are from being so.

Properly speaking, partiality only displays itself when we have the power of making a choice, or of showing a preference. If we make that choice or show that preference without any just reason or sufficient

cause, merely through natural inclination, affection, or favour, whereas our duty calls on us to see the true state of things, and to give our opinion truly and faithfully, we are partial. We are partial also when we try to believe only what is most pleasing and agreeable to us, and form our judgment accordingly. This is clearly contrary to the observance of truthfulness, and a serious hindrance to the practice of justice. To acquire the true spirit of impartiality and to learn how to act justly, we must look straight to God and try to see the matter as He sees it. The more important the point in question is, the more we should seek God's light and direction, not only in consideration of the matter itself, but in regard to the certainty that the more our interest is enlisted the more strongly our partiality will be enlisted also if we do not take care. When we see its power to lead and blind us in trifling things, we cannot doubt its strength in greater matters. We have an instance of this in the generally admitted fact that if a man looks on attentively at two strangers playing some game, or engaged in some trial of skill, he is sure to wish for the success of one in preference to the other, and this, not from any just reason he could assign, but from some attraction or feeling of partiality he experiences towards the person he favours, and thus justice and reason are sometimes over-ruled in our decisions and judgments.

If we can be prejudiced so easily without any real cause, and if we are likely to become partial without being able to assign a reason, we can understand how liable and how likely we are to have our minds and judgments warped and biassed in matters where our interests are concerned and our feelings engaged. Great care is especially necessary if we have to form an opinion and are obliged to come to some decision about the actions of others, that our judgment may not be influenced unduly either against them or in their favour. If we feel inclined to condemn the views or mode of action of some one we do not like, or for whom we have no great esteem, it is well to imagine ourselves in his place, and then to try and see how matters look from *his* point of view. And if we are about to condemn his acts, it is well, before doing so, to imagine them done, not by him, but by one for whom we feel a strong regard, and then to consider what sentence we should pass on them, and what excuses we should make for the doing of them. Then if we transfer our judgment to the conduct of the person for whom we have less regard, we may rest satisfied that we are not swayed by prejudice. This is, no doubt, an exercise of the imagination, but the imagination, when it is a help to charity, is always a help to the ascertainment of truth. The more kindness and considerateness we throw into our opinions of others, the more in accordance with justice they

are likely to be, and consequently the more accuracy will be found in our decisions and judgments.

One of the most natural and necessary endowments to enable us to act and speak truthfully is moral courage. If we observe ourselves closely we shall find many things we would rather leave unnoticed, and many things we would prefer not having said, if duty did not oblige us to act and to say them. We know some matters are not in proper order or going on rightly, and we see mistakes that we ought to correct, but we consider that we have sensitive people to act with, and we are afraid they may feel hurt if we point out what requires redress, or what should be avoided. If we think that they might become low and depressed, communication with them would not then be so agreeable; our present peaceable and pleasant intercourse would be interrupted. And so from the dread of this, or some such inconvenience, we are cowardly enough to shut our eyes and to make no allusion as to what should be remedied. Our silence is mistaken for approval, and it is supposed that all is going on in accordance with our wishes; and as we see disorder continuing and increasing, we keep grumbling in our own minds at the carelessness and misconduc of others, overlooking our own indolenc e and un mindful of our own neglect. A few words said kindly at first, but with straightforward honesty, to the responsible person, would have set all to rights and

saved many blunders and mistakes, involving much pain and remorse afterwards.

The want of accuracy in a character displays itself unmistakably in the habit of exaggeration, or in the misstatement of facts that we are too careless to relate truly, or too indifferent to represent faithfully. This habit is likely to accompany us from childhood, as children, besides being imaginative, delight in giving a surprise or in creating a sensation. They are also likely to jump at conclusions and to colour facts in accordance with their wishes, or embellish them according to their fancy. It must be confessed that women are inclined to these habits, in which they would indulge unless they have been brought up with watchful care on this point, and have been impressed with the importance of a high appreciation of truth and accuracy. I am persuaded, though it may seem a strange assertion, that next to vain people it is the amiable and the kindly disposed who are most likely to fall into the habit of exaggeration, and this from their desire to interest and entertain their friends. If some accident or adventure has happened to such a person, he is glad to have an attractive or an amusing subject to speak about, and as he describes and recounts it he sees what it is that strikes his hearers and engages their interest, he dwells particularly on those points in his desire to be agreeable, and he enlarges on them,

dilating and garnishing them, to gain sympathy and to keep attention, losing sight of the simple facts, and overlooking the real circumstances of the case. Some of those who are listening to him, and who were present at the occurrence, are surprised at his description of it, as they can trace but little resemblance to the event as it took place. They are pained and amazed at his want of truth, and lose faith and confidence in him, resolving in their own minds to attribute in future one-half to exaggeration in everything they may hear him relate.

Excessive and exaggerated expressions of praise have nearly always the opposite effect to what is expected, and are usually most injurious to our friends, for violent partisanship is ever likely to create opposition. As, partly through a spirit of contradiction and partly through a sense of truth, others will deny the high perfections we attribute to our friends. They will even unduly depreciate them, and point out faults that would otherwise have remained unnoticed. Is not "a fair field and no favour" the safest ground for every one? On the other hand, exaggerated blame or undue censure is sure to do harm also. Like severe punishment, it will go far to prevent repentance and hinder amendment, for to some minds it will appear not only to expiate the fault committed, but to outweigh and overbalance it, leaving the cause for complaint on the other side.

The habit of accuracy will save us from a multitude of errors and many misunderstandings with those around us, which we are sure to fall into if we make careless assertions and misstatements. It will save us from being unjust to our friend by stating his opinions incorrectly and representing him falsely. We do this when we give a remark as spoken by him, and while we profess to repeat his expressions, we leave out a word here and put in a word there; then after altering the meaning and changing the effect, we affirm that we give the sentence as spoken by our friend. This is not only untrue, but doubly so to our friend, for we quote him wrongly and misrepresent him. Even when we quote his own words, but out of their true context, we are false to him, by imputing to him views and sentiments which are not his. Now, such mistakes and misrepresentations are often the cause of great divisions among friends and much unhappiness in families. Though we may think lightly of them, and as matters of no moment when they occur to others, still when we are ourselves in question we see them in a different light. For there are few things more likely to annoy and disquiet us than to hear our words misquoted and our opinions misconceived. Besides, there are few things harder to set right, for the part that is true gives the colouring of truth to what is false, and this it is that makes it difficult for any amount of explanation to clear away.

If we want to be thoroughly true to our friend we must be careful not to quote him, or rather not to name him when we quote him, except it is something excellent and praiseworthy, or a matter of public interest; unless, perhaps, we speak to a mutual friend who understands us both well, and can rightly appreciate what was said. Above all, we should carefully avoid repeating anything our friend says to us in confidence, no matter how trifling or unimportant it may seem to us; and even what he says in casual conversation about himself, his personal concerns, his private views, opinions, and plans, should never be repeated, unless he wishes us to act or desires our advice, and we may require the counsel of a third person. I do not say this merely with regard to such things as may be confided to us under the promise of secrecy, for that silence is then a positive duty is patent to every one, and a duty we must ever observe. Once a secret has been confided to us, it should appear as if we never heard it; and if the circumstances to which it refers should become generally known, it is decidedly a breach of trust to inform any one that it had been previously confided to us. For such a disclosure, besides being dishonourable and unfair to our friend, often causes disunion and feelings of distrust towards him among others. Such a disclosure can do us no good: it only proves our vanity and shows how little we can be relied on.

Secrets are always a burden, whether we cumber other people with them or take the load on ourselves, so that the knowledge of them should never be desired or sought after. At the same time, our friend ought to feel sure that in any trouble or anxiety he can always command our fullest attention, our sincere sympathy and our best counsel, and he ought to feel doubly sure that whatever he says to us shall never be mentioned or revealed to any one.

I may be considered to go too far on this point of silence, but I hold that we should be not only true to our friend by keeping his confidence, but that we should keep sacred also whatever a stranger may confide to us in his hour of affliction. Though what he has said might scarcely be considered a secret, still our fellow creature has trusted us with his feelings and sorrows, and what he has spoken from his heart in his need of sympathy and comfort, was meant only for our own ears, and confided to our own keeping.

Even our enemy, should we ever have one, ought to feel satisfied that we would observe silence with regard to anything he ever confided to us in the days of our friendship; and if we are wise we shall never lend a willing ear to anything confidential that our enemy's former friend may wish to say to us about him, or allow him to reveal anything which was ever confided to him. We must keep and even strive to

make our friends true by guarding them from being false, if we expect them to be true to us, for we may rest assured that no one will be true to us who is false to another.

On this principle children should never be allowed to complain in secret of any one who has vexed them, and young people of more advanced years should be prevented from recounting their annoyances, troubles, and difficulties in confidence. This is sure to make them cowardly, untruthful, and self-engrossed. We know that life is a warfare, and if we are rightly trained we must be prepared to meet the conflict bravely and resolutely, like true soldiers of Christ, and to meet calamities, suffering, and trial with peaceful endurance, meekness, and resignation. But if we have not been accustomed to practise these virtues during our youth, speculative instruction on them will be but little help in the hour of need. People generally, but above all young people, seldom expatiate on their troubles and difficulties without throwing the blame on somebody else, and in doing this they are likely to exaggerate a good deal, and to go far beyond the truth. Mothers and teachers act most unwisely when they permit or encourage the child to complain to them in this way. They wrongly believe that by receiving his confidence unchecked they encourage him to confide in them more fully, and that they will be better able to preserve their influence over him as

he advances in years. They could scarcely make a greater mistake, for this method of action is calculated to destroy their influence for ever. The child knows when he has spoken too strongly, and has wronged his brother or schoolfellow, and becomes displeased and dissatisfied with those who allowed him to do so. He will feel doubly angry when the feeling of vexation with his friend shall have passed away, and while treating him afterwards as a friend, he will be conscious that he was false and unjust to him, and had acted deceitfully by him, and he will never have full reliance or entire trust again in those who led him into this error, or listened to him without reproof or correction. I believe it is only those who adhere strictly to principle, not harshly, yet undeviatingly, who can preserve a true and healthful influence over others, and any failure or departure from it on our part is never forgotten, and I fear scarcely ever fully forgiven by those who are placed under us.

Faults against trustiness and fidelity may often come from thoughtlessness and vanity, and I believe more frequently from vanity than from anger, jealousy, or any other unsubdued passion. Some persons when they are in a communicative mood know not where to stop, and often go too far; and if they have much vanity will often go much farther, and not only break trust in some matters, but will reveal everything that was ever confided to them. They do

this to prove how much they were trusted and considered, and to show what experience they have had. The impression they make on their hearers is probably the reverse of what they expected to produce. For we must all confess that the value we set on any person depends on the reliance we can place on him. And the esteem we entertain for him is according to the trust we have in him. We are estimated in like manner by our neighbours, and no matter what gifts and talents we may possess, we have no worth in the estimation of God or man without faith and fidelity. Even with regard to God Himself, do we not reverence Him in the same degree that we believe in Him? and do we not love Him in the same measure as we have trust in Him? There is one subject on which persons frequently speak untruly and unfairly, and consequently it is one we ought to avoid talking about except to a really true friend, who is honest enough to speak the plain truth, and to put the right view before us,—and that subject is oneself. Whenever we comment on our own character and disposition, or expatiate on and declare our motives and intentions, we are liable to deviate from the truth, and what we endeavour to draw from others on such occasions is more certain to lead us still farther from it. As a rule it is always better to talk about things than about persons: it is safer for truth and still safer for charity.

It is a strange phase in the human mind and one that clearly indicates our fallen state, that while the desire and appreciation of the truth is always a source of joy to the heart of man, and the faithful expression of it to others is always a source of peace and satisfaction to us, still the process of investigating the truth about ourselves, and the declaring of that truth to ourselves when we have discovered it, is by no means always agreeable or pleasing to us. We are glad to acquire every other kind of knowledge, but we shrink from this alone. No doubt, to undeceive ourselves entails great labour and is a difficult task. To remove false ideas and conceits we have of ourselves, and the wrong impressions which the false representations of others may have induced, is a wearisome and irksome labour.

We shall find much help, and it will be of the greatest assistance to us through life, if we impress on our minds this simple truth, and keep it always in our hearts, that we are only what we are in the sight of God and nothing more. If we lose sight of this, we are sure to be deceived, because then we are sure to put a false value on ourselves, and to measure ourselves by a wrong standard, and also to make the opinion of others the law and the governing power of our lives; as they applaud and approve of us, we esteem ourselves and grow in self-importance, and as they censure and depreciate us,

we become depressed and desponding. If we were once thoroughly convinced that we are only what we are in the sight of God, that nothing else is true about us, and that nothing is to our advantage but what He approves, or to our disadvantage but what he reprobates, we should become indifferent to the opinions of others, and uninfluenced by human respect. We should then look straight to God in everything, regardless of praise or dispraise, and insensible to flattery while filled with the one desire of pleasing Him. To the *really truth-loving* soul flattery is always distasteful and even painful. It is wounding to him as so much falsehood. From the knowledge he has of himself, it takes the form of truth in his eyes, but under the garb of irony.

When we come to the question of telling ourselves the truth, we find all we can learn is very little, and very humbling to human pride, and though easily told, it is hard to be realized. It is simply this. All good comes from God, and we have nothing good of ourselves. He has entrusted us with great and wonderful gifts, but they are his gratuitous graces and blessings. We are to trade with them until He comes, when we must give Him a strict account of all, even of the very least. Now as we are nothing of ourselves, and as every good gift comes from God, all we can know about ourselves is by inquiring what use we have made of the talents committed to

our keeping, whether we have turned them to profit, or whether we have left them idle or misused them. If we claim them as our own production and construction, we are false and dishonest; if we turn them against the Giver, to offend Him, and violate His laws, our perfidy and guilt are all the greater. So all we can learn of ourselves are our sins and offences, for we have nothing else of our own. When we know them thoroughly, we shall then, and only then, know ourselves.

If we have used any of God's gifts rightly and according to His will, it has been entirely through His grace and by His help, and we owe Him deep gratitude for enabling us to do so, for sustaining and upholding us, and for calling us into existence at all—being what we are!

God's infinite mercy and wonderful forbearance will strike us forcibly when we consider what it is to be true to God. For then the cause of our being and the object of our existence, which is to know and serve God, come clearly before us, to do Him honour and give Him glory. This revelation of our duty puts us in our true position before Him as His servants, and declares to us our obligation to look first to Him in everything and to do His will in all things, and gives us our right place as His children, with the duty we owe Him in seeking His honour and gaining His glory, by the watchful

observance of His law, and the faithful and loving fulfilment of the least intimation of his will.

What a blessing to fulfil our high calling to walk worthily of our noble destiny! What a blessing it would be to us if we were as true to God as the faithful watch-dog is to his master, standing by him on all occasions, often seemingly unnoticed and overlooked, but still always devoted and on the watch for his master's call and his master's interests. Every sign, the slightest word or the least expression of his master's will is instantly obeyed and carried out at once. He is forgetful of himself, and entirely regardless of the fatigue and suffering it may cost him. He is satisfied, and even rewarded to the full in being at times allowed to sit at his master's feet, thoroughly happy at being tolerated there. What ineffable happiness it would bring us if we were as true to God, yet, it ought not to be too much to expect of a rational and immortal being, or to ask of a redeemed soul to be as faithful and devoted to his Heavenly Master and Divine Saviour, Who has bought him at a great price, and desires his heart, that he may abide in truth, in the union of love, and the enjoyment of peace. Père Surin, S.J., says: "Union with God is the enjoyment of truth".

CHAPTER XIII.

HUMILITY AND SIMPLICITY.

Our Divine Saviour alone can teach us true humility, and we can only learn it by following His precepts and imitating His example. But in practising this virtue in our present and perverted state, we ought to call to our aid the remembrance of our faults and failings, and to humble ourselves, considering our defects and errors. The essence of humility does not however consist in this practice, as Christ could not employ it. It is, nevertheless, a necessary help to *fallen* man to vanquish his pride and conquer his self-complacency.

Humility is a virtue which inclines the will to sincere self-abasement and self abjection. It is established and promoted by the knowledge through which we recognize ourselves to be what we are, and it leads us to manifest this knowledge by our outward actions. Again, humility consists in overcoming and keeping down all self-esteem, and in subduing the frail and vain tendency of our poor weak nature to exalt ourselves above ourselves, above our deserts. This results from the true knowledge we have of our-

selves, and the conviction of our own hearts that we are nothing of ourselves. In other words, humility is truth, and it is derived from the true knowledge of God and of ourselves, and contrasting the knowledge we have of ourselves, our nothingness and misery, with God's infinite perfections and goodness, we recognize our own baseness and despise ourselves. And as we become lowly in our own opinion, we more and more reverence and obey God, keep His law, and submit to others for His sake.

To make this matter clearer we shall divide the subject into two points. The first we shall designate, for the present, humility of the intellect or understanding. The second, humility of the heart or will. The humility of the understanding is a true knowledge and a clear conviction of our own nothingness. We are nothing and we have nothing, but what we have received, and besides this nothingness we have the vileness and wretchedness of our sins, faults, and shortcomings. This galling assertion may be a difficulty to some minds. They may ask, how can anything that exists be nothing? and how can it be really true that we are nothing, seeing we have a body, and knowing we have an immortal soul, made unto God's likeness, and gifted with reason and free will? St. Paul tells us: "If any man think himself to be something, whereas he is nothing, he deceiveth himself". Almighty God created us, as He created

the earth, out of nothing, we are nothing and have nothing of ourselves, but God in His infinite goodness confers upon us, or rather consigns to our keeping some of His most valuable possessions and treasures. They are not from ourselves, so we must not glory in them. They are His, and to be used according to His will until the moment of death, when we must render him an account, "even to the last farthing," then indeed we shall know that we are nothing, and have nothing but what we have received from Him except our sins.

To speak correctly, what is called humility of the understanding, or otherwise self-knowledge, is not the virtue of humility, though it is essentially necessary to that virtue, as necessary as light is to the growth of the plant. Light does not create the plant, which, nevertheless, without it, cannot live or grow. So self-knowledge nourishes and strengthens humility when it is conferred by God's grace and enlivened by Divine love. Perhaps it would be clearer to represent the matter in this way. Self-knowledge is the ground in which the tree of humility is planted, and the root of this tree is the knowledge of God. As the ground is trenched and broken up by contrition, and fertilized by the heavenly dew of grace, the root strikes through it, taking a firm hold and lasting possession. The stem grows and throws out its branches on all sides, spreading and expanding as the tree increases in

growth, and on these branches all other virtues are grafted.

Self-knowledge of itself and without the grace of God does not incline the will to humility. But it often has the contrary effect, as we see in the case of some who are, and are conscious of being, great criminals. The clear remembrance of their crimes, the weight and consideration of their guilt often harden them the more, and make them more desperate and reckless, until they acquire some knowledge of God, a glimmering of hope, and a touch of contrition. Then self-knowledge by the aid of grace begets true humility. It softens the hardest hearts and bows the proudest spirit down to the earth under the mighty hand of God. Judas knew himself. He possessed self-knowledge, but when he turned away from God and resisted grace, the terrible consciousness of his crime, in its awful depth and darkness, took full possession of his soul, to the extinction and exclusion of the true knowledge of God and the remembrance of His infinite mercy, and separated him from his Divine Master for ever. Surely if any of us knew ourselves really and thoroughly, without knowing God, His mercy, goodness, and charity, should we not despair? Was it not from the conviction of this truth that St. Augustine prays: "Lord, teach me to know Thee," before he cries "Teach me to know myself"? And St. Francis of Assisi

says: "Who art Thou, O Lord?" before he asks, "Who am I?"

We must allow that the knowledge and remembrance of our sins and failings is humbling to us, and we may readily admit that as God called us into existence, and conferred upon us life and being and all our powers of soul and body, we belong to Him as our Creator, and that we cannot justly attribute any of these things to ourselves, or claim them, or take pride in them as our own. Yet, surely, we may count as ours any good works we may have done, or think we have done through life? But here again the grace of true humility undeceives us. If we have ever performed a good action, it was done by God's grace and God's help, for our Blessed Lord tells us distinctly: "Without Me you can do nothing". And yet in his boundless mercy He will reward us eternally for the concurrence and co-operation of our will. Though that also is a special gift and grace from Him. No action is worthy of merit unless it is done in the state of grace. It may be generous and wise, and it may bring us temporal rewards, but not an everlasting recompense, except it be by the blessing of contrition and conversion. Sanctifying grace is a free gift of God, purchased by His Precious Blood, and conferred upon us with the pardon of our sins, when He admits us to His friendship. But besides sanctifying grace we require the aids of actual grace in the perfor-

mance of every good action, which God alone gives us voluntarily and gratuitously, and of His own infinite goodness. Therefore if God enables us to do any good work for Him we have nothing to glory in, nothing even on which to rest a self-complacent thought, no matter how well it may be done and even with the best dispositions, as He alone did it, and accomplished it in us and by us, for all good is in God and from God. But when we think of all the faults, errors, and sins that stain and disfigure our daily life, then we discover our special work, and find we have nothing to be proud of, but much to humble us even in our noblest and holiest actions. So, true knowledge of ourselves leads to humility of heart and entire submission to God as the Author and source of all good. This acknowledgement in no way hinders the recognition of the many and great things God has given us. In fact the more we realize and are convinced of our nothingness and vileness, the more clearly we see and freely admit with wonder and gratitude the gifts and graces we have received.

There is nothing false, cowardly, or pusillanimous in true humility, but quite the reverse. It makes us honest, brave, and resolute. For few are stronger than those who have measured truly the weakness of their own hearts, and then lean solely on God for help, relying on His mercy and shielded by His

grace. Humility alone enables us to say: "I can do all things in Him Who strengthens me". So it is that by placing all our confidence in God we can undertake the task duty puts before us, and encounter labours and difficulties with courage, perseverance, and peace of mind. Our Lord wishes us to profit and to trade with the gifts He confers on us. He tells us that the wicked and slothful servant was cast out and punished, not for wasting or misusing his lord's money, but for not turning it to account, and leaving it buried, which was done from a cowardly, servile fear, and the want of all confidence and trust in God.

True humility gives strength and courage, and also brings peace to the soul. It is a gift from God and a light from Heaven. Our Saviour says to us: "Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart". He alone can teach it. He blessed this earth with it when He bestowed it on His Blessed Mother and practised it in perfection Himself.

The first degree in the practice of humility teaches us, that if we are true we must be humble; if we are true to God and truthful to ourselves, we must humble ourselves in God's presence and acknowledge our weakness and misery. From the conviction of our nothingness and lowliness, we honour and worship God, obey His law, and observe His commandments, and all the more readily submit to His will and to

His creatures for His sake. The more we know the truth about ourselves, the more consideration we shall have for others. We shall submit to them more easily and be less exacting, as well as more tolerant of and patient with their faults and defects. We shall understand them better when we understand ourselves.

As we advance in the practice of humility to the second degree, we shall aim at conformity with God's will, and strive to have no will but His, avoiding everything and anything that would displease Him, even at any cost, and submitting in a spirit of the deepest reverence and love. As the humble man makes progress in this degree, he despises himself, considers himself inferior to every one, and treats all with due submission, respect, and courtesy. He dreads and shuns praise as so much untruth and dishonesty. He knows that before God he is undeserving of it and has no right to it, therefore he must regard himself either as a fool or an imposter if he accepts it as *his* due.

We must here meet a difficulty that may present itself. It may be asked, Is it just, and in accordance with truth, to think and believe that we are inferior to every one? We readily admit that good and holy souls are far above us, but to put ourselves below, and consider ourselves worse than the greatest sinners and criminals, sounds like exaggeration, and looks as if we were stretching the point too far, even into

falsehood. Now let us look closer into this matter Suppose that the person we prefer ourselves to, and look down upon, happens to have been a great sinner, and guilty of crimes we know we have never committed, still we do not know the present state of his soul. He may have repented and obtained pardon. Simon the Pharisee condemned St. Mary Magdalen in his heart at the moment our Divine Saviour declared her sins were forgiven. Besides, we do not know the dispositions, or the amount of ignorance with regard to what is right and wrong, or perhaps the indeliberateness with which these deeds were done. In the sight of God we may be much more guilty, he may be innocent of many other sins we have committed, and committed against the dictates of conscience and the light of God's grace. We may well believe that if the most depraved soul on earth had received all the gifts, graces, and aids, the instruction and example, the protection and the care, with which we have been blessed from childhood, he would have corresponded to them more faithfully and not wasted them as we have done. So we have more to answer for, as "where much is given, much shall be required". We know our own shortcomings and sins, and the malice and weakness of our own hearts. We do not know so much evil of any one else, and so we may well put ourselves last, and believe ourselves inferior to all.

This third degree of humility is indeed very high perfection, it is a grace that only comes from an ardent, generous, devoted love of God, and a true conviction of our own nothingness and sinfulness. Great and sincere love of God fills the heart with the desire to follow the example of our Blessed Lord, to imitate Him and resemble Him, in labours, in suffering, and in ignominy. The humble soul in this degree not only avoids praise, respect, and honour, but prefers neglect and obscurity. Even the contempt of the *wicked* is desirable for the love of our Divine Saviour, and in the hope of following in His footsteps, of pleasing Him, and of growing in His love more and more until united to Him in eternity.

Self-knowledge comes to our help also in this degree, as in the light of God's love we realize and see more clearly what we really are, we learn to despise ourselves and see we are deserving of condemnation. We do not, therefore, expect the esteem of others, we are willing that all should see us as God sees us. We are content to be despised by the wicked, as in this we are drawn to a nearer resemblance to Jesus Christ Who was so despised.

Humility is acquired by earnest prayer, and the faithful practice of it. These are of course necessary, for the acquisition of all virtue, but most especially for humility, for the most fervent prayer is requisite to give strength to overcome the innate pride of the

human heart, as God's grace alone can subdue it. We should pray for true, courageous, and loving hearts. True, in examining and seeing ourselves as we really are, and in testifying that knowledge in all our acts towards God and man. Courageous in encountering the trials, troubles, and warfare of life with patience and submission. And loving hearts, in fulfilling God's law, and doing His will in all things with distrust of self, but with entire confidence in Him. Exterior acts are also necessary to acquire the habit of humility, such as words and actions. With regard to words, we must carefully avoid saying anything in our own praise, even for the sake of example, or in the hope of edifying others, except in circumstances of extremely rare occurrence, and then we ought to enter deeply into our own nothingness and into the praises of God for His gifts.* And with regard to actions, there are two distinct ways of performing these profitably, first by accepting cheerfully all things which present themselves which are not of our own seeking, and are trying to our self-love and humiliating to us. For instance, the shame and confusion our errors and faults may bring to us, the failure of our undertakings, and also all the inconvenience and annoyance caused by our neglect and thoughtlessness, or through our want of ability and experience. And next, we must bear with meekness and patience all that is said and

* St. Paul, *passim.*

done to us by others which may be hurtful to our pride and wounding to our vanity, all that is uncharitable and unkind, the endurance of severe criticism and censure, and the infliction of rudeness and incivility, whilst we desire and endeavour to serve and oblige all who come within the sphere of our influence. These and such like trials are sent or permitted by God to exercise our humility, so that by availing ourselves of them we may overcome our pride and become meek and humble of heart.

The second way of practising humility is by imposing humbling acts on ourselves, and doing such things voluntarily. When these are any way remarkable so as to draw attention upon us, and the notice of others, they should be avoided as most dangerous to humility, because they are likely to nourish in its stead pride and vanity, at least in the souls of those who are not as yet saints, and in whom we usually find such outward acts to come from a special impulse of Divine grace. The humiliations that God sends are the best and safest for us, if we use them rightly. He knows our defects and where we are likely to fail, and what will do us most good, and He will never try us above our strength. It is important to keep this truth in our minds, for some souls lose courage when told that humiliation is the road to humility. They are deterred from praying for humility, thinking that it is quite the same thing

as to pray for sufferings, and knowing the weakness of their hearts, they dare not do so. Surely this is wronging our Heavenly Father! We ought to feel certain He will never put a burden on us that He will not help us to bear. He will never give us a "stone when we ask for bread," but the more we seek and entreat for humility the more peace and joy He will give our souls.

SIMPLICITY.

True simplicity belongs to the virtue of faith. When faith is firm and strong, simplicity grows and increases, and as faith declines, simplicity declines, for it rests on confidence and trust. Simplicity looks direct to God with full and childlike confidence, having but one thought, to please Him. This produces a singleness of purpose which pervades all our actions, vivifies each of them, giving it a value it would not otherwise possess. In true singleness of purpose there is earnestness, strength, and perseverance. It combines "The strong will and the endeavour," with a high and firm resolve. It also wins from heaven that great gift to the soul of man, forgetfulness of self, which is more than being unselfish, as it betokens a greater amount of grace when we are unmindful of self, than when we overcome our selfish tendencies with an effort. The simple

man does not revert to himself, or think about himself. He looks straight to God, and acts only with the single view of honouring Him and doing His will. and this saves him from many faults and defects in his daily actions. Simplicity is of higher excellence than sincerity. The sincere man may be very honest, truthful, and candid, still the habit of being sincere may centre in himself. He may be ever occupied with the fear that he is misunderstood, or with the dread that he is misinterpreted, or mistaken for what he is not. Whereas simplicity lifts the mind of self and all selfish views to the presence of God, where the brightness of His truth and the light of His love make us forgetful of ourselves but thoughtful of God's honour and mindful of His glory.

The practice or habit of simplicity brings us great blessing for this world and the next, for it leads to the possession of three gifts, the highest and the noblest that the soul of man can enjoy. The union of the heart and mind with God; the knowledge of truth; and the principle of order. First, Simplicity draws the soul direct to God, that it may know His good pleasure and fulfil His will, referring all to Him as our last end, and resting in Him with implicit trust and confidence. Secondly, by looking first to God, we see all things in the light of His truth, we see what they are in regard to Him, His purpose and intentions, and conforming our judgment with

His views, we give everything its true value, and so seek His justice and abide in His truth in thought and action. Thirdly, by giving God the first place in all things and in everything, we form for ourselves the true mariner's compass, which will guide us safely and surely through the voyage of life. It will not only aid us to reach Him, and the haven of our souls, but it will assign and limit all things else to their proper places and preserve them in their proper order. For it leads us to look to the primary and main object of everything, and to make sure that this shall be first attended to and first fulfilled, as far as matters are under our control. This I believe is the true secret and sure way of observing and maintaining order, even in the smallest details of our duty.

The perfection of order manifested in all God's works reveals to us His love of it, and we know we please Him in proportion as we observe it in all we do, for His glory and in His honour. Every soul in every state of life is loved, guarded, and guided by God for the fulfilment of this end, and each individual has special work to do for Him, which if faithful to His law, we shall perform in our duties to Him, to our neighbours, and ourselves according to the decrees of Divine Providence. These duties are various, some seem opposed to each other, and many appear of equal importance. But once

we direct our attention to God, to know His will as our guiding star, then all things fall into their places, one subordinate to the other, and all tending to the perfecting of our life in the state and calling that He designs for us. The desire to do God's will brings us back to the true sense of our existence and the main purpose of our being. By keeping this supreme aim in view in all our actions, it in no way hinders us from giving full and due attention to each separate duty, but on the contrary it makes us more exact, prompt, and faithful. Simplicity makes us straightforward, generous, and unsuspicious. It has a perception and clear instinct of what is false, it discerns deceit more readily, and protects us more securely than worldly prudence or wily wisdom ever can do.

We shall all become perfectly simple at the hour of death, and we shall then recognise its real value when the soul, with one hope and one desire, stands before God in judgment.