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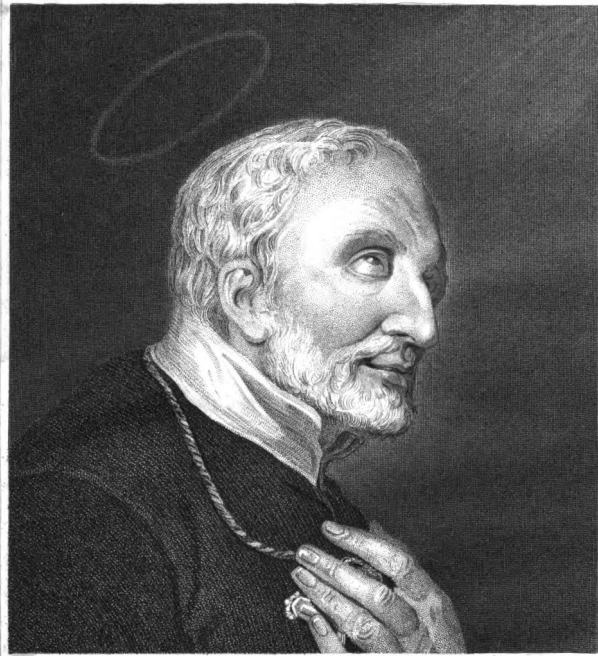
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A Correct Likeness of
+ SAINT ALPHONSUS MARIA DE LIGUORI +

BISHOP OF SAINT AGATHA OF THE GOTHs.

And Founder of the Congregation of the

+ MOST HOLY REDEEMER. +

The Saints and Servants of God.

THE LIFE

OF

S. ALPHONSO MARIA DE LIGUORI,

BISHOP OF ST. AGATHA OF THE GOTHs,

AND FOUNDER OF THE CONGREGATION OF THE MOST HOLY
REDEEMER.

"Gaude Maria Virgo, cunctas hæreses sola interemisti in
universo mundo."—*Antiph. Ecclesie.*

PERMISSU SUPERIORUM.

VOL. I.



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M. D. CCC. XLVIII.

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We hereby approve of this Series of Lives of the Canonized Saints and Servants of God, and recommend it to the faithful of our District, as likely to promote the glory of God, the increase of devotion, and the spread of our holy Religion.

Given at Birmingham, this 29th day of October, 1847.

Thomas
Bishop of Combyopolis

Nicholas
Bishop of Melipohemus

TO
THE REGULAR CLERGY
OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN ENGLAND,
THE CHILDREN
OF ST. BENEDICT AND ST. BERNARD,
ST. DOMINICK AND ST. FRANCIS,
AND THE SONS
OF THE HOLY IGNATIUS,
THE GREAT MASTER OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE,
AND THE NURSING-FATHER OF SAINTS AND MARTYRS,
WHO,
IN THE STRAITNESS AND NEGLECT
OF THEIR UNHONOURED CLOISTERS,
OR THE CHEERLESS SOLITUDE
OF THEIR HIRED LODGING,
HAVE JOYFULLY EMBRACED THE POVERTY OF JESUS,
AND EARNED BY LOVING ZEAL
THE CROWN OF MARTYRDOM,
AND WHO,
THROUGH SCENES OF AWFUL SACRILEGE,
AND TIMES OF BITTER PERSECUTION,
THROUGH THE LONG AND WEARY VISITATION
OF ACTIVE MALICE OR OF COLD CONTEMPT,
HAVE PERPETUATED,
AMONGST THEIR UNWORTHY COUNTRYMEN,
THE BLESSED LINEAGE
OF THEIR HOLY FOUNDERS.

ST. WILFRID'S,
FEAST OF ST. BERNARD,
M. D. CCC. XLVII.

PREFACE.

THE next volume, containing the Life of the Blessed SEBASTIAN of Apparizio, Franciscan Lay-brother, will appear on the 25th of April. The public are requested to excuse the want of punctuality in the publication of this volume, as the delay has been owing to circumstances which no one could control.

Since the Introductory Essay on Canonization was written and in the printer's hands the writer of it has joined the Oratory, and it therefore becomes a duty to state expressly, that no one is responsible for anything in it except the writer himself, and that the Approbation at the beginning of the volume, as will be seen by the wording of it, does not include any expressions of individual opinion contained in notes or prefaces in any of the volumes.

F. W. FABER.

*St. Wilfrid's,
Feast of St. Benedict, 1848.*

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ON
BEATIFICATION, CANONIZATION,
AND
THE PROCESSES OF
THE CONGREGATION OF RITES.

A

TO
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
THE EARL & COUNTESS OF SHREWSBURY,
THIS ESSAY,
WRITTEN AT THEIR SUGGESTION AND REQUEST,
IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED
WITH SENTIMENTS OF DEVOTION AND GRATITUDE
FOR THEIR MORE THAN PARENTAL KINDNESS
IN TIMES OF DIFFICULTY AND TRIAL,
AND FOR THE CONTINUED AND CHEERING EXAMPLE
OF THEIR MANY DOMESTIC VIRTUES,
SO FEELINGLY TESTIFIED
BY THE DAILY BENEDICTIONS OF THE POOR.

ST. WILFRID'S,
FEAST OF OUR BLESSED LADY'S EXPECTATION,
M. D. CCC. XLVII.

ON
BEATIFICATION, CANONIZATION,
AND
THE PROCESSES OF
THE CONGREGATION OF RITES.

THE favourable reception which this Series of the Lives of the Saints has met with, the extensive sale, especially among our Protestant fellow-countrymen, and, so far as we have seen, the uniformly kind favour and indulgent encouragement shown to it by the Catholic press, both of England and America, may perhaps warrant the Editors in venturing a few observations, which would have been premature and out of place before, but have now become due to the continued indulgence of our readers. There are many things which may appear to need some little apology; not only the irregularity of the publication of the early volumes, but also the choice of Lives first put before the public, occasional instances of slovenly translation, ungainly expressions apparently uncatholic from

a too literal adherence to the original, and here and there phrases which in the Catholic language of a Catholic country are easily intelligible, but which may at first sight appear wanting in controversial accuracy. These it is hoped have been already overlooked by our readers; the difficulty of managing so extensive an undertaking, the uncertain coming in of manuscript, and some other private disadvantages, often leave the Editors hardly their own masters; but all which are much less likely to be felt in the succeeding volumes. But there are matters of more importance than this: the very title of the Series and the provisions of the Prospectus naturally raise questions in the minds of many of our good Protestant readers, and perhaps of Catholic laymen as well, which deserve both an answer and a settlement, and upon which Protestants may be glad to have some little information, and be willing to take it not in spirit of controversy, but simply of information drawn from sources which do not generally fall in the line of their reading. It is of these, if we may do so without presumption, that we wish to say something at present; and the tone of generous admiration and ardent sympathy, with which many of the sons of modern Rome, such as St. Charles Borromeo, St. Francis Xavier, St. Francis of Sales, St. Vincent of Paul, and others, are almost invariably spoken of by English writers, warrant us in supposing that the information contained in the following pages will not be unacceptable to our readers. What is canonization? How

is it done? What does it import to a Catholic? How does it differ from beatification? What is meant by the title of Venerable, and by the Holy See decreeing that a man has practised virtue in an heroic degree? What is the amount of authority attaching to each of these acts of the Church, and in what sense are they acts of the Church? What sort of obligation, if any, do they lay Catholics under? What sort of value, considered simply as questions of evidence, have they to others? And what sanction, if any, do the biographies of the saints borrow from the fact, that the Church has made their cultus matter of precept or permission? And what sort of authority do the peculiar formation and jealous scrutiny of the processes give them, simply as human testimony judicially sifted? Something like an answer to these questions will be attempted in the following pages.

There is hardly any study, and certainly no kind of spiritual reading, which calls for more cautious jealousy and scholar-like discretion than the Lives of the Saints; and if it be actually impossible in any particular instance to avoid erring in one of two extremes, it is better to be too backward than too forward in the matter before us. When we pass the boundaries of ordinary life and enter a land of marvels and of strange actions, we must remember that we are on the very ground where delusion and counterfeit work is to be looked for, and we must be careful not to let either general enthusiasm or a particular devotion to a favourite saint, or a

natural tendency to give in to the spirit and genius of romance, allure us for one instant from the analogy of the faith. It is a comparatively trifling mistake to deal out too scanty an allowance of belief to the miraculous gifts with which Almighty God may have favoured one of His chosen servants and vessels of election; but to be beguiled into false devotions or immoderate feelings, to confound the possible with the probable, the probable with the certain, and even the certain with what is matter of faith, is a far more serious affair, essentially injurious to our best spiritual interests, and yet which very easily comes of confounding the admirable with the imitable in the Lives of the Saints. Indiscreet corporal penances, peculiar observances of interior mortification breeding scruples because unsuited to us, a morbid hankering after raptures, ecstasies, and other supernatural gifts, a conceited fancy (perhaps one of the most perilous of delusions) that we are being raised to the higher degrees of mental prayer, affected singularities in good works, disregard and disrespect of our director, as though he misunderstood what God is doing in our souls—these are some of the errors into which an undiscerning study of the Lives of the Saints has led and may lead; and the simple enumeration of them is a sufficient condemnation. What has happened in Catholic countries may occur, though it be less likely, even were the cold atmosphere of circumambient heresy does so much to chill any thing like devotional excess.

But as *corruptio optimi est pessima*, so the very number and danger of the errors into which hagiology may lead, will give us some idea of the value of it as a means of spiritual advancement, and of the consequent dread of it felt by the spirits of evil. That which cannot be abused is good for nothing, said the acute Niebuhr of his own bold canons for interpreting the legends of primitive history; and it would argue a great want of moderation as well as of discriminating judgment, to set aside the study of Saints' Lives altogether, because of the dangers into which an ill-guided and incautious imitation might lead. An intolerant impatience in trying to dispense with what lays us under the troublesome obligations of calmness, prudence, and discretion is generally a symptom of rash judgment, of prejudice greatly to be distrusted, and of an irritable impetuosity which would be very unbecoming in one who should put forward his opinion for others to follow, or who should venture to wield the weapons of spiritual direction. We should beware as much of this unsafe precipitation as of a blind unintelligent credulity, or an imperious desire to force others to believe and like as much as we may happen to believe and like ourselves.

All the Saints and spiritual writers have agreed in no one point so signally as in recommending the perusal of Saints' biographies. The Lives of the Saints, "the Gospel in practice" as he called them, were the constant study of the Blessed Liguori during the period of his

conversion, at the time when he left the bar and vowed to be an Oratorian. To the Lives of the Saints read upon his sick bed by the wounded Ignatius, the Church owes through the mercy of God the conversion of that wonderful man, and the incalculable fruits of his conversion in the labours of his glorious and persecuted society. The story which St. Augustine tells us in his Confessions of the two courtiers of Theodosius, converted all at once by the marvellous Life of St. Anthony, is too well known to be repeated here; and we read* of the Blessed John Colombino, that he led a worldly, covetous, and irreligious life, but that one day, as his quaint old chronicler describes it, he went home from the warehouse more hungry than usual; and because his dinner was a little delayed, he got out of temper and abused both his wife and servant, saying he was in a hurry to go back to his counting-house. "You have too much money, and spend too little, John," said his wife; "why are you putting yourself out in this way? While I am getting things ready, take this book and read a little;" so saying, she gave him a volume containing some Lives of Saints. Giovanni, somewhat nettled, took the book and threw it into the middle of the room, saying, "You think of nothing but legends; I have the warehouse to go to." Presently however his conscience began to prick him; he took the book from the ground, and opening it, lighted upon the Life of

* Vita per Feo Belcari. c. ii.

St. Mary of Egypt. Shortly afterwards his wife called him to dinner: "Wait awhile," replied Giovanni, forgetting his hunger; and on he went. The legend was long, but, as his old biographer observes, there was a celestial melody in it: time sped; his wife looked at him; Giovanni was still reading, and what was more, grace was working. There was conversion in the legend of the penitent of Egypt; the story softened his heart; it was his thought by day, and his dream by night; the churlish Giovanni began to give alms, and always just double of what was asked of him; and to that reading was owing the outburst of the love of God which the Blessed Giovanni spread with his "poor sheep of Jesus," the Gesuati, from one end of Italy to the other, from the Pope at Viterbo down to the swineherd of Sienna.

It would be endless to multiply instances where grace has worked through the study of the Lives of Saints. Probably there are few of our readers who have not experienced it themselves. Let us content ourselves by casting a glance at the last day of the Blessed St. Philip Neri's Life, for he, if any one, can give us safe instruction in the matter. On the morning of Corpus Christi, the day on which God so suddenly took him to his reward, when the holy father had heard the confession of his favourite Francesco della Molara, he said to him, "Francesco, remember that for the future you always come to the Oratory to hear the sermons, and do not forget to read spiritual books, *especially the*

Lives of the Saints.” Aware of his approaching end, he gave his penitents that morning spiritual instructions, with an unusual tenderness mingled with solemnity; and he was particularly urgent about three things, the frequentation of the Sacraments, the attending sermons, and the reading *Lives of the Saints*. After he had said vespers and compline, he spent the afternoon partly in receiving visits, and partly in hearing the *Lives of Saints* read to him, and he had the *Life of San Bernardino of Sienna*, that eloquent lover of *Mary*, read to him twice over. Such were the practice and council of a Saint just as he himself was about to enter into glory.

Indeed, to discard ourselves or discourage in others the reading the *Lives of Saints*, would apparently betoken some disrespect to the Church; for by even the lowest of her sanctions, such as the steps preparatory to the signatura commissionis, she at least calls the attention of her children to the holy men upon whose lives apostolical processes have been or are about to be formed, or who by the custom of the Congregation of Rites are entitled to the name of Venerable; and by the decree of canonization the cultus of the Saint *permitted* in beatification, is made *of precept* to the Universal Church. These clearly are the models she puts before us to admire and imitate; these alone of our fellow exiles in this vale of tears, does she authoritatively pronounce to be now enjoying the Beatific Vision; these are the marked followers of the Lamb, whom the Church calls by name that we may know them

and copy their virtues as well as venerate their relics; and it is worth observing, that hardly ever are mass and office granted to the nameless martyrs or "sancti baptizati," whose bodies are extracted from the catacombs, so strongly does the idea of imitation come out in all that regards the cultus of the Saints. The practice and advices of the Saints themselves, recorded facts, the finger of the Church, the universal teaching of spiritual writers, all unite in pointing out the study of Saints' Lives as a great means of grace and an almost necessary help to advancement in virtue.

We must not however forget the distinction between what is admirable and what is imitable in these records of sanctity; for to lose sight of this distinction would be most dangerous. "Read the Histories and Lives of the Saints," says St. Francis of Sales in his Introduction to a Devout Life*, "in which, as in a looking-glass, you may behold the portraiture of a Christian life, and accommodate their actions to your state of life; for, although several actions of the saints cannot absolutely be imitated by such as live in the midst of the world, yet they may be in some degree followed: for example, you may imitate the solitude of St. Paul, the first hermit, in your spiritual and real retirements; and the extreme poverty of St. Francis by the practices of poverty; and so of the rest. It is true, there are some of their Histories that give

* Pt. ii. xvii. 3, 4.

more light for the conduct of our lives than others, such as the Life of the Blessed Mother Theresa, the Lives of the first Jesuits, that of St. Charles Borromeo, St. Louis, St. Bernard, the Chronicles of St. Francis and several others. There are others again which contain more matter of admiration than imitation; as the Life of St. Mary of Egypt, of St. Simeon Stylites, and the two St. Catherines of Sienna and Genoa, of St. Angela, and such like; *which nevertheless fail not in general to give us a great relish for the love of God.*" This is a very remarkable passage to come from such a writer as St. Francis, and illustrates very well the practical turn of his mind. He would have even the extraordinary actions of the saints, such as the utter solitude of Paul, and the utter poverty of Francis, copied by us in our measure and by accommodation; and few perhaps less versed in spiritual direction, would have mentioned the Chronicles of St. Francis as among the imitable biographies. Indeed the extreme difficulty of drawing the line between the lives imitable and lives admirable is very significant. Father Quadrupani, the Barnabite, good-humouredly laughing at ambitious beginners who envy St. Joseph of Cupertino his marvellous flights in the air, lays great stress on the same distinction, and gives the same advice in his beautiful Documents for tranquillising the scrupulous;* yet even the Life of St. Mary of Egypt, ranked by

* xiii. Lettura Spirituale. 3.

St. Francis among the admirable rather than the imitable lives, was the *frequent* study of the wise and practical St. Philip Neri, and as we have just seen, was the means of the Blessed Colombino's conversion from the niggard worldliness of a hard-hearted tradesman.

We must therefore, while giving scope to a right and proper caution and criticism, repress with equal jealousy imprudent fears, uncritical censures, and cold suspicions. We must take the middle road of kindly and intelligent moderation, and endeavour to ascertain for ourselves safe canons by the aid of which we shall be enabled to maintain this middle ground against both coldness and credulity. We all know too well the numbing effect which the pestilential air of heresy is likely to have upon us; no one who has resided for a while in a Catholic country, but feels and fears the danger when he returns home. It is therefore quite possible that we may become in some little measure tainted by the spirit of unbelief which is around us; we may look at things rather too much as our neighbours look at them, and without being aware of it ourselves. Without our faith being touched, our tone of mind and spirit of devotion *may* be somewhat injured by being lowered; and our best security against this is a humble acknowledgement of its possibility. The danger is indeed becoming every day less and less, because of the abatement of prejudice which there is on every side, and because of the much more patient and kindly spirit which the religious ear-

nestness of those who differ from us causes them to exhibit towards us, our doctrines, and our rites. Where there is so much less readiness to suspect evil and so much more willingness to grant a fair and reasonable hearing, we are under less temptation to withhold a more simple, natural, full, and genuine expression of our sentiments, unchecked by a continual dread of ill-natured misinterpretation. Still it may be well for us to see what this temper might come to, if indulged; the picture is happily an imaginary one, for the gift of faith and the grace of the Sacraments stay the plague at every turn. Nevertheless it may be profitable to see what principles, which an unwary son of the church might give a lodging to in his mind, would soon produce if they could obtain an unhindered development for themselves. If we get a clear idea of this, it will throw no little light upon the questions which remain for our future consideration.

It must of course be an object of the utmost importance to every loving son of the Church, to have, not his understanding only, but his feelings, taste, and devotional yearnings in harmony with the genius and temper of his spiritual Mother. Indeed, without this it seems impossible for a man to achieve anything great for his neighbour, or to advance himself in the path of Christian perfection. Short of heresy, at more or less remote distances from it in different cases, we are all liable to a cold, dry, hard, doubting temper, which is always standing on

the defensive as though it was going to be robbed of some portion of its power of disbelieving, as though more were about to be exacted from it in the way of credulity than is absolutely necessary for salvation. This temper is most injurious to true piety, and most dangerous to the soul, as may be readily perceived if men will only reflect how very far removed it is from the disposition of a child, the model which our Redeemer puts before us in the Gospel. But persons of this turn of mind, if they gave in to it, would never be content with keeping their own little treasure of faith safely under lock and key; they would become strongly impressed with the idea, that they have a mission to prevent others from believing one atom more than they believe themselves; the whole world in their view would be running headlong into superstition, and they called on by a duty wholly self-imposed to arrest this universal deluge of credulity. It would actually fret them to see any one else believing, and visibly enjoying the belief, of what is not positively and penally *de fide*. Outside the Church this temper is Protestantism, graduating down almost to naked unbelief; inside the Church it would be the same disease stripped of its fatal power, like smallpox by the charm of vaccination. The grace of the Sacraments and Communion with the body of Christ divest it of its malignant efficacy, and leave it simply as a weakening and disastrous affliction of the soul. The spiritual danger of thus "making a shrew of the Church,"

as the Anglican Laud somewhat quaintly words it, was most clearly perceived by the holy patriarch Ignatius, and led him to append to his Book of Spiritual Exercises those eighteen rules, *Ad sentiendum cum ecclesia*, whereby a man might keep himself in an *orthodox humour*, so to speak, as well as in the orthodox faith. There is perhaps no part of that marvellous little book in which the Saint's supernatural gift of discernment is more visible than in those eighteen pithy rules; and this may be seen from the fact, that no imitation of Catholic doctrine and ritual outside the Church, although it might be put in apparent harmony with formal statements of doctrine, could be tortured into such a shape as would fit these rules, and this has been known to have been in one instance a source of uneasiness leading ultimately to conversion.

Now it is clear that there are in the Catholic Church, independent of the dogmas which are actually *de fide*, and which a man must receive or become formally heretical, a great number of important doctrines which are so true, that it is a moot point among Catholic doctors whether they are not *de fide*, a number which are *proximæ fidei*, a number which are certain because *de fide ecclesiastica*, as it is called, many which are commonly received, many which find place in the offices of the Church, many which are "pious," many which the greater number of Saints held, many to which, expressed in certain devotions, the Church accords liberal indulgences, many which are symbolized in certain

ritual acts authorized by the Church, many which form the groundwork of approved customs in religious orders, many the denial of which has been stigmatized by universities and theologians, as scandalous and temerarious, and savouring of heresy. Now how could a man be considered in harmony with the Church, supposing he rejected all or many of these things? Must he not be forfeiting no little portion of religious truth? Must he not be allowing no little of the spirit of the Church to escape him? Must he not be guilty of as monstrous an act of private judgment as a man can commit short of actual overleaping the limits of formal heresy? We hear of holy men who by throwing themselves heart and soul, like children, into the system of the Church, acquired such an instinct for true doctrine, that they could reject subtle errors when propounded to them, even though they had no knowledge of dogmatic theology. But it is indeed most true that there may be implicit false doctrine as well as explicit heresy, or, in other words, that there may be material heresy, which the goodness of God prevents from becoming formal; and this slow-heartedness to believe, while it arrays a false and illegitimate discretion against all that is generous and ennobling in the temper of faith, may run into material heresy much sooner than people are aware. Men have a great itching to obtain the reputation of being safe, and to be slow always looks like being safe, and as the eye of the multitude does not go deeper than

the look, this character is very cheaply acquired. Few have any intelligible and internally recognized principles by which they moderate the judgments of their understanding; in most cases they merely aim at a point which seems tolerably equidistant from two extremes, as if truth resided in a fixed and material mean; in this process possible and probable truths, possible and probable aids to devotion, possible and probable gifts of God may be sacrificed; but where the conscience does not take pains to pay an habitual homage to truth for its own sake, it is astonishing how blunt the perception of the value of these things becomes. Catholics who are in the habit of practising meditation, however loudly they may be accused of superstitious tendencies, are in reality not only quite as accurate as others, but even more accurate, in distinguishing between what is actually necessary to be believed and what is not; witness the continual bandying about of the words *heretic* and *heresy* among others, and the comparatively rare use of them among Catholics, as applied at least to differences of opinion one with another. Catholics take much pains to ascertain the exact degree of authority and probability attaching to each sacred doctrine or pious opinion, because all truth countenanced by the Church is to them a solemn thing, from God, and of unknown import to their souls. Charity also would fain be saved the pain of condemnation when and where she can. Thoughtful people must see that the Church's gift of infallibility affects in a certain

way and to a certain amount all the permitted or favoured doctrines which she allows or encourages her children to embrace; just as if St. Peter or St. Paul had given any uninspired counsels to their penitents, they would not be quite like the counsels of a common Saint, although they might not be inspired; and this holds without at all meaning to establish any parity between inspiration and infallibility. Men have their souls to save, and they are never in so sure a way as when they are in childlike agreement and harmony, not with the *de fide* definitions alone (although that is *the* essential point) but with the current doctrines, pious opinions, encouraged usages, indulgenced devotions, and significant ritual of Mother Church.

All this applies very strongly to the study of the Lives of the canonized Saints, and to the degree of influence which it is safe and well to let those lives have over our doctrinal opinions and ascetic practices. It is then of no little importance that we should know what amount of authority the decrees of canonization possess, and how far they have power to oblige the faith of Catholics; because otherwise we might run into errors on both sides. On the one hand we might tamper with the great prerogative of infallibility, and on the other confound truth with probability, and get superstition out of the admixture. For let us see how the case stands. Every one will admit that there is an immense body of direct or indirect teaching in these biographies, bearing in the way of illustration at

least, if not of proof, upon the commonly received doctrines in the schools of theology. A man need not have gone deeper than Bellarmine in his reading to perceive this. A whole corpus of doctrine and practice might be drawn up out of them; and as a matter of fact, great use is made of them as soon as ever men come to teach doctrine or ascetics in a practical way. Almost all the great works of catechetical instruction are adorned by examples drawn from the Lives of the Saints; and the same remark will apply to a considerable proportion of our most classical books of devotion. Some of this teaching consists in beautiful enforcements and exemplifications of truths already taught us by authority; some adds its weight to questions left open to dispute in the Catholic schools, and inclines the balance in this or that direction; some forms the actual foundation of "pious opinions" among the faithful, or aids in propagating new devotions, as St. Theresa gave at least quite a fresh stimulus to the devotion to St. Joseph,* and the venerable Margaret Mary Alacoque, and F. Colombiere to that of the Sacred Heart;† even the miracles themselves are in many instances closely connected with doctrine. The truth of all

* The first public appearance of this devotion was in the Confraternity of Bachelors at Avignon: and it is said to have been first propagated by Gregory XI. in the fourteenth century, in the ancient church of St. Agricola at Avignon.

† Such at least is the common opinion; but in the life of F. Eudes, a posthumous work of the Jesuit de Montigny, the origin of this devotion is referred to F. Eudes. Liv. x. p. 366. note.

this may at once be shown by a few examples. St. Philip Neri, previous to the reformed discipline of the Council of Trent, miraculously discovers a youth to be in priest's orders by the shining of the sacerdotal *character* on his forehead. St. Catherine of Bologna assures us, and her words are quoted in almost countless treatises of devotion, that she gained whatever she wished through the intercession of the holy souls in purgatory; yet this appears *prima facie* opposed to the teaching of St. Thomas. The question of the safety and propriety of the peculiar devotions to the Sacred Humanity of Jesus, which are found such stumbling-blocks by those who are not Catholics, and have been so successfully propagated by the sons of St. Ignatius, is considered as set at rest in no slight degree by the authority of St. Theresa, and the supernatural lights she received on the subject. From the Life of St. Francis Jerome we gain a fearful knowledge of the intensity of the pains of purgatory; from that of St. Stanislas Kostka we are piously led to believe that the great feasts of the Church Militant are in some way noted in the Church Triumphant; and from that of the B. Henry Suso we obtain a most vivid idea of the refreshment of the adorable sacrifice of the Mass to the souls in purgatory. So from other Lives we learn the peculiar power which certain prayers appear to have in heaven; for example, the well-known instance of the Antiphon, *Sub tuum præsidium confugimus*, before the Litany of Loreto, and the words *Eja ergo advocata nostra* in the *Salve*

Regina, as was revealed to St. Gertrude; and from the Life of the venerable Benedict Joseph we learn, that a life of perpetual pilgrimage to holy shrines, may even in these self-wise days be, with proper vocation, acceptable to Almighty God.

Instances might be multiplied almost ad infinitum, but these will suffice. Now it is plain that all this cannot be disposed of in any brief or contemptuous way; the attention, the conscientious deliberative attention, of a Catholic must be arrested by it, and perhaps the more he lives in the practice of the presence of God, the more time he spends in the peaceful region of prayer, the less will he be inclined to handle these things in a summary and disrespectful way. Can he safely reject as false, or at least not worth a thought, everything which is not positively *de fide*? Certainly not: it would be the most unreasoning indiscretion, the most impatient intellectual rashness that could be conceived. It would be the case of a man whose prime care was, not to be in harmony with the Church, but just to turn the corner of formal heresy by an adroit and perilous nicety: it would be the case of a man, who through culpable idleness and still more culpable fretfulness of intellect, declined the toil and thought and humble submission to the authority of great and good men which the matter required and exacted, and having thus come to a decision by a faulty moral process, he would be found, as is usual, bigoted in his own opinion, and a loud and irritable

tensor of those whose opposite conduct appeared to contradict his own.

What then would be the course which a wise and pious discretion would pursue? First of all a man would lay down the authoritative teaching of the Church as his sole *rule*, his only really divine one; and while he would not venture to assert that everything besides that was false, he would most unhesitatingly assert that everything which contradicted that was beyond all controversy false; and secondly, that whatever even *seemed* the least out of harmony with the *rule* was on no account to be received, until the apparent discrepancy was reconciled in some way or other; and thirdly, that in no subject-matter would he evince more slowness, more jealousy, more suspicion, than in the case of these apparent discrepancies with authorized teaching; and fourthly, that the more exclusively such matters rested on visions, revelations, prophecies, and the like, all the more cautious would he be in receiving them, because he would feel himself within the special province of spiritual delusions. These canons must surely recommend themselves to every one, not as very deep certainly, but as safe and orthodox, inasmuch as they lead us to measure everything by its greater or less analogy with the authoritative teaching of the Church, and admit of a prudent jealousy as ballast to anything like a precipitate judgment or as a spur to a lazy credulity. We have before us as a *fact* the existence of a very extensive and singularly influential department of Catholic litera-

ture, the Lives of the Saints, and we have questions rising out of it which must be dealt with. It is not then a difficulty created for the mere pleasure of removing it; we find it ready for us, and pressing upon us. Starting therefore with these canons, and desiring no greater residuum of matter to be believed than these shall leave us, let us try to state the case of this voluminous literature, and to obtain more minute and practical rules for our guidance in allowing ourselves to be influenced by the Lives of the Saints.

First for the statement of the case; for in this matter, as in most others, a clear statement brings us half way to a conclusion. In opening the Lives of holy men, 1. canonized, 2. beatified, 3. of whom the Church has pronounced that they practised virtue in an heroic degree, and 4. who are considered commonly among Catholics as having died in the odour of sanctity, and consequently as candidates, to use a low word, for the honours of canonization—in opening the Lives of these men there two things especially which strike us. First, the constant, and in some instances, as in that of St. Joseph of Cupertino, almost unconscious exercise of miraculous powers, the occurrence of raptures, visions, bodily transformations, power over demons, the intermingling of the visible and invisible worlds, the reading of the secrets of the heart, the gift of bilocation, as it is called, and the like: these seem to surround the servant of God like an atmosphere, so that we have at first some little difficulty in getting at his common character. He seems to be-

long to a different order from ourselves ; we have by an effort to strip him of his miraculous powers and gifts *gratis data* in order to discern between the admirable and the imitable. These marvels are to some quite unedifying, nay, almost shock and startle them ; in others, as in St. Francis of Sales already quoted, they breed a more intense love of God, a much livelier apprehension of the mysteries of the faith, a generous contempt of the world and its little politics, a holy indifference to calumny and wrong, and a more efficacious desire to nerve themselves up for penance and the hard practices of interior mortification and the stony ascents of Christian perfection. Whether the fault is in the marvels for *giving* people disedification, or people are in fault for *taking* disedification from them, anyhow there the marvels are ; and we are now only dealing with facts as we find them.

The second thing we observe in the Lives of these servants of God is a most extensive class of actions, totally opposed to the *common* rules of human prudence, and even repugnant to the prejudices of flesh and blood, as savouring of childishness, or indiscretion, or a want of sobriety or moderation, or as simply capricious. We may take as example St. Francis Borgia, allowing his face to be spit upon all night ; St. Peter Martyr letting himself be imprisoned and remain for three years under a scandalous charge of impurity, which he might have dispelled by a word ; St. John of God feigning himself mad ; St. Philip Neri playing the fool, as men would call

it, in front of Chiesa Nuova, or reading light books to give foreigners a low opinion of him; Saints Marina and Theodora disguising themselves as men, and afterwards allowing children to be fathered on them without discovering the imposture; Brother Juniper, the Franciscan, permitting himself to be taken to the gibbet as a murderer, and only delivered by a singular intervention of Providence. These are specimens of the kind of actions alluded to, and instances might be almost infinitely multiplied. Now it must be borne in mind that we are not apologizing for these actions, still less holding them up as imitable; the latter proceeding would be indiscreet, the former impertinent; we are only noting the fact, that they occur abundantly, and so far as we have seen, in *every* Life of the servants of God whose causes have come before the Congregation of Rites. It is simply to the undeniable and significant *fact* that we desire to call attention at present.

Furthermore it must be remembered, that these extraordinary actions, seemingly so opposed to the dictates of prudence, are by no means easily or lightly admitted by the Sacred Congregation in the causes of beatification and canonization. To refer them to a special instinct of the Holy Ghost is not a mere invention of idleness or a refuge of uncritical credulity. On the contrary, they are submitted to a most rigid examination; causes are often delayed because of them, and a discussion takes place on the practice of the cardinal virtue of prudence as

exhibited by the servant of God whose cause is under consideration. Thus, when Canon Zanotti, misled by the spurious acts of St. Proculus, the patron of Bologna, referred his alleged homicide of Marinus to a special instinct of the Holy Ghost, Benedict XIV.,* in showing the spuriousness of the acts, speaks very strongly of the duty of trying every other method of explanation, before the known sanctity of a Saint induces us to refer any of his extraordinary actions to a special instinct of the Holy Ghost. In the same way the Roman Sophronia, who killed herself during the persecution of Maxentius, is not reckoned among the Saints, because, as Baillet says, the Church had no proof of this being an inspiration; so that, although in the sight of God, who knows the heart, she might be a martyr, she could not be so before the Church, who does not judge the secrets of hearts. St. Austin also tells us that Mensurius of Carthage would not count as martyrs those who imprudently and without special call were the cause of their own martyrdom. When the cause of the Blessed Sebastian of Apparizio came before the Congregation, the Promoter of the Faith objected to his having been twice married, and yet in both unions lived in continence, especially as no proof was offered of his wives having consented to this, as there was in the case of St. Bridget and

* De Canon, iii. 18. *martyris repugnantia*, 8, 9. As we follow Benedict XIV. throughout we shall not load the pages with references, but content ourselves with this general acknowledgement.

Ulfo for a time ; so that it seemed rather a reprehensible singularity and contrary to the sacrament of matrimony, than an instance of heroic purity. In consequence of this the cause was stopped, and the case referred to the three universities of Paris, Padua, and Salamanca. The decision was in favour of Sebastian ; the cause proceeded and he was beatified. In like manner the postulators in the cause of the Blessed Peter Forier had to contend with the Promoter of the Faith on behalf of his prudence in recommending continence to several married persons. On the other hand the martyrdom of St. Emmeram of Ratisbon, related by Baronius (ad ann. 702), offers a most striking example of the prudence which the Church requires in those for whom the honours of canonization are claimed. When he had been most cruelly mutilated he asked his priest Vitalis to bring him some cold water to refresh him ; the priest, a thoroughgoing rigorist, and as such as deficient in prudence as in affectionateness, answered, that he ought rather to desire death than refreshment ; but St. Emmeram rejoined that no one ought to hasten to death, but rather to wish it should be deferred, that our weakness may have more space wherein to do penance. In harmony with this, the Church always in the case of her martyrs institutes a most rigid inquiry into the preparation they made for martyrdom, whether they were baptised or went to confession and received the Communion if they could, and the like, as we see in the causes of

St. John Nepomuc, St. Fidelis of Sigmaringa, and the twenty-six martyrs of Japan, and any proof of venturous negligence in these respects would immediately stop the cause. If then the extraordinary actions of the Saints, and the conformity of even martyrs at the very time of martyrdom to the ordinary obligations of Catholics, are submitted to such a jealous and suspecting rigour, our confidence surely must be proportionably heightened when the servants of God have passed the sacred ordeal, and are placed on the altars of the church for the admiration and imitation of the faithful. For, let it be observed once for all, and borne in mind throughout, the judicious Benedict XIV., in giving reasons why baptized children, though martyrs, should not ordinarily be canonized, says, "beatifications and canonizations are not solemnized only that we may have authorized* intercessors with God, but also that we may imitate the deeds of those so canonized, and no *ratio imitandi* can be drawn from the case of infants." In the same way Pius VI., when he beatified Andrea Ibernou, a Franciscan lay-brother, in 1791, says in his decree, "It is the duty of Christians to imitate what they venerate; we therefore think it our duty to hold out to you the Blessed Andrea Ibernou for your veneration, and entreat you to imitate his virtues,"† It is quite necessary to

* *Authorized*, i. e. to us and for our devotions, not as if the decision of the Church affected a *comprehensor* further than by increasing his accidental glory.

† Charles Butler in vit ejusd.

remember that imitation, not admiration, is the object of the Church in canonizing Saints; it is one great part of her office as regards the *morals* of the faithful. This must materially influence our view of the marvellous part of the Saints' Lives, inasmuch as it shows that at least these extraordinary and irregular actions would operate against their canonization rather than advance it.

Extraordinary however as this class of the Saints' actions must be considered, we shall find that even those very actions are not mere objects of admiration, but convey lessons and propose models to all who are aiming at advancement in the spiritual life. Let us open the most accredited books of devotion and spiritual direction, and see in what sort of way they are handled there; for their appearance in such quarters is very much connected with the whole question now under consideration. Take for example the noted *Catechisme Spirituel* of F. Surin; * speaking of true wisdom he says, "Q. In what does true wisdom consist? A. In ruling our judgments according to the common sense of the Saints. Q. What do you understand by the common sense of the Saints? A. I understand what they commonly think of the maxims of the Gospel, and the ideas which they have of perfection. Q. What then are the sources of true wisdom? A. The Gospel, the writings of the Saints, their senti-

* Vol. 1. p. viii. c. 1.

ments and their conduct, when all of them or nearly all of them, agree in thinking in the same way of certain points of perfection: for example, of the practice of gentleness, of self-contempt, and of the virtues about which we have spoken in the chapter on the Evangelical Counsels. For, although the Saints differ very much from each other, looked at with reference to their outward conduct, they resemble each other strikingly in their ideas of virtue, and in their manner of practising it, so that it is evident they are all animated by one spirit. This assemblage of ideas, maxims, and practices, in which the Saints agree, form what we call true wisdom. It has two essential characteristics; the one is—to be opposed to human prudence to such a degree as to look to men's eyes like folly: and the second is—to be so deep and hidden, that even the majority of those who practise virtue do not *comprehend* it, although no one who lives according to the spirit of Christianity can be altogether ignorant of it. Q. Have you no example by which you can make us understand wherein this hidden wisdom consists? A. There are none more marked than those of St. Francis and St. Ignatius. They loved contempt to such a degree, that they wished to pass for fools, and to perform actions which might earn that title for them; and although they had the precaution to warn us not to follow instincts of this sort without great reasons involving the glory of God, it is nevertheless true that they regarded this practice as an excellent

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degree of perfection, and that in this matter their opinion was conformable to that of the rest of the Saints. There are several other points in this wisdom which the greater part of mankind has no relish for: for example, taking affronts and insults quietly, without seeking reparation for them. Q. Besides the Gospel and the writings of the Saints, is there no other living rule on which we could form ourselves so as to acquire this wisdom? A. Among the persons with whom we live, the common opinion of those who pass in the minds of the public for perfect may serve as a law and sure rule in this matter. For it generally happens that those persons whom we consider truly mortified, disinterested, and wholly given up to piety, all think alike; and without knowing each other, agree perfectly in the judgments they pass on the practice of virtue. It is in fact because they are all breathing the same air of sanctity, and are interiorly instructed in the same school, which is that of Jesus Christ. These persons, who live according to the maxims of the Gospel, may be regarded as the depositories and interpreters of the minds of the Saints, and we may apply to them what our Lord has said of himself, They who shall do the Will of My Father, shall know if this doctrine be of God. Let us then, who wish to acquire the true wisdom, consult the opinion of the persons of whom we have spoken. As to men of learning and talent, if their wisdom is not based upon the mortification and abnegation of the Gospel, they

may indeed serve well for a rule in matters of faith and theology; but it would not be always safe to follow their opinion in the practice of this hidden wisdom which Jesus Christ has taught, and which the Saints alone have relished. In fact, we see that scholars are so little agreed among themselves (upon questions of this sort) and pass such conflicting judgments on matters of spirituality, that no great account is to be made of what they say of it."

These two things then, this constant dealing with the supernatural, and this multitude of actions seemingly repugnant to human prudence and social conventions, are just the distinguishing characteristics of these servants of God, marked out for the honours of ecclesiastical cultus. We boldly appeal to those who have any acquaintance with the voluminous literature of modern hagiology, if these two classes do not contain within themselves almost every discernible difference between ordinarily pious Catholics, and those whom the Church puts upon the altars for the veneration of the faithful. Theologically speaking, the logical differentia of a saint is the *heroicity* of his virtues:* but then when we come to see what this heroicity is and wherein it consists, we find that the special

* This must not be understood to mean that heroic virtue is specifically different from non-heroic virtue; this would be contrary to the consentient doctrine of St. Thomas, Scotus, and Suarez. The view taken in the text, in order to obtain an intelligible classification which would separate saints from ordinarily pious Catholics, is of course not to be confounded with the philosophical question of the *specific difference* of heroic virtue.

exhibitions of it are in these extraordinary actions, and the special seals of it the miracles wrought through the saints themselves or through their relics. The commonly received scholastic definition of heroicity implies as much as this; *virtus heroica est ille virtutis gradus, perfectio, seu fulgor, et excellentia, quæ facit, ut homo circa materiam illius virtutis, supra communem aliorum hominum operandi modum operetur, et in hoc Deo similis sit.** It is therefore no exaggeration (however it may seem so) to say that in order to get the *species* "Saint" out of the *genus* "good Catholic," the differentia must consist of the combination of the two things here mentioned. Add these things to a "good Catholic," and he becomes the similitude of one of those whom the Church holds up for our cultus; remove these things, and he sinks again to the level of an ordinarily pious Catholic; for the heroicity of his virtues is, we repeat, found either in the seal God has set to his practice of them, and this is by the gift of miracles, or in these apparently strange actions, which are then to be regarded as the fruits of a special instinct of the Holy Ghost. Apply this rule, for instance, to the Lives of many of those noble French ecclesiastics who were contemporaries of St. Vincent of Paul, and founders of those numerous missionary Congregations which so wonderfully revived the ancient Ambrosian spirit of the clergy. Some of them, however holy,

* Card. Lauria 1. 3. sent. tom. 2. disp. 32. n. 27. ap. Scaramell.

have quite a different aspect from those whom the Church inscribes in the catalogue of the saints, while others, such as M. Olier, the founder of St. Sulpice, seem only to require the judicial solemnities to make them of the fraternity of the canonized. Any one versed in the biographies of the saints will at once admit the truth of this; they know almost beforehand the kind of actions which they will perform; their mind is constantly suggesting parallels from the Lives of other saints; the perfect similitude and consistency of the whole is quite familiar to them, so that they know "the kind of thing," to use a forcible vulgarism, to look for when they open the book. In a word, to repeat what was said before, the marvellous and the eccentric, as the foolish wisdom of the world would call them, form the logical differentia by which we acquire the species "Saint;" and this, independent of the conclusions which may be drawn from it, is extremely striking, and merits a serious and prolonged consideration.

But there is also another point which should not be forgotten, and which seems to render the isolation of the saintly character more complete and impressive. For if the *differentia* of the Saints is to be found in the combination of the marvellous and the eccentric, suffering, and of all sufferings especially the persecution and opposition of good men, seems to be an *inseparable accident* of sanctity, so soon as and so far as it is heroic. It was necessary that Christ should suffer and so enter into His glory, is in

its measure applicable to His saints. Hence an inquiry into this very thing forms part of the work of the Congregation of Rites. Not only are the sicknesses of the servant of God and the ordinary afflictions of his life inquired into, and the manner in which he bore them, but the falling away of his friends, the ridicule of the world, and the opposition of even good men, are investigated with special care, and that too while the dubium about his virtues is under consideration, as though these afflictions and thwartings were, so to speak, authentications which Providence is sure to give to heroic virtue, and of even a more convincing nature than miracles, seeing that the investigation of these cannot be entered upon until the dubium on the virtues has been solved and set at rest. Yet it is plain that these things add greatly to the likelihood of the Saint's character being misunderstood, or giving offence at first sight; they impart a look of strangeness to his life; they naturally make us suspect singularity, or self-will, or at least a want of discretion in not keeping in favour with virtuous persons and authorities. Many an objection of this sort which is made by readers, is nothing more than a repetition, although unconscious, of the shrewd shifts of the promoter of the faith, which he has urged out of a sense of duty, and which the postulaters have answered and refuted to the satisfaction of the acuteness and jealousy of the Sacred Congregation. A very limited acquaintance with Acts of Canonization will enable a man to

see how true this is, and how seldom we can hear now from critics in the world even a tolerably plausible objection to the actions of a Saint, which has not been already far better urged and very completely answered in the Congregation.

We read in the Lives of the Saints of plans and actions which offend many even pious readers; they disapprove of them in themselves, they disapprove still more of their being held up either to the admiration or imitation of the faithful. Now if when the Saints themselves were alive, redolent with the odour of their sanctity, the vividness of their bright example and the solemn authentication of their frequent miracles fresh upon them and around them—if at that time there was almost a general disapprobation of their plans and modes of action, as in the case of St. Alphonso Liguori, when he founded his Congregation, if, as again St. Alphonso was, they were left persisting in a kind of proud-looking isolation, if even popes and bishops were against them, and they gave way only to the pressure of actual command, if the pious were scandalized, and the holy Inquisition interfered, if calumny seemed for the while truth, and truth hypocrisy, if these wonderful men also went so far as to consider this opposition and offence the best proof they could have that their work was the Will of God, as St. Philip Neri and our good bishop Challoner are said often to have refused to join in a work because it was not opposed by good kind of men, if all this took place

where they were personally concerned, must not something of the same sort be always expected towards their Lives, especially if those Lives be faithful and minute? And will not this easily account for the diversity of opinion and the somewhat offended temper of objection which Saints' Lives have generally elicited? What the unkindly world, and the remaining worldliness in the ordinary faithful, found so uncongenial in the living Saints, will still be uncongenial in their Lives; although of course, in the case of Catholics, the intervention of the Church and the honours she has decreed to the Saint, will soften and diminish this, and will naturally make criticism less positive and more modest.

Yet after all the fact remains: these are just the cases in which there *has been* this intervention of the Church; it is exactly these men and men like them whom the Church has singled out with her unerring instinct for canonization; men who have had to confront this opposition, jealousy, thwarting, and suspicion of the good, and who have passed through the terrific ordeal of this heart-breaking persecution; and this fact, without pushing it even as far as we might, will be found most difficult of explanation on any hypothesis of adversaries, and yet most imperiously requires one at their hands.

Let us now take some instances, in order that we may not lie open to a charge of exaggeration. In the second report of the Auditors of the Rota, in the cause of St. Theresa, we read that she was so completely abandoned by every

one, that nobody would even hear her confessions. The auditors tell us of St. John of God and St. Jerome Emiliani, that they were counted and treated as mad; Surius tells us almost the same of St. Louis King of France. As to persecutions from heathen and heretics, we know what St. Francis Xavier suffered in India, St. James de la Marche from the Fraticelli, St. Pascal Baylon from the Huguenots, and St. Didacus in the Canaries; and for examples of persecution from bad Catholics, we have the priest Florentinus trying to poison St. Benedict, as St. Gregory tells us, the spite of Frate Elia against St. Francis and St. Anthony of Padua, the sufferings of St. Vincent Ferrer, St. Theresa, St. Charles Borromeo, and particularly the cruel persecutions which St. John of the Cross underwent in his great enterprise of reforming the Carmelite Order: to say nothing of the martyrdoms of St. John Nepomuc, and our own St. Thomas. But it is more to our purpose to adduce instances of the Saints being persecuted by good men, whom God, for their own humiliation and the merit of His servant, allowed to mistake the Saint, or to be deceived by calumny. St. Philip Neri was persecuted by Roman prelates under Paul IV. and St. Pius V.; his pilgrimages to the Seven Churches were put down to vain-glory or a seditious humour, and he was disgraced. St. Alphonso Liguori, after having been persecuted by Father Ripa and made the laughing-stock of Naples, was no sooner deserted by his first companions, Mandarini and others,

at Scala, than he was denounced by name from the pulpits of the capital as a warning to other self-sufficient dreamers. St. Theresa was denounced to the Inquisition, and so was St. Ignatius. The venerable abbot Berrer was deposed by a delegate of the Holy See, and bore his unjust punishment with the utmost patience for seven years. The glorious St. Joseph Calasanctius, whose Life is such a study for these times, was summoned before the Inquisition; he was deprived of his office of general; his order was abolished and reduced to a simple Congregation, and was not restored until after his death by Clement IX. All this was in Rome itself, and under the eyes of Sovereign Pontiffs, whose officials, without any fault of their own or any want of justice, were deceived by a malicious conspiracy; and we are actually told that so frequent and grievous were the persecutions which St. Joseph Calasanctius underwent from good men and prelates in authority, that the postulaters were more than once on the point of giving the cause up in despair, such tedious difficulty had they to make their ground good against the promoter of the faith. In like manner Leo IX. was imposed upon and set against St. Peter Damian; and St. Gregory tells us that the Holy See gave ear to the calumniators of St. Equitius, who accused him of preaching without authority. Nay, even the absence of this kind of persecution seems to have amounted almost to an objection in the case of St. Francesca Romana; it was hinted that

she was entering into her glory without this suffering; though, as every one knows, it pleased God to allow her to be subjected to frightful assaults of the evil one, which the auditors actually put in the place of other persecutions, and which may be seen at length in the second March volume of the Bollandists. Thus, as Benedict XIV. remarks, in all causes it is to be "sedulously inquired whether the servants of God suffered distresses, and what sort of distresses, and with what patience and charity they bore them."

What has been said in the preceding paragraphs must not however be pushed too far, that is, beyond the point for which there is evidence, or be understood in too exclusive a sense. It certainly does seem that the union of extraordinary actions with the frequent exercise of miraculous powers forms the differentia constituting the species *Saint*, that in a great multitude of cases, perhaps the majority, the heroicity of a virtue renders it misunderstood by those who have not a spiritual discernment, so that heroicity and singularity may sometimes be apparently and accidentally synonymous, and that the jealous suspecting opposition of good men is attached in the manner of an inseparable accident to the character of heroic virtue. But it must be remembered that this is not all; this does not embrace the entire character of a Saint; he is not merely an assemblage of eccentricities, nor is it the object of what has been said to hold him up as such. These are the prominen-

ces in which his heroism juts out beyond the level of ordinary attainments, and therefore they are precisely the things by which we know him, but they are not his sum and substance. They cannot even be proceeded to in his cause until the virtuous discharge of his relative duties has been examined. Nay, in everything peculiar to or important in his particular station in life, an heroic degree of virtue is expected. If he has published any works or left manuscripts behind, they undergo a rigorous revision, and that of a most minute kind; and although their passing that revision does not imply any such approbation of the Holy See as that a man may not modestly impugn the doctrine of a Saint, yet it aids greatly towards the formation of our judgment about him. Thus it was objected in the Congregation as a hinderance in the cause of St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi, that in her revelations our Lord was said to have been crucified with three nails; whereas St. Bridget had taught, and it was the more common and Catholic opinion, that He was crucified with four. The uncertainty about the relics of the holy nails of course throws no light upon the question, as it is supposed that some of them were not used to affix the Holy Body, but to fasten the title, or in the workmanship of the cross itself. Neither again does the impression of three nails on the heart of St. Clare of Montefalco go towards any settlement of the question, because, as the Bollandists and Cornelius Curtius tell us, raptures may be in

their substance divine, and yet in their circumstances conformed to species naturally perceived: and it is on this principle we must explain the circumstantial discrepancies we find in visions and ecstasies following on fervent meditations of the Passion, and the seeming contradictions between such books, for example, as those of St. Bridget and Sister Emmerich.* Even reported sayings and sermons of a servant of God are scrutinized when his cause comes before the Congregation. For instance: the Dominicans affirmed that the blood which our Lord shed during the triduo of His Passion remained hypostatically united to His divinity; † the Fran-

* It should also be remembered that when the Holy See approves of the private revelations of St. Hildegarde, St. Bridget, and St. Catherine of Sienna, she only claims our assent on *human*, not divine, faith. The words in Cardinal à Turrecremata's approbation of St. Bridget's revelations are, "that they can be read in Church in the same way the books of other doctors, and the histories and legends of the Saints." See also Melchior Canus. 12. 3. and Cajetan, Martinus del Rio ap. Azeved.

† Quod Verbum semel assumpsit nunquam dimisit, moraliter loquendo de partibus ad integritatem corporis necessariis, C. physice loquendo de particulis minimis sine quibus stat integrum corpus, N. Ita intelligendus venit D. Th. inf. q. 54, a. 2, ad 3, dum dicit totum sanguinem qui de corpore Christi fluxit, in corpore Christi resurrexisse: hoc, inquam, verificatur moraliter de toto sanguine qui fuit necessarius ad integritatem corporis in statu resurrectionis, non vero physice de toto omnino, etiam minimis particulis non necessariis. Unde Pius II, in bulla ad abbatem S. Marie Xantonensis diocesis, quam vidiisse se ait Silvester in rosa aurea tract. 3, q. 31, dicit fidei veritati non repugnare, asserere Redemptorem nostrum de sanguine in cruce effuso, ob ipsius passionis memoriam et fidelium consolationem, partem aliquam in terris reliquisse.

Ex dictis colligis sanguinem Christi etiam in triduo mortis mansisse hypostatice unitum Verbo; tum quia resumendus erat in corpore resurgente; hac etiam ratione caro et anima inter se sep-

ciscans denied it. During the Easter of 1462 St. James de la Marche, preaching at Brescia, asserted the Franciscan doctrine, and said that the Blood shed in the Passion could not rightly receive the cultus patriæ. The next day a Dominican preached, and branded St. James's proposition as heretical. James of Brescia, the Dominican inquisitor, requested St. James by private letters to retract his assertion, as having been formally declared heretical in the cathedral of Barcellona by command of Clement VI. The next Tuesday however St. James publicly repeated his doctrine in a sermon, whereupon the inquisitor summoned him to answer for his faith under pain of an anathema. The bishop of Brescia interposed to bring about a reconciliation, and Pius II. refused to solve the doubt, but by a brief freed St. James from the charge

aræ manserunt unitæ Verbo; tum quia alias si consecratus fuisset calix in triduo mortis, divinitas non fuisset per concomitantiam sub speciebus vini, quod est contra Trid. sess. 13, c. 3. Secus dicendum de præputio et sanguine effuso in circumcissione quia non erant resumenda in resurrectione.

*Nota contrariam sententiam quosdam ordinis F. F. Minorum prædicasse circa annum 1352, sub Clemente VI. et anno 1462, sub Pio II, contentionemque acram inde ortam inter prefatos Fratres Minores et F. F. Prædicatores oppugnantes. Re delata ad summum pontificem Pium II, utrinque coram ipso et coetu cardinalium disputatum est, Pio II et majore parte cardinalium in favorem sententiæ Prædicatorum opinantibus: non fuit tamen quæstio definita, ne multitudo Minorum, cujus erat contra Turcas prædicatio necessaria, offenderetur. Imo Pius II, decima quinta die ante mortem constitutione edita, vetuit ne quis opinionem Minorum proscriberet ut hæreticam, donec quæstio per sanctam Sedem finiretur. Ita Spondanus ad annum 1462. Porro hæc F. F. Minorum sententia, licet nondum huc usque proscripta, e scholis tamen est eliminata, utpote nec pia nec segura, inquit Suares. *Bilkuart de Incarnat. vii. 2. sub fin.**

of heresy, and forbid either Dominicans or Franciscans to moot the question again, but to expect the decision of the Holy See. No express definition came out, but the Council of Trent having defined the Blood to be part of Christ, Cardinal de Lugo declares that the Franciscan doctrine can no longer be maintained without incurring the note of heresy. Under Paul V. then the doubt was started whether all this was not a sufficient obstacle to the resumption of the cause of St. James de la Marche. The case was handed to Cardinal Bellarmine, who, after carefully examining what had been done in the matter by Pius II. decided in favour of the resumption. The Saint was formally beatified by Urban VIII.; but when his canonization was proposed, the promoter of the faith brought the whole matter up again, and succeeding in quashing the cause until the reign of Innocent XII., who appointed a Congregation of theologians to examine the doctrine of St. James. They having decided that the opinion was a probable one, so far as any definitions existing in his time were concerned, the cause was resumed, and finished under Benedict XIII. This history will give some idea of the methods of procedure, as well as the spirit, of the Sacred Congregation.

After his works and manuscripts have been revised, the life of the servant of God is then examined with reference to the three theological virtues; his exercise of them, that of charity especially, is established by manifold heroic acts proved by competent testimony. In the three

theological virtues, heroicity is always required ; on the four cardinal virtues heroicity is required in those alone which have a special bearing upon his office and position in life ; of such importance is the discharge of relative duties considered ! It is this definite and orderly discussion of the theological and cardinal virtues which has impressed itself so completely upon the form and arrangement of modern Italian biographers ; that fourfold division into facts, virtues, gifts, and miracles, which so entirely mystifies all chronology, and is mostly so teasing to English readers by its apparently awkward methodism. There can be no doubt but that Bacci's biography of St. Philip Neri would be far more life-like and captivating if it were arranged in chronological order ; the absence of this destroys all the light and shade of a life, and the development of a Saint is in itself, especially when he is a founder, of immense interest. But it may be questioned whether as spiritual reading and a help to mental prayer, a life written on the Italian method is not the best of the two. Anyhow there can be no doubt that it is the processes of the Congregation which have introduced this style of biography.

As a very ancient instance of referring heroic actions to the theological virtues, we may quote that of St. Athanasius, who refers St. Anthony's victories over the demons to an heroic exercise of the theological virtue of hope. The controversy as to whether the theological virtues are necessarily connected with the moral, and the

moral with one another, does not enter into this question, because all admit that if not necessarily, at least in order to perfection, these connexions must certainly exist, and perfection is precisely what comes under consideration in the causes of the servants of God. The council of Vienne under Clement V. declared it to be the more probable opinion, that the theological virtues are infused into infants as well as adults in baptism; and Suarez gathers from the Council of Trent, that infused habits of faith, hope, and charity are given in justification; so that the connexion of the theological virtues with each other is not merely from their own nature, but from God's liberality in the first infusion of them. Hence the heroic exercise of one of the three is accounted adequate proof, if none other is at hand, for the other two as well; but inasmuch as the connexion of the moral virtues with the theological is an open question, the Thomists maintaining the affirmative, the Scotists the negative, heroicity is required of the servant of God, at least in those of the moral virtues which more immediately bear upon his relative duties, independent of his heroic exercise of faith, hope, and charity.

But to go a little more into this scrutiny about relative duties; with ecclesiastics a most important inquiry instituted by the Congregation regards their obtaining Church preferment, their reluctance to accept it, their humility in the discharge of its duties, and the like. If the servant of God held high dignity, a complete stand is

made till the postulaters show his freedom from ambition, nay, his aversion to the promotion, and his acceptance only in virtue of holy obedience. Some of the Saints have been remarkable for their steady and successful rejection of dignities; this was eminently the case with St. Philip Neri, St. Francis Borgia, St. Bernard, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Bernardino of Sienna, St. Vincent Ferrer, and St. Philip Benizi, the great legislator of the Servites, who fled from Viterbo and hid himself in a mountain, when the Cardinals were going to elect him Pope. Others again have accepted preferment after much struggling and in obedience to a precept of holy obedience, as was the case with St. Lawrence Justinian, St. Andrea Corsini, St. Peter Damian, and the Blessed Nicolas Albergatus. St. Gregory the Great fled from his elevation, as John the deacon tells us; St. Gregory VII. says violent hands were laid on him in order to make him pope. The same is related of Victor III., Gelasius II., Gregory X., St. Celestine V., and the glorious Pius V. When Clement XI. was elected pope, he refused to accept the tiara, and he was so determined in his refusal that four theologians were consulted as to whether he could continue to resist the will of the electors without grave sin. One of these theologians was the Blessed Joseph Mary Tommasi; and their answer was in the negative. Some time afterwards Clement created the Blessed Joseph Mary a cardinal; he out of humility refused, and persisted in his refusal; Clement

playfully turned against the holy theologian the arguments he himself had used to force his Holiness to ascend the papal throne, and compelled Tommasi to accept the dignity. In the cause of every servant of God who held ecclesiastical dignities this question is rigidly discussed, as we may see from the Acts of Pius V. St. Francis of Sales, and the Venerable Bellarmine; and when the cause of Innocent XI. was introduced, the promoter of the faith, urging some ill-natured calumnies of Bayle, objected to the means he had used for obtaining a certain prelate which paved the way to the cardinalate; and had he been able to substantiate his facts the cause would never have been introduced: but it was shown that then, as now, peevish, disappointed, and spiteful men were in the habit of transmitting packets of ill-natured gossip from Rome to their correspondents in other countries, especially when the characters of men of note were concerned, in order to make themselves of a little transient importance; and that this was the way in which Bayle had obtained his information, which was satisfactorily disproved by weighty documents.

But, at the risk of being tedious, in order to prove the solicitude with which the Church exacts a virtuous discharge of relative duties from those who are to be raised upon her altars by the solemnity of canonization, let us bring together a few details, which will be found full of interest, and capable of throwing great light upon the whole of our present subject. If the

servant of God, whose cause is under consideration, has been sovereign pontiff, then, independent of the examination his life undergoes as a bishop and as a secular prince, particular attention is paid to such points as the following: whether he has bestowed too much time on politics and secular cares, whether he has practised meditation, sought to advance in humility, bestowed dignities, especially the cardinalate, upon worthy and "*reluctant*" persons, whether he has been energetic in forwarding foreign missions, in watching jealously over ecclesiastical discipline, and defending the rights of the Holy See, and whether in his court and personal deportment there has been more of the emperor than the pope. In fact, St. Bernard's book to Pope Eugenius is taken as the ideal of heroic virtue in the supreme pontificate; and in a long list of canonized and beatified popes, upwards of seventy, most wonderfully has all this heroic virtue been set forth for the comfort and edification of the Church.

In the causes of cardinals special attention is paid to their obedience, frugality, residence, care of their titular Church, sincerity and boldness in counselling the pope, and cheerful submission when he has decreed contrary to their advice. Thus Baronius, when cardinal, lived as plainly as when he was a simple Oratorian; and the same may be said of the frugality and modesty of the Venerable Bellarmine and the B. Tommasi. Cardinal Bessarion affords an illustrious example of freedom in counselling the

pope, and every one will remember the well-known courage of St. Pius V. when he was cardinal. But it was actually a matter to be considered by the Congregation whether the Venerable Cardinal Ximenes had not offended by excess from his having once said, perhaps in joke, that the pope ought to have a "*bit of a frightening*" now and then. The conduct of cardinals in their legations is also a subject of most jealous scrutiny when their causes come before the Congregation.

An equally minute inquiry is instituted into the manner in which bishops have discharged their episcopal duties. An eminent spiritual writer has remarked, that the elevation to the episcopate has in most instances been found to be the cause of relaxed strictness and mortification; this therefore is inquired into. But one example will be enough to show to what details the scrutiny descends. The zeal of the apostles in giving confirmation as soon as they heard of the conversion of Samaria is looked upon as laying a kind of precept upon bishops; and it is inquired whether the servant of God has been distinguished by a zeal for that sacrament of which he is the ordinary minister, and special mention is made of this in the bull of St. Turibius's canonization, and it is also related of St. Wilfrid by Eddi Stephanus, his biographer. The conferring of orders, the granting of faculties to confessors, the care of ecclesiastical seminaries, the government of nuns, reverence to the Holy See, conduct towards secular princes and noble-

men, giving of patronage, expenditure of revenues, all these are jealously examined. For example, in the cause of the Venerable Cardinal Ximenes the promoter of the faith objected, that through his exertions several of his relations had married into high families, and that he had given them ample dowries; and in the cause of the Venerable Card. Bellarmine it was objected, that he had given pensions to poor relations.

Thus it is in the cause of religious from their vocation to their death, even to the making of their wills, if they had been elevated to the episcopate, and had had a dispensation to make a will, as in the case of the B. Alexander Sauli, the Barnabite; thus also it is with kings, noblemen, and laymen of whatever rank, from him who wore the crown of the holy roman empire down to the Loreto-going beggar, Benedict Joseph. This may be seen from the Acts of St. Wenceslaus of Bohemia, Henry the emperor, Edward of England, Leopold of Austria, Louis of France, Amadeus III. of Savoy, Casimir of Poland, and the good St. Elzear of Subrano. The justice and moderation of their wars form no slight difficulty in causes of this latter kind. Thus it is also with virgins, widows, and married persons. In all cases the inquiry is most rigid and minute. Even the circumstances of the death-bed are always jealously examined, as if it were the touchstone of final perseverance. Sudden deaths may sometimes impede the advancement of a cause, as rendering the proof of final perseverance incomplete; then indirect

and proximate evidence is carefully looked for, as in the case of St. Andrew Avellino and the B. Colette; or miracles immediately afterwards, as in the case of the B. Jordan, the general of the Dominicans. Scacchus tells us that the words with which the dying servants of God recommend their soul to Him must be weighed. When Benedict XIV. was promoter of the faith he objected to the words a servant of God had used on his death-bed about utter trust in God, seeming to exclude the notion of good works and to contravene the decisions of Trent. In like manner objection was taken to Cardinal Paul Buralis of Arezzo having administered the Viaticum to himself with his own hand, when it was brought him—a singularity contrary to the custom of the modern Church. But Cardinal de Lugo shows that the consent of the priest who brought the Blessed Sacrament excludes all fault in the matter. St. Dominic mentioned things to his own praise on his death-bed, whereas St. John of the Cross would not allow such things to be named in his presence. St. Martin and St. Thomas of Villanova were willing their lives should be prolonged for the good of others; St. Philip Neri and St. Francis of Sales quite rejected the idea. St. Francesca Romana was noted for having a death-bed without temptations, whereas other saints have died overclouded, as it were, with the shadow of God's judgments, while St. Romuald, St. John of God, and St. Cassian of Narni, died without witness of man. F. Consolini the Oratorian, like Cardinal Bellarmine,

seems to have prayed that he might not have the use of his reason on his death-bed, that he might thus avoid being treated like a saint and receiving visits of honour from distinguished personages. This was indeed the dictate of humility, but it also implies a confidence and spirit of abandonment which it makes one quite tremble to think of. To read the account of St. Andrew Avellino's death-bed, who would have supposed that from the loss of speech to explain his temptations, it should actually have presented difficulties to the Congregation of Rites? A Saint himself, St. Alphonso Liguori, thus relates it: "They say of St. Andrew Avellino that at the time of his death there came ten thousand demons to tempt him. During his agony he had so fierce a conflict with hell that all his good religious who were by trembled with fear. They saw the Saint's agitated face all swollen, so that it became quite black; his limbs quivered, and beat one against another as in the palsy; floods of tears flowed from his eyes; his head shook violently; all signs of the horrible battle in which he was engaged. Everyone wept with compassion, redoubled their prayers for him, and yet trembled with fear to see that even a Saint should have to die thus. They consoled themselves however in seeing that the Saint often threw his eyes round, as if looking for some one to help him, and fixed them on a devout picture of our Lady, and they remembered that he had often said in his lifetime, that Mary would have to be his refuge in

the hour of death. At length it pleased God that the conflict should end in the glorious victory of his servant: the quiverings of his body ceased, the swelling of his face went down and its natural colour returned; they saw him fix his eyes tranquilly upon the picture, and making a reverent inclination to it, as though Mary, as was believed, appeared to him at the moment, and he intended to thank her for her aid, he breathed out his soul gently into our Lady's arms with a smile of Paradise upon his face. At the very moment a Capuchiness, also lying in her agony, turned to the nuns by her bed, and said, Say a Hail Mary, for at this moment a Saint has died."* Yet it was about this death-bed that the cool judgment and safe acuteness of the Congregation found room for doubt and hesitation; what confidence may we not have in processes which carry with them the weight of such an approbation?

Of course it need hardly be added that the sins of the servants of God, and the signs of heroic repentance, are sought into with even a yet keener jealousy. Indeed a separate volume might be written, in which almost every duty of the different relations of life might be illustrated from the processes in these causes. It is enough to say that to the whole examination is given the character of the harshest criminal proceeding, with this significant difference, that the Congregation is reminded that there is no

* *Glorie di Maria*, i. 94, 95.

necessity of settling these causes in the face of a doubt; they can be quashed, and silence imposed, whereas in criminal trials some judgment must be given, and the doubt is in favour of the accused, whereas here it is decisive against the servant of God. The working of this is, as was intended, to strangle causes which are a little defective, as being the more safe method of procedure. The number of witnesses, the classification of their testimony, and the ingenious interrogatoria sent from Rome into the country at the formation of the processes, all increase the difficulty of getting a cause through the different stages, and add proportionably to the weight of the judgment when given. Benedict XIV. accounts for the few Saints which the solitary orders have produced mainly to the difficulty of getting witnesses; so that it seems as if those holy recluses sacrificed for the love of God some portion of their accidental glory in heaven as well as men's praise on earth. Indeed since the decrees of Urban VIII., and the beautiful machinery which Clement XI. invented for the Sacred Congregation of Rites, no human process (putting out of sight entirely the promised assistance of the Holy Ghost,) can be conceived more morally certain of discovering truth than the one instituted in the causes of beatification and canonization.

Thus we have most ample guarantee in the case of every one whom the Church has either beatified or canonized, that they have been distinguished by a calm, persevering, virtuous dis-

charge of their relative duties, that all which men consider most solid and practical in moral goodness has been exhibited by them even in an heroic degree, and that the extraordinary and unusual actions which they have performed have only whetted the acuteness and more effectually aroused the jealous spirit of scrutiny in the ecclesiastical tribunals. The Sacred Congregation is not, as it were, dazzled, taken by surprise, and betrayed into a favourable decision by the brilliance of certain heroic feats, but works its way through masses of evidence and accumulated doubts with all the cautious moderation and diligent solemnity which we should expect to find where there was that deep sense of responsible co-operation implied in the promise of the assisting presence of the Holy Spirit. Heroic virtue is in itself very liable to misapprehension, even since the publication of the Christian code of morals, and although the excellence of the evangelical counsels is of faith. Aristotle's idea of magnanimity is a picture of monster virtue; and most students of the Ethics will have come to the conclusion that the philosopher's magnanimous man would have been almost intolerable in society, and certainly both disliked and misunderstood, and he will be ready to join in poor Don Abbondio's querulous impatience with the "fidgettiness" of the Saints, when Manzoni brings him in the *Promessi Sposi* in contact with Frederic Borromeo. If the whole sum of the Christian life be to grow Christ-like, to conform ourselves to His Image,

His Image as visible to us in the gracious mystery of the Incarnation, if it be (speaking humanly,) to transfer ourselves into Him and His place, to make His will our will, His love and hatred our love and hatred too, and, at least in our attitude towards the world, to stand where He stood and as He stood, or, more truly and more awfully, where He stands and as He stands—if this be so, and if it be that God's ways are far above out of our sight; then in proportion as the Saints grow towards His Image must their ways be just so far above our comprehension as they are before us in grace. We cannot measure them by our measures; we cannot bring them within our rules. Our tests will not *always* tell upon their characters, nor reveal what is involved and contained in their ways of acting. So far therefore ought we to be from that venturesome profaneness which mounts into the judge's seat to pass sentence on the Saints, that where we do not understand what their actions mean, nay, even where we are perplexed and things look the wrong way, we ought to have a moral conviction, springing from humility, that even in proportion to the strangeness and the doubtfulness of an action, where Saints are concerned whose sanctity the judgment of the Church has put beyond the lawfulness of a doubt, is the likelihood or more than likelihood, that there is something heroic about it which we do not yet fathom; and just for this simple reason that the Saint's ways are in their poor measure like God's ways, far above out of the

sight of us who are below. Even they who are not irreligious, but are lagging behind, when they look upon the Saints see like the blind man in the Gospel only men as trees walking. All the Saints alike, whether they be anchorets of the desert, or missionary bishops, or martyr virgins, or pontiffs sanctifying themselves beneath the bewildering pressure of affairs, all equally, as we read their Lives, present themselves to us like St. Paul, as deceivers and yet true.

But it may be asked, where are the limits to this? They are to be found in this particular, that all these peculiarities do not in the main put a Saint beyond the embrace of our imitation, when under similar circumstances; and the members of the Congregation of Rites are supplied by Cardinal Bona and others with tests for discerning the rightness or wrongness of these strange actions, which, like Abraham's proceeding to slay his son, are usually set down in the Saints to a special instinct of the Holy Spirit. First it is to be seen whether the rest of the Saint's life is eminent for sanctity, and in particular for patience and charity, whether there are any circumstances from which we may infer that the impulse was so vehement as to be morally irresistible, as in the case of St. Paul's conversion, whether peace and tranquillity of mind have followed the performance of the action, whether anything beyond the strength of nature has occurred in the action, and this Suarez illustrates by St. Benedict's giving an obedience

to St. Maurus to walk on the water to Placidus, and Benedict XIV. by the admission of Jacoba Settesoli to the death-bed of St. Francis of Assisi in spite of the cloister; and, finally, as Cardinal Borromeo adds, whether the strange action has been successful. The precept of Almighty God to the prophet Osee about his wife, and to Abraham about his son, are of course the scripture exemplifications of these things. To all this might be added, if space would allow of it, most curious illustrations of the ingenious jealousy of the ordeal through which the cause of the servant of God passes with regard to the claim of miraculous powers. We cannot do more here than remind the reader, that in order to avoid arguing in a circle, the virtues are required to be proved independently of the miracles and without any support from them, that special jealousy is shown in the examination of miracles which do not surpass the power of *invisible* natural powers, those e. g. of a good angel, and that in many, if not in most cases, where several servants of God have been invoked, the subsequent miracle cannot be referred to any one of them in such way as to be available in the cause, as in the case of the Seven Blessed Founders of the Servites.* Indeed we cannot do better than refer our readers to the treatment of St. John Francis Regis's miracles by the able and good Giovanni Maria Lancisio, who bequeathed his medical library and patrimo-

* But see Bened. xiv. l. iv. pt. 1. c. v. 16 et seqq.

ny to the hospital of Santo Spirito, and who was employed by the Congregation of Rites as *medicus pro veritate* in the causes of the servants of God, and has left dissertations of great value on the miracles of St. James de la Marche, St. Stanislas Kostka, and St. John Francis Regis.

Indeed, putting out of view all idea of divine assistance, and looking at the matter simply as a question of evidence, it is hardly possible to conceive any process for sifting human testimony more complete, more ingenious, or more rigid than the one scrupulously adhered to by the Congregation of Rites in this respect. Much depends on the decision, and there is no necessity for coming to a decision at all; these two things are continually before the eyes of the judges, and render the ordeal one of almost incredible strictness. No one can study the great work of Benedict XIV. on Canonization, or peruse the decrees of Urban VIII. and Clement XI. without feeling the utmost confidence in any narrative of facts, however supernatural, which comes out of the trial confirmed and approved upon the whole: and we are now merely speaking of it as a question of human testimony which has come out undestroyed from the long, intricate, and jealous cross-questioning of a most ingeniously contrived system of cavil and objection. A fact only requires the appearance of being supernatural to awaken against it every suspicion; every method of surprise and detection is at once in array against it; it is allowed no mercy, no advantage of a doubt, and any

thing rather than the benefit of clergy. All this really gives to Lives of Saints drawn from the processes a trust-worthiness which scarcely any other historical or biographical works can possess; and enables them to claim from the reader at the very least a *general* confidence which he can hardly give to any other narrative of facts in the world. Let any one look at the way in which miracles are dealt with in the Congregation, their accurate division into three classes, the necessity of what is called *instantaneity* in order to distinguish a miracle from a *gratia*, the length of time required to prove the absence of relapse, which was thirteen years in the case of a nun cured of epilepsy by the Blessed Hyacintha Marescotti, and is extremely long in hydrophobia and some other complaints, the interrogatories, the requisites in witnesses, the presence of the first physicians of Italy and their opinions in writing, and sundry other precautions. Many a candid Protestant would be surprised, if he only took the trouble to peruse a few of the processes of the Congregation in matters of beatification and canonization. But if we attempted to do justice to this subject, we should be led far beyond our present bounds: it will be enough here to subjoin a few cases in illustration.

If, for instance, a case of recovery of sight is investigated, first of all, the blindness has to be proved, and whether the man was born blind or became so afterwards; secondly, the duration of the blindness; thirdly, the recovery of sight

with its qualities ; fourthly, the opinion of medical and scientific men has to be adduced as to the cause of the blindness, (if, that is to say, it has not been since birth ;) fifthly, it is inquired whether it would be *possible* to attribute the recovery of sight to any natural cause without having recourse to the idea of a miracle ; sixthly, whether the recovery was instantaneous, unless it be a miracle of the second class, and then instantaneity is not a necessary requisite ; and if neither witnesses nor medical men can state the cause of the blindness, no decision can be come to. Hence in the causes of St. Agnes and Blessed Peter Fourrier, some miracles of this sort were rejected from their not being instantaneous, and so possibly attributable to a natural cause. They might be, and probably were, miracles before God, but they were wanting in the demonstration necessary to establish them as miracles before the Church.

Again: when Benedict XIV. was promoter of the faith in the cause of the Blessed Hyacinta de' Marescotti, there was a case, already alluded to, of a nun cured of hereditary epilepsy after her twenty-fifth year, without having any crisis, or receiving any benefit from medical treatment ; on the contrary, it appeared that the remedies which had been administered to her were of a deleterious character. The promoter objected that the process had been formed only eighteen months after the last paroxysm, and that the nun might be seized again, and therefore that the miracle ought not to be approved ;

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neither was it approved till after thirteen years had elapsed: and in the cause of St. James de la Marche, a miracle of this nature was rejected altogether. Again: in a case of hæmorrhage from a wound, staunched at the invocation of St. Stanislas, there was an appearance of exaggeration in the account of the witnesses, as according to the laws of science, death must on their own showing have preceded the invocation. Lancisio, writing *pro veritate* and so against the miracle, admitted the exaggeration, but still allowed the matter to be miraculous for other reasons, and recommended the Congregation to admit it, but in vain; it was rejected, on the ground that anything like a slur on the witnesses is always to be considered an insuperable objection in the Congregation.

In like manner after discussing the question of relapses, and with reference to the first miracle proposed in the cause of St. John of the Cross, Benedict XIV. thus sums up: "These things being premised, and the argument being confined to relapses strictly understood, and to causes of beatification and canonization, and also to the approbation of miracles in them, in which approbation there is no question of relapse, unless the first healing has been perfect, absolute, without crisis, and instantaneous:— all this, I say, being premised, their opinion is to be followed who say that extreme strictness is to be used in ranking such cures among miracles; for, although in themselves and before God they may be miracles, yet they do not ap-

pear such before the Church. We must also proceed with caution if any new cause of the disease is alleged by way of getting rid of the idea of a relapse, and so bolstering up the miracle; for medical men have always heaps of such causes ready at their fingers' ends; so this must be sedulously discussed. All difficulty however will cease, if it can be made plain that the disease returned for the greater glory of God, or if the sick man prayed to be cured only for a time; and with these cautions the first miracle in the cause of St. John of the Cross was approved." And later on he says, "The heretics, James Sercels and Warenfels, after treating on miracles, break out vehemently against the Roman Church, charging her with an over great facility in approving miracles; but if they will compare our rules and tests with their own, they will be obliged to confess that the scrutiny of the Holy See and Catholic bishops in the matter of miracles is more severe than the one they themselves propose."

The pious jealousy of the Congregation might also be illustrated, and that most interestingly, not only by particular cases of its treatment of miracles, but also from its method of procedure in granting proper offices and masses. We might instance the whole history of the fluctuating controversy about the stigmata of St. Catherine of Sienna, the proper office of which with lections for the second nocturn is now granted to the Dominican order, and the dioceses of Sienna and Pisa besides. Deeply instructive

examples might be drawn from the cases of the invention of the Blood of Christ at Mantua, which was probably some that flowed miraculously from an image crucified by the Jews of Beyrout, the translation of the Alma Domus Lauretana, and our Lady of the Pilar. But we have surely said enough for our object, which is simply to breed confidence in the reader by proving to him the existence of jealousy, criticism, sifting of evidence, solemn, tardy, judicial recognition, and a continually operative sense of responsibility before God and the Church; and thus to show him with what amount of modest assurance a supernatural biography drawn from the processes may fairly claim his confidence, his patience, and his respect.

Having thus limited and qualified what might otherwise seem peremptory and exaggerated in the statement of our case, so far as it regards the performance of extraordinary actions and the exercise of miraculous powers, and having endeavoured to gain the reader's kindly confidence by some samples of the way in which authorities go to work in investigating these matters, let us pursue the main current of our argument. Now we have before us in the one work of Benedict XIV. the cases of about two thousand and seventy-two servants of God considered with reference to their cultus or claim of cultus from the Church: this is a rough enumeration, which may be considered as falling short of the real number. Further, we maintain that in all these instances the exercise of mirac-

ulous powers and the performance of actions which seem to lie beyond the limits of worldly prudence are manifest to a greater or less degree, and in all to a degree sufficiently striking to form a characteristic. The birth-places and residences of these holy persons are as various as the lands the sun shines upon; the ages in which they lived are as many in number as are the centuries which have elapsed since the coming of our Lord; their rank and circumstances in life are about as various as the most versatile imagination can depict to itself; their biographers are of all classes and of all turns of mind, and with all the diversified prejudices which their times, age, temper, or position could produce; the imprimaturs of these biographies vary in dignity from the rare *eulogy* of the Master of the Sacred Palace down to the simple *Nihil obstat* of the Vicar-General of the least bishopric in the Brazils: but as the faith of these servants of God is one, and as the holy Church, whose children they are, is one, so are their miracles and the strange fashion of their heroic virtues one, and so is the instinct of the faithful to venerate them one also.

It would therefore be quite irrelevant to our purpose to select individual cases of miracle, or so called eccentricity, either for defence or attack. They exist in such portentous multitude, and in such equally portentous diversity, that we may be quite content to turn the most ingenious and sceptical sifter of human evidence loose upon the mass, let him wreak all his angry

craft upon it, and do his worst; and when he has gathered his spoil here and there, when he has done his long and mighty sum of subtraction, how little success will he have had in bringing the mountain down! Let us even grant him—on the common principles of evidence it is the wildest of all improbabilities—a hundred cases out of every thousand, nay, five hundred out of every thousand, and such tens and hundreds of thousands remain, that we must come back to the old inquiry at last, what is to be thought of all this? what is to be done with all this? The mind is positively overshadowed by the number and variety of cases which remain, even after the most unrestricted process of diminution has been gone through. Tease, and tear, and worry the gigantic mass of historical evidence as we will; make abatements for any amount of corruption, uncertainty, interpolation, forgery, superstition, and ignorance which the least modest exaction of an opponent could desire; assume any hypothesis of complicated systematic world-wide yet undetected fraud which we can muster credulity to swallow, and which would be far beyond what the scholarlike Bollandists would ask of us in behalf of their documents; lay bold hands on missal collects, breviary lections, martyrology and popes' decrees; and then after all we must sit down wearied and peevish with our thankless and fruitless toil, and confronting the tremendous pile of tough unmanageable evidence before us, with a heavy-hearted suspicion that

we may have been doing despite to the grace of God in His Saints, we shall be obliged to proceed to form some judgment or other which shall not be absolutely disrespectful to the matter before us.

Let it next be considered, that so far the weight of Church authority, whatever weight that authority may have in this particular subject matter, has not been mingled with the *argument* at all. It has been alluded to simply as one among other features of this overwhelming mass of evidence; but our *argument* so far is perfectly independent of it and separate from it. It is submitted to the rational, intelligent, and considerate judgment of our Protestant readers. On what has been said hitherto common sense and common humility may conjointly pass their judgment without calling in theology to arbitrate at all. Let us now put the dilemma into which we have brought ourselves:—quantities of the Lives of the Saints, full of these miraculous incidents and extraordinary actions, are published in almost every language in which the Gospel of Christ is preached; they form the favourite reading of enthusiastic youth; they are the staple books in religious refectories, at the evening recreation of holy nuns, in colleges, seminaries, and ardent noviciates; the lections of the Breviary contain no insignificant number of anecdotes of a parallel sort; the mass and office of crowds of these Saints and Beati have been granted either to the universal Church, or to countries, or to dioceses, or to single cities,

or to entire religious orders, or to separate provinces and reforms of orders; relics of these servants of God are in almost every country of Christendom, authenticated by the sign and seal of the cardinal vicar, with a formally expressed faculty from him to the possessors, "to keep the said relics about them, to give them to others, to distribute them out of Rome, and to expose them to the public veneration of the faithful in any church, oratory, or chapel whatsoever;" the praising and revering of these relics is specified by St. Ignatius in his sixth rule as one means of keeping ourselves in harmony with the mind of the Church; anecdotes of these servants of God, many of them miraculous, many of them extraordinary, are found in the catechisms and devotional books by which the youthful members of the Church are instructed, and upon which they are trained, and they are never quoted there except in terms of reverential eulogy. Now can anything be conceived which bears more directly or with more important consequences upon the whole morality of the Universal Church? And can anything be imagined more awful than the idea that all this may be false, and that the Church may possibly err in the whole matter? Could there be a more complete triumph for the gates of hell than this, to have one perhaps who is a reprobate in the dungeons of hell, burning with hatred of God, and venerated upon the altars of the Universal Church, the pillar and ground of the truth? "In the Church," says St. Thomas*

* Quodlibet 9. qu. 7. art 16.

“there can be no damnable error; but this would be a damnable error, if he were venerated as a Saint who was in reality a sinner.” “It is of great importance,” says Melchior Canus,* “to the morals of the Church that you should know to whom you ought to pay the cultus of religion. Wherefore if the Church could err in these matters it might make a grievous slip in morals. For there is very little difference between paying cultus to a devil and doing it to a damned person. So if the Church should enact a law of abstinence which was opposed either to reason or the Gospel, she would truly have erred disgracefully. Thus also she would err disgracefully in the doctrine of morals if she were to pass a law ordering cultus to be paid to one who was not a fit object of it; for this would be at variance at once with reason and the Gospel.” The text of the canon law says precisely the same:† “Whosoever shall call the just unjust, and the unjust just, is abominable before God. Likewise he who says that a Saint is not a Saint, or on the other hand declares that he who is not a Saint is a Saint, is abominable before God;” and “Whosoever *believes* a man to be a Saint who is not one, and joins him to the society of God, *he violateth Christ.*”‡

Thus the Pope and his Sacred Congregations setting the example, general councils not reclaiming but rather acting similarly themselves, the immense Catholic episcopate consenting, the ap-

* 1. 5. c. 5. concl. 3.

† Can. 57.

‡ Can. 58.

proved religious orders aiding and abetting—moral principles of dubious propriety and truthfulness, false examples of uncertain discretion and of unsound evidence, deleterious objects of imitation, and possible execrable objects of prayer, and a whole tone of thought, devotion, and feeling corrupt to its core and dangerous in the extreme, are the food wherewith the universal Church nourishes her youth, and replenishes her convents and her seminaries! Where, if not here, have we a right to look with sober expectancy for the unfailing assistance of the Holy Ghost? Where, if not here, may we not repose implicit confidence in the unerring voice of our spiritual Mother? Alas! who would not start back in amazement and in horror, if he looked upon the vast fields of Christendom, calculated the amount of this particular literature under consideration, pondered its tremendous influence and its far-seen consequences on and on into generations yet unborn, weighed the variety and importance of the papal, episcopal, and academical sanctions given to it—and then was told that all this *might be* wrong, was actually fallible? Surely they who would make the infallibility of the Pope's ex-cathedra decrees depend upon their subsequent, at least tacit, acceptance by the universal Church, have here a case in point where the acceptance is not only not tacit, but where cardinals, bishops, prelates, doctors, religious orders, universities, and the courts of Catholic sovereigns, are vyeing to magnify the decrees of canonization, to extend their conse-

quences, and to publish them with more than royal or imperial pomp. Either all this, *in the main and as a system*, is true, or else the morals of the Catholic Church are eaten away to their very core. All this was going on before the Holy Council of Trent, yet we have no reclamation, but the contrary; it was actually systematized, and accidental abuses and extravagances retrenched by Urban VIII. and Clement XI., and greater finish and nicety given here and there by almost every succeeding pontiff, and Urban's Decrees, enforced by the Holy Roman Inquisition, have been everywhere received. If the Church is not committed in this matter *to some extent*, (to what extent will appear afterwards,) then language has ceased to have a meaning and common sense to be a guide.

Having thus looked at the question as involving the consent of the universal Church and implicating her in it, let us gather the matter up, where a theologian would most naturally look for it, to the proper and divine seat of the Church's unerring decrees, to the blessed Chair of Peter, where the pilot sits and wields the Spirit-guided helm. The horns of our dilemma will then be put thus: Either this claim, exercise and frequency of miraculous powers is *in the main* true, (for we have shown that the criticism of individual cases is irrelevant to the question from the very overpowering abundance of the evidence) or it is *in the main* false, and these actions lying beyond the pale of human prudence and the ordinary conventions of worldly wisdom, are either

in the main reprehensible, or they are *in the main* in some cases the fruits of a special instinct of the Holy Ghost, and in other cases exemplifications of virtue practised in an heroic degree. If the one is false and the other are reprehensible, then it is hard to conceive a case of more widely extended moral mischief, or one in which it would be more natural that we should hear the warning and rebuking voice of the Holy See. Yet what has been really the case? Urban VIII. has given the fullest of all sanctions to it by specifying and retrenching the abuses which had arisen in connexion with it; for no sanction is so clearly exempt from all suspicion of inadvertence or surprise as a specific reform.* Sixtus V., in confirming the decree of the canonization of St. Didacus, spoke for a whole hour in proof of the infallibility of the decree. The decrees of canonization and beatification never light on any one whose life has not been distinguished in the two respects mentioned; many of the decrees relate instances in point with great applause; the office often contains others, when there are proper lections to the second nocturn; so that the Church by her Head actually, on the hypothesis of the adversary, holds up to the admiration and *mutatis mutandis* to the imitation of all her children what is either false, or superstitions, or foolish, or dubious, or all these things together. The pastors and doctors of

* See particularly the Constitution of that pope, *Sanctitas sua*; also Constitut. 39, given in 1625, the Declaratio of the same given in the October of the same year; and Constitut. 134, given in 1634.

the Church receive and applaud; the faithful embody it all in numberless devotions; and so the whole Body of Christ teaches and receives (according to the different views of opponents,) a possible, a probable, or an actual falsehood, one too whose roots are most intimately entwined with the whole of morals, and thus the gates of hell have triumphed in the most complete and brilliant manner over the immaculate Bride of Christ. If this bewildering notion be too horrible to be true, as no Catholic when he sees it thus drawn out will doubt for a moment, then it must needs be that this claim, exercise, and frequency of miraculous powers is *in the main* true, and these actions lying beyond the pale of human prudence and the ordinary conventions of worldly wisdom, *in the main* fruits of a special instinct of the Holy Ghost or exemplifications of virtue practised in an heroic degree.

This is all we claim for the Lives of the Saints: and if this be not true, what third road is there between the horns of this dilemma? Be it well remembered that we only speak of these miracles and extraordinary actions *in the main*. We leave each particular instance of them free to criticism, free to be weighed by the merits of its own evidence, with the light of its own probability and nothing more around it. Of course, in saying this it is manifest that we must except the particular miracles quoted by the Holy See in its decrees; whatever weight that approbation may have, and which we have yet to examine, all Catholics will agree in the

indecenty of making those particular miracles the subject of doubt or contestation ; for even those who seem to have doubted the right of the Church to pronounce infallibly in the matter of canonization *in the general*, have added that no one can impugn any given decree *in particular* without being guilty of scandal and impiety. But bating these few thousand cases, we claim nothing more for the matter in question, than the general admission required above. No doubt some biographers are more judicious, more critical, more discerning than others ; some are more free from the prejudices of locality or the kindly esprit de corps of a religious order than others ; and for this reason we have in the present Series preferred Lives written later, and from the calmly sifted judicial processes, to such as have been composed on the spot where the Saint died, and amid the first effervescence of popular devotion, a proceeding diametrically opposed to the conduct one should have pursued in reference to any other biographies, where the works of contemporaries and fellow-countrymen are selected rather than others. Still the general tone, the general prevalence of the supernatural, the perpetual recurrence of these extraordinary and unusual modes of action, remain the same : give the largest allowance you please to the prejudices and tempers of biographers, as before to the possibility of fraud and error, the huge mass of facts is so little diminished that it continues in the main to be the

same, most powerfully influencing doctrine, and still more powerfully influencing morals.

Having thus stated the case in its principal bearings, we may now advance to the grand practical questions involved in it. It follows from the very intimate connexion between hagiology and morals, that there is no subject-matter in the handling of which calmness, caution, and discretion are more imperatively required; sound and judicious criticism ought to be applied; the utmost carefulness shown to claim no more authority for a thing than it really possesses or may fairly vindicate to itself. A man ought to labour in such a work under an abiding sense of the responsibility which he is incurring; and must first ascertain to himself as well as he is able, not the intrinsic goodness of his end only, but the propriety of attempting it under given time, place, and circumstances. All that was done under the pontificate of Urban VIII. and by Cardinal Lambertini himself when he was raised to the papal throne, shows how carefully the authorities of the Church would have a man pick his way amidst the dangers which beset so delicate a subject-matter; and when he has done all that prudence and deliberation and the counsel of pious and learned men can suggest, there still remains to be continued what he must have started with—earnest prayer, and a most humble submission of the whole, not to the judgment of the Church only, but also to that of his immediate superiors. Such we may conceive to

have been the temper of mind in which the Bollandists entered upon their generous and edifying labours; but how few are there who would venture to look upon themselves as thus qualified either to write original Lives of Saints, or to make compilations where their own erudition, criticism, and discretion would have to co-ordinate and give a character to the whole! Hence came the peculiarities of the present Series. Suggested and encouraged, nay, almost eagerly forwarded, by many wise and eminent men, it was remembered from the first that so delicate a subject was it, so prolific at all times in giving offence in this or that direction, that even in the beginning of St. Philip Neri's Oration one of his serious troubles arose from the very fact of his being falsely delated to the Pope, for permitting indiscreet narrations of extraordinary actions of the Saints in the discourses at San Girolamo. It was on this account that seven rules were laid down for the conduct of the present Series, in order to avoid as much as possible all exercise of editorial private judgment, and to make it as safe and abundant in edification as under many disadvantageous circumstances it could be; and the extensive and rapidly extending sale of the volumes seems as it were to have given an approbation to the peculiar features of the undertaking.

1. It was resolved to choose translations rather than original works, in order that what was inevitably forfeited in pure style and spirited narrative might be more than compensated by

the absence of indiscreet criticism, offensive apology, and all expression of individual opinion; and it was laid down as a rule, that, as far as possible, the Lives of the Saints distinguished for outward and active charity should precede those more peculiarly mystical and supernatural. It need hardly be said that in a work of such magnitude Editors cannot always control the coming in of manuscript, and this rule it has been found impossible to adhere to as strictly as could be wished.

2. It was considered a duty, to be scrupulously faithful to the originals translated, not in the way of literal translation, for this is often the worst of infidelities, but in carefully giving the whole work, except in the case of additional or irrelevant matter, and the fact and amount of that omission to be accurately stated in each case. Otherwise what confidence could be reposed in the work? On what principle shall we pick and choose? who will commission us to exercise this latitudinarian right to cut down or omit or change? Shall we not mutilate, nay, in effect, falsify, history? Are we not arrogantly constituting ourselves judges of accredited authors, exercising a censorship over censors who have already pronounced their *Nihil obstat*, and taking even more upon ourselves than if we had ourselves composed original Lives of the Saints? The humble office of truthful translators seemed the one best calculated for the object in view, and our ambition has not gone beyond it.

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3. Pains were to be taken to select such biographies as were held in esteem in Catholic countries, and widely circulated among the faithful.

4. In all cases *imprimaturs* were to be looked to as guides in this selection.

5. The Lives drawn up for or from the processes were always to be preferred, although often with less literary attractiveness about them than Lives written with more freedom. The object of the Series is rather spiritual than literary; and as all masters of the spiritual life tell us that the biographies of the Saints should be read slowly, pausatim and a little at a time, the style of the processes seemed in some degree more suitable.

6. Notes were to be avoided as much as possible, as so many vents of private opinion, and involving more or less the office of critic or censor; and quite sufficient literary scope for this, so far as it might be necessary, could be given in the Preface.

7. The whole was to be submitted to the authority of immediate superiors, and the Series put in every respect under their absolute control: and certainly so far as a judgment can be formed from outward appearances, the success of the Series has been beyond what the most sanguine promoters of it could have anticipated, both in the way of sale, of numerous expressions of sympathy and encouragement from those who have been edified by it, together with some singular confessions on the part of inquirers still

out of the True Fold of the attracting influence which it has had upon them in favour of Catholic doctrine and practices. May Almighty God vouchsafe to bless it still more as a weak instrument for His greater glory in the hearts and secret lives of men!

Such were the reflections which gave rise to the Series, and such the principles on which it was to be conducted. But a thoughtful man, who may have been in some degree impressed by what has been said, may reasonably urge, "All this may be very true; but if I am to allow these biographies to exercise an influence on my faith and practice, if I am to let confidence succeed to jealousy, and permit them to tell upon my tone and habits of mind as I see them tell upon those of others, by what practical canons shall I be guided? How shall I regulate this influence? what standard of appeal shall I have? what simple tests, easy to comprehend and always ready at hand, shall I habitually apply to any difficulties which may arise in my journey through this confessedly supernatural land?" Let us try to discover such tests.

In reading the Lives even of canonized Saints a man may frequently meet with instances of the supernatural, and of seemingly eccentric conduct, which to his peculiar temperament seem unlikely, indiscreet, startling, ludicrous, perhaps offensive, though his humility would hardly allow him to commit himself to such words. Now it is true the Saint is canonized,

and he would not for the world venture upon anything like sitting in judgment upon the Church; but the offending points are not mentioned in the decrees one way or another; there is no judgment of the Church about them; it only so far tells upon them that they cannot (supposing them authentic) be dismissed with contempt or disrespect; but otherwise they are quite open to criticism. The reader is obviously free to use his own judgment both on the credibility and on the edifying character of the anecdotes in question:—how shall his judgment proceed? On some such principles as the following, which we venture to lay down, as safe and prudent, and steering clear of anything like puerile credulity on the one hand, and profane rashness with the Saints of God on the other. But before we begin let us remind the reader of an anecdote in the Life of St. Philip Neri, which contains an apposite lesson.* “Natale Rondanini, doctor of Faenza, was one day reading the Life of the Saint, and was come to the chapter where it is said that Philip having fallen into a deep moat as he was carrying bread to a poor family, was seized by the hair by an angel, and delivered from that danger; and also farther on he read how that Pope Clement VIII. was cured of the gout. Now he was a little incredulous about this, and many doubts passed through his mind as to whether these two circumstances were true

* Vol. II. p. 261.

or not; wherefore the Saint appeared to him in the night in a dream, clad in a bright and glittering vestment, and gently rebuked him for his lack of faith, in doubting whether what he had read of him in his Life were true. Natale, trembling and quaking, repented him of his unbelief, and the Saint's admonition was so deeply impressed on his mind, that ever afterwards, it mattered not who was present, when he heard persons reasoning about the Saints or their miracles, he would say to them, 'Play with children, but let the Saints alone.' "

I. *Analogy with the faith.* This would be the first criterion. A man who went to work with the wary reverence befitting the subject, would first look to see how far the facts which startled him were in analogy with the faith; if they were not, then the probabilities against them would be immensely increased; of course in the case of actual discrepancy they would be at once rejected with scorn; if they were in analogy with the faith, then the duty of still farther suspending his judgment would be obvious, and he would have no difficulty in acknowledging it. Thus, for example, the miraculous things found in the heart of St. Clare of Montefalco are in analogy with the Catholic doctrine of the Holy Trinity, and were a strikingly beautiful illustration of it. St. Philip Neri's discerning a youth to be a priest by the shining of the sacerdotal character on his forehead is plainly in analogy with the faith. The same may be said of instances of a beautiful Infant appearing in Hosts,

and similar occurrences, quite in analogy with the faith, that is, such as we might naturally expect on the hypothesis that the faith was true. Hence when John the Deacon tells us, and even an author bearing the name of St. John Damascene gives his countenance to the story, that St. Gregory the Great was said by his prayers to have delivered the soul of the Emperor Trajan from hell, we reject the story, because it is not in analogy with the faith.* St. Antiochus† tells us of a monk on Mount Sinai, famous for chastity, who had a vision in which he saw the souls of the Apostles and Saints in dense darkness, and the souls of the Jews in shining light. Whereupon he apostatized from Christianity and became a Jew, because he prized his false vision above the analogy of the faith. So when it was deposed of St. Dominic, St. Theresa, and St. Louis Gonzaga, that they had never had a temptation against purity, it was received with most unkindly but judicious suspicion by the Congregation, as seemingly out of analogy with the faith. When St. Bernardino of Sienna, at the beginning of the fifteenth century, introduced the cultus of the Holy Name of Jesus, he was accused to the Pope of introducing a new and suspected cultus, and it required all the eloquence and ability of St. John

* John the Deacon expressly says that this legend was unknown in Rome, and existed only among the English: and the *Oratio de Mortuis* is not St. John Damascene's, and directly contradicts what he says. De Fide l. 2. c. 4.

† Hom. 86.

Capistran to lull the suspicion, so jealous are they in the Holy City, and even so perseveringly incredulous, where there is any appearance of swerving from the analogy of the faith. Indeed nothing can illustrate this better than the fact, that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are made by theologians to rank *after* the theological virtues, and find their place between those and the moral virtues.

II. *Analogy with the received opinion of doctors and the faithful.* This is of course a less certain criterion than the last; but it is a very safe one, which could not be overlooked without great rashness and imprudence. Anything supernatural adduced as evidence for some innovation in opinion and practice, would be regarded with great jealousy, and the authors of it be treated with harshness by their lawful superiors. Still it would not be necessarily false; instances in point may be found in the institution of the two Feasts of Corpus Christi and the Sacred Heart, and the sufferings of St. Juliana of Retinne and the Ven. Margaret Mary Alacoque, in consequence of the revelations made to them regarding those feasts. But when the supernatural fact is in analogy with the received opinion, it presents itself under auspices which are favourable just in proportion to the degree of certainty and reception which the opinion itself enjoys. Thus when Baronius in a dream saw our Lord refuse St. Philip Neri's request, and the Saint obtain it by turning to our Blessed Lady, this was in striking analogy with the common opin-

ion.* Along with this may be classed in the way of contrast the account St. Francis Xavier gives us of a man who had kept something back in confession seeing himself led by the Infant Jesus to our Blessed Lady, who rejected him as having sins on his conscience sacrilegiously withheld in confession; the Saint having at the same time the same vision of the man's rejection represented to himself. The same may be said of the answer St. Stanislas Kostka received in prayer, that he should spend the ensuing Feast of the Assumption with our Blessed Lady in heaven; the late lamented bishop of the London district, Dr. Griffiths, expressed the same wish with touching earnestness shortly before his death; and in the same connexion we might quote the story of Father Diego Martinez, the Jesuit, being carried by the angels into heaven, to see with what splendour the feasts of our Blessed Lady were observed there. All this is in analogy with the common opinion of her assumption, and of the great feasts of the Church Militant, being in some way noted in the Church Triumphant. The vision in the Campidoglio at Rome, related by the great St. Peter Damian, in which it was revealed that our Blessed Lady took out of Purgatory every Feast of her Assumption, as many souls as there were inhabitants in

* We may quote here a passage of St. Antoninus. 4 pt. tit. 17. sec. 5. "The prayer of the Saints rests on nothing of their own, but only on the mercy of God. But the prayer of the Virgin rests on the grace of God by natural right, and on evangelical justice. For the Son is not only bound to honour His mother, but to obey her, which is *de jure naturæ*."

Rome, is a similar instance. So St. Malachy's triple vision of his sister, related by St. Bernard, is used even by Bellarmine, as helping to prove a gradual diminution of the pains of purgatory. Thus many of the events of the life of the glorious St. Francesca Romana are equally in analogy with the commonly-received opinions about the holy angels and the demons. When Erasmus tells us that St. Francis appeared to him in a vision, and thanked him for rating those who set any value on being buried in the Franciscan habit, we join with Benedict XIV. in rejecting it either as a falsehood or delusion, because it fails when this test is applied to it. It came out in evidence before the Congregation that a certain holy Florentine woman had in her private prayers recommended herself to Jerome Savonarola. Benedict XIV., then promoter of the faith, maintained she had sinned, because, in spite of all the apologies made for him, it was acknowledged that he had been delivered to the secular arm, strangled, and burnt at Florence, and this after the judges, delegated by Alexander VI., had issued a process against him. The postulators in reply, besides throwing a doubt over Lambertini's facts, met the objection as one the force of which consisted in showing that the holy woman had acted contrary to the received opinion of the character of Savonarola. They maintained that his contemporaries had regarded him as a holy man, that he had died in the communion of Rome, after receiving the Sacraments

and taking the plenary indulgence at the hour of death, and that Suarez teaches that a person is to be excused from sin who pays private cultus to one of whose eternal salvation there is a strong probability.* But their chief answer was that St. Philip Neri, already canonized, kept in a cupboard of his room a picture of Savonarola with rays round his head, and as Gallonio tells us, when the controversy arose about condemning Savonarola's works, St. Philip prayed that they might not be prohibited, and God revealed to him that they would not be so. The majority voted for the postulators, and Benedict XIII. imposing silence on any farther discussion of her prayers, ordered them to proceed with the cause of this holy woman, which Clement XII. confirmed.

III. *Dissimilitude to heresy or fanaticism.*

This again is a criterion of inferior accuracy to either of the preceding ones; first, because of the very nature of heresy, which is a distorted caricature of the truth; and secondly, because of the well-known artifice of the devil, by which he strives to deceive the servants of God through crafty imitations of holy things and the disguises of angels of light, whereby if he should fail of deceiving, he may at least throw a slur over things which are really true. Thus the so-called suicide of St. Apollonia is agreed upon by all to have been a special movement of the Holy Ghost, notwithstanding its outward resem-

* See also Ferrais sub vocab. Venerat. Sanctor.

blance to the fanaticism of the Donatists and others. Still this criterion is of great value, although not unerring; and a man would be bound in prudence to stand back from anything which had even the look of heresy or fanaticism. It was by the application of this test that the wise St. Francis discovered the real character of the friar who was in the enjoyment of a great reputation for sanctity. The Saint was told by the monk's superior that his subject had a miraculous *attrait* for silence; but no sooner did the holy patriarch learn that the man carried it so far as to abstain from sacramental confession, than he discerned the delusion, and predicted the end of the wretched apostate. When causes of female servants of God are before the Congregation, inquiry is made whether they have made use even of their gifts gratis data only ad privatam doctrinam; the opposite conduct being an especial mark of heresy and fanaticism. St. Ignatius, as superior, used to give his fathers and brothers extremely long penances for very trivial faults; upon which a question is raised as to whether this is zeal for the spirit of observance, or simple imprudence. Indeed all the exemplifications of the two difficult virtues of zeal and anger in the Saints, especially the latter, have first of all to pass this test now under review. Thus St. Francis Xavier in a transport of zeal caused the house of one of his eastern neophytes to be burned down, because sacrifice had been offered to an idol in it. The same Saint having con-

ceived the design of going to China in order to gain that empire to Jesus Christ, his voyage was hindered by the government of Malacca. St. Francis did all he could to gain the governor, but gentleness having failed, he assumed his character as apostolical legate and laid the city under an interdict, ordered all the Jesuit fathers to leave the place, cursed those who had caused his journey to be stopped, and then shook the dust from off his feet at the gate of the city and left it. No sooner was he gone than the plague broke out; the governor, accused of sundry crimes at court, was arrested, sent to Portugal, and died of a broken heart in prison. When Adam Clarke shook the dust off his feet against the Cornish farmers, it was mainly the arrogance arising from lack of mission which distinguished his conduct from that of the great St. Francis. The patriarch St. Francis of Assisi, visiting the houses of his order in Tuscany, found that in one monastery the young friars spent too much time in philosophical disputes, which he judged contrary to the spirit of prayer and the religious life. He ordered the provincial to correct that; he promised to do so, but St. Francis, discovering afterwards that he had not fulfilled his promise, cursed him. The provincial fell ill, and sent to beg his superior's pardon; the Saint's answer was, "I have cursed him, and he shall be cursed," at which words a bolt fell from heaven, and killed the provincial on his bed. It is plain that such anecdotes as these may contain examples of he-

roic virtue, but from their outward resemblance to fanaticism a man would rigorously sift their authenticity, and that being established, he would require nothing short of the recognized holiness of a canonized Saint in order to render them approved.*

IV. *Harmony with what is recorded of other Saints.* This is obviously a common sense criterion; it is the multiplication of witnesses in order to strengthen a case, and it is very observable that the evidence of hagiology is not only formidable from its mass, but from its singular coherence also. If we meet with anything startling in the Lives of holy men who have died in the odour of sanctity, and then find the same recorded of one, two, three, or more of the canonized Saints, reason tells us that if this be not actually enough to overrule our objection, it is enough to make us suspend our judgment. It breeds in us the same sort of feeling we have when we discover the similarity between the Old Testament miracles and those of our Sa-

* It may be well to quote here the words of Father Surin about the anger of the Saints. Cat. Spir. ii. 249. "We ought to remark that these movements of indignation which come from God, and have God for their object, cause no trouble in the soul, but leave it as free and as tranquil as though it were in a movement of joy. We may say in general of anger, what we have already said of sadness and hatred, that when it is grace which forms them in the heart, they not only do not remove God from us, but unite us to Him, and dispose us to prayer, just as much as a heavenly consolation could do. The reason is, that it is not self-interest which touches us, nor any satisfaction of our own, which affects the soul in these conjunctures, but the sole interest of God, whom alone we desire to please."

viour, and again the likeness of the apostles' and martyrs' miracles to His. It is the same thing in kind, though of course infinitely lower in degree. If, for example, a man reads in the Life of a poor frail nun that our Lady acted as portress for her, in order that her flight from the convent might not be discovered till she came back in penitence, such an extremely startling anecdote* gets at least a kind of indirect respectability from the fact solemnly recorded in the Breviary lections for the feast of St. Felix of Valois, viz. that, the rest of the monks oversleeping themselves, our Blessed Lady came down into the church to St. Felix, dressed in the habit of his order, and assuming the post of cantor, she, the Saint, and some angels sang the divine office alternately, and that St. Felix satisfied his obligation by this unearthly choir. Again: if a man reads that our Blessed Lord has vouchsafed to put the Wound of His Side to the mouth of some holy uncanonized nun, and allowed her to drink therefrom a "spiritual nectar," he cannot quite so immediately dismiss the matter when he finds the same favour claimed for the canonized Rose of Lima, and, in an instance so famous as to be classical, for St. Catherine of Sienna. Again: if a reader is shocked in the Life of Rosa Maria Serio, the Carmelites, by learning how St. John the Evangelist took her heart out of her side, and

* Quoted by Scaramelli (from Theoph. Raymund. Mirac. l. 7. c. 35.) in the *Direttorio Ascetico*. T. 1. art. XI. c. VI.

how our Lady squeezing some drops of black blood out of it, applied it to the Heart of Jesus, and it was then replaced filled with the fire of divine love, he will find the recorded experience of St. Bridget, St. Gertrude and St. Lidwine stand very much in the way of anything like an off-hand rejection of the story, especially with the well-known case of the Holy Ghost entering the heart of St. Philip Neri as a ball of fire, breaking his ribs, and causing a miracle of many years' duration in order to keep the Saint in life and action. Thus also the Bollandists make classifications of Saints, from certain miraculous qualities which have been common to a great number of them; as in the case of the Elæophori,* or "ointment-dropping" Saints. Thus if any one felt a difficulty about believing that miraculous and healing oil flowed from the remains of St. Walburga, the difficulty of rejecting it would be not a little increased by finding the same property claimed for St. Andrew the Apostle, St. Matthew the Evangelist, St. Lawrence the Martyr, St. John the Merciful, St. Demetrius of Thessalonica, St. Nicolas of Myra, St. Catherine, St. Elizabeth of Hungary, St. Euphemia of Byzantium, and the Tuscan St. Agnes. Thus also some might be offended at St. Philip Neri's contemptuous way of casting out devils, sending others to do it, with light words, and so forth; but they might think the Saint had some meaning in it, when

* Life of St. Richard the Saxon. pp. 95. 97. Toovey's Collection.

they found the great St. Francis Xavier doing the same, sending little boys to hang his cross round the neck of the possessed, or to speak scornful words. Then again, some Saints seem to have been raised up by God as counterparts of other Saints; St. Rose of Lima, for example, stands in that relation to St. Catherine of Sienna. In like manner, when we read of St. Francesco di Paola, that he knew he should be canonized, it seems difficult to conceive how such a foreknowledge as this should not interfere with the liberty of his actions, or at least make some of his voluntary humiliations look insincere and merely dramatic; yet the probability of such a revelation is much increased when we read that it was also granted to St. Vincent Ferrer, St. Philip Neri, and St. Andrew Avellino. Any one who stumbles at being told that St. Anthony of Padua was a Saint from his childhood, will be more inclined to believe it when he hears the same of St. Nicholas of Tolentino, St. Felix of Valois, St. Rose of Lima, and the Blessed Colomba of Rieti. If it seems unlikely that our Blessed Lady should have personally assisted at the death-bed of St. Clare from the very singularity of such a privilege, we naturally think more of it when the same is recorded of St. Felix of Cantalice, St. Clare of Montefalco, St. Theresa, St. Peter of Alcantara, St. John of God, and as it would seem from a previous anecdote, St. Andrew Avellino. The same may be said of the Saints who exercised dominion

over the elements and inanimate nature, as St. Peter Igneus, St. Chunegunde, Tiburtius, who suffered in the Diocletian persecution, St. Francis of Paul, St. Peter of Alcantara, St. Louis Bertrand, St. John of God, and those mentioned by St. Gregory the Great* over fire, others over the production of fountains, others over trees and flowers, and the like. Familiar intercourse with spirits, splendour flowing from the face, the being raised into the air at prayer, and multiplying provisions, are almost universal in all Saints and holy persons who have had the gift of miracles at all; so that we must admit them at once simply on the principles of human evidence. The same may almost be said of miraculous passages over rivers and arms of the sea, such as were those, among many others, of St. Maurus, St. Beno, St. Peter of Alcantara, St. Hyacinth, and St. Francis of Paul. If any person were offended by an instance of it in one neither canonized nor even beatified, he would proceed warily when he found that the sixth lection in the Roman Breviary for the feast of St. Raymond of Pennafort contained the account of his sailing one hundred and sixty miles in six hours upon his cloak from Majorca to Barcellona, and then entering his convent through closed doors. It is true that the Church does not guarantee the Breviary from the possibility of historical error; but what shall we say of this same marvellous voyage being the subject of

* Lib. 1. dial. 6.

the collect for the day, and put into our mouths as a solemn address to the Almighty? No one accustomed to the study of history will ever dream of neglecting this criterion of parallel cases.

V. *Corroborations in the Lives of Saints, who spent their days in practical activity and outward philanthropy in the world, for strange events or actions in the Lives of mystical and cloistered Saints.* This also is a criterion of no slight importance; for it is in the Lives of innocent cloistered souls, and mystics who lived in retirement hardly of the world,* as Addolarate or Extatiche, that we who live in the world and know union with God only by name, or at most by puny endeavour, and not in its glorious realities, find most matter for surprise and occasionally (alas, for ourselves that it should be so!) for offence; and doubtless the poverty of human language, and the scarcely culpable misapprehension of the biographer, may sometimes cause things to be put before us in a manner most unfavourable to their reception. But the Saints who have been men of outward toil and apostolic discretion, to whom the ways and customs of the world have been familiar, and who have sanctified themselves among them, already command our respect, as indeed they do the respect even of heretics and aliens. If then we find

* How many travellers, clerical and lay, Protestant as well as Catholic, have verified, and more than verified, what was considered so extravagant in Lord Shrewsbury's relation when first published!

any particular favour or action in a mystical Saint paralleled in St. Philip Neri, or St. Ignatius, St. Pius V. or St. Charles, St. Vincent of Paul, or St. Francis of Sales, St. Alphonso Liguori, or St. Thomas of Villanova, St. Francis Borgia, or St. Francis Xavier, the matter is very much altered: a host of preliminary objections are disposed of, and the case gets all it wants, a fair hearing on its own evidence. This must recommend itself to every one. If we take objection to the wonders which accompany the mass of some holy mystic, we are less captious when we find the same in the mass of St. Philip Neri, the cheerful companion of cardinals and courtiers, or in the eight, ten, or twelve hours' mass of the Blessed Lawrence of Brindisi, who traversed Europe as the plenipotentiary of popes and kings, and got through as much business as any three stout and diligent prime ministers who were not hard-working Capuchins. If we are startled at wonderful accounts of bilocation in monks and nuns uncanonized, we are comforted in reading of the equally wonderful accounts of bilocation in the energetic missionary St. Francis Jerome, who could preach in one city while he was distributing alms in another, or in the discreet, sagacious Xavier, who could spend three whole days in two different places, busily engaged in both. If we are offended by some good simple-hearted nun among the austere Turchine having too great and childish a devotion for relics to be becoming in a Saint, we shall hardly judge her with such positiveness

when we have taken a good look at St. Philip Neri dancing before the bodies of the martyrs, Papias and Maurus, or the perverse enjoyment which the great St. Charles Borromeo took in endlessly translating relics processionally from church to church, and which was apparently the *deliciae* of the good and wise and prudent prelate. If our Protestant friends may have almost persuaded us to smile at St. Anthony's conflicts with the devils in the deserts of Egypt, we must perforce think rather more of it when we find amid the enlightenment and easy means of detection in modern times St. Francis Xavier praying before a devout picture of our Blessed Lady, the devils filling the church with angry howlings, striving in vain to frighten the Saint by horrid apparitions, and at last falling foul of him in good earnest, and beating him severely, till he is obliged to call on the Queen of Heaven, at whose potent name the baffled demons fly, and the Saint is forced to keep his bed for two days from the wounds and bruises he had received. And lastly, how differently must we look upon the claims of holy persons to have received the Stigmata, since the Church has granted mass and office of permission in honour of the Stigmata of St. Catherine of Sienna, and of precept in honour of those of St. Francis of Assisi.

VI. *A consideration of the date of the Saint, of the character of his biographer, and of the authority of the imprimatur attached to the Life.* There are very numerous cases in which this

criterion, though seemingly of low authority, will be found most useful. The accidents of date and birth-place, although they cannot affect the general supernatural character of a narrative in the way of despoiling it of its credibility, will often prove explanatory, and contribute probability or improbability to particular questions. This will apply especially to the biographies of holy men who lived under the Avignon popes, and to the shape in which things appear that at the time were pious opinions, but have since been defined, and to anecdotes involving matters of discipline previous to the Council of Trent. The character of the biographer must also of necessity enter as an ingredient in the deliberation, his means of information, his prejudices, his esprit de corps, the general evidence which his work bears of his power of cautious historical criticism, and the like. Rosignoli, for example, would not be a biographer of great weight. On this account, as has been said before, formal Lives drawn up later on and in connexion with the processes, are in most cases preferable to narratives composed on the spot, immediately after the Saint's death, and in the effervescence of popular devotion. But in the case of mystical Saints, the Lives drawn up by the Saints' contemporaries, and especially their confessors, would be much more to be selected. Hence the value of the Blessed Raymund of Capua's Life of St. Catherine of Sienna, of F. Sebastiano degli Angeli's Life of the Blessed Colomba of Rieti, and of Fra. Quinta Bevegnati's Life of St.

Margaret of Cortona. The auto-biographies of such Saints, e. g. the Life of St. Theresa and the beautiful Insinuations of St. Gertrude, hold a sort of middle place between history and theology, and are rather spiritual treatises of ascetical and mystical divinity than mere biographies. Giussano's Life of St. Charles Borromeo, written from personal observation and only seventeen years after his death, is a striking exception to this general rule, the reasons of which are readily to be found in the peculiar character of St. Charles himself, and the sort of influence he had over those about him. The great value of Lives drawn from the processes may be seen from what Benedict XIV. tells us, viz., that such a Life (*si processibus inniteretur*) may be adduced in the Congregation in proof of the *fama sanctitatis*; whereas Prosper Bottinius, when he was promoter of the faith, maintained in the cause of John of Ribera, that a modern life not drawn from the processes is inadmissible as evidence, and he proved his point from the decrees of Urban VIII. Thus F. Cepari's Life of St. Aloysius was examined by some cardinals, compared by them with the processes, and then approved by the pope; so that it is of very high authority indeed as a biography. Some Lives written by relations and intimate friends have occasionally been allowed of in the Congregation, and ratio had of them in the proceedings; this was the case with the Lives of St. Lawrence Justinian and St. Francis of Sales, written by their respective nephews. Peculiar

attention was paid to the depositions of confessors in the causes of St. Louis of France, St. Homobonus, St. Peter Martyr, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Catherine of Sienna, and St. Francesca Romana; and Bevegnati's Life of St. Margaret of Cortona, quoted above, was of great moment in her cause. An objection is sometimes made to accounts of miracles or celestial favours which could not be known except by the Saint's own disclosure; but the reader need not allow himself to be shaken by this. If he examines the rigid minuteness of the search after notes of vain-glory instituted in the Congregation, he may acquiesce in this alternative, that the servant of God has mentioned it either under obedience or else for the greater glory of God, as St. Paul mentioned things to his own credit, and Abbot John in Cassian, and St. Ignatius, and Venerable Bellarmine. If the servant of God has been either canonized or beatified, we durst hardly suppose them guilty of falsehood in such a subject-matter as supernatural favours from Almighty God. Taulerus even condemns the affixing of arms and inscriptions on buildings; Nicolaus Alemannius *de Lateranensis parietinis* takes a milder view; yet the eye of criticism fell upon the arms of Pius V. on a corner of the palace of the Holy Inquisition, and Card. Lambertini is at the pains of defending it. It is plain also that the Imprimatur is of *some* authority, whosoever it may be; and in the case of a series composed of volumes each of which has two or three or four Imprimaturs they form a

cumulative pressure upon our inclination to believe or reject, which is by no means despicable. Perhaps at some periods in the Church the Imprimatur of the Sorbonne has been known to have been most rigid and scrupulous, and so during those periods it carries all the more weight with it. The character of particular religious orders at times imparts a value to the Imprimatur of their theologians, especially when such orders have been distinguished through a long course of years for sound, solid, and discerning erudition, as was especially the case with the Augustinians and Dominicans. On the value of the *Roman* Imprimatur we cannot do better than quote the remarks of Gaume:* “There is a great difference between the Roman censors and those of other places. If it happens that a diocesan censor approves and gives his Imprimatur to a bad work, it is undoubtedly a great misfortune, but the evil is in some sort a private one. The Roman censors, it must not be forgotten, are the agents of the sovereign pontiff, named by himself, or by his immediate representative, and we may say that the pope is himself, as it were, the guarantee of their censures. If then a Roman censor should approve, and particularly if he should eulogize a work which contained one word contrary to what Rome teaches or permits to be taught, it would be a great evil for the whole Catholic world, and the pope would be obliged in condemning the censor to publish his

* *Man des Confess.* pref. p. xii. aliund citat.

mistake, in order to arrest the consequences of it. We must conclude then that it would be *at the least* very imprudent to blame a theological work approved, and particularly if praised, at Rome by the competent authorities." As an instance we may quote Pollidori's *Life of St. Dominic*, as *praised* in the Roman Imprimatur.

VII. *An inquiry as to how far the Church has committed herself in the matter.* This criterion is one of immense importance, and involves a great many questions of a theological nature. These it will be necessary to go into, even at the risk of being wearisome. First, then, it will be agreed on all hands, that no amount of sanction by the Church of God, even the very least degree which she ever accords, is a light or mean thing in the eyes and on the consciences of her children; she gives a dignity to whatsoever she touches. At the same time, if she has degrees of approval, and observes rules in the apportioning of those degrees, it is manifestly the duty of her children not to confound them one with another in an indiscreet and undiscerning way. On the one hand a man whose language implies that he has no respect except for what is *de fide*, and that he will submit to nothing else, is not only an ignorant man, but a very presumptuous one; he is as deficient in humility as he is in scholarship. On the other hand a man, who in the impetuosity of partisanship and the precipitate advocacy of favourite opinions, wilfully or negligently confounds the different degrees of the Church's approval, puts a falsehood into her mouth, and runs

the risk of driving others to the very edge of formal heresy. The test of all scholarship is moderation, and the special test of Catholic scholarship is humility besides. Now it is plain that in the subject under discussion the authority of the Church is of very great importance; all will admit that the infallibility of the Church, to speak metaphorically, radiates light and probability far beyond its own actual sphere, far beyond the points on which the weight of the infallible judgment directly falls. It is of importance to know how far it penetrates, and in what directions, of what particular value other and inferior judgments of the Church are, to what extent they bind, what they imply, how much collateral matter they embrace, and to what extent we may draw deductions from them, or flatter ourselves that at least the shadow of the sanction falls on those deductions. The greater value a man sets on religious truth, the more importance he attaches to all these questions, and the more simple he is in his way of dealing with them.

This opens the way to the following questions, the answers to which will complete what we have got to say, and discharge our obligation to our readers. 1. In speaking of beatification and canonization, What precisely is meant by the word *Church*, "the Church sanctions," "the Church pronounces," and the like? 2. What is the exact meaning of a thing being *de fide*, and if it is not *de fide*, is it necessarily only of human faith? 3. What is meant by

a servant of God being called *Venerable*, and by the decree that he has practised virtue in an heroic degree, and what authority attaches to it? 4. Is the decree of beatification a judgment, and if so, what sort of a judgment, and how does it differ from canonization? 5. Is the Church infallible in the canonization of Saints? 6. Is it *de fide* that the Church is infallible in the decree of canonization? 7. Is it *de fide* that the canonized Saint is really a Saint? In answering these questions we shall follow chiefly the doctrine of St. Thomas, Melchior Canus, Bellarmine, and Benedict XIV.; and we must premise that we shall speak throughout of the whole matter of beatification and canonization as it has been since the power was resumed from individual bishops to the Holy See; because antiquarian difficulties and moot points of history are quite irrelevant to our simple purpose. The reader should however be reminded, that when he reads or hears of Saints having been expunged from the calendar, the remark merely applies to local canonizations of bishops or popular devotion disallowed of by the Holy See; in no case to the canonizations of the popes, which would be impossible. Indeed the decrees of Urban VIII. about the *via non cultus* and the *via casus excepti* show the jealous care of the Holy See in this respect.

1. First, then, in speaking of beatification and canonization, What precisely is meant by the word *Church*? We answer—the permission or judgment, as the case may be, contained in the

decrees of the sovereign pontiff, whether declaratory of the exercise of virtue in an heroic degree, or beatifying, or definitively canonizing the Servants of God. Thus "the Church sanctions," would mean that the decree sanctions, or the pope sanctions, just as we say the Church says, for the Breviary says, i. e. the Church *in* the decree, *in* the Breviary; this, which is a usual and unobjectionable way of speaking, is actually necessary in order to avoid long descriptive circumlocutions at every turn. And let it be observed, that in reality there can be no controversy here, because if a member of a particular school of theology or from peculiar views of his own, were to deny that the infallible decree of canonization became infallible before it had been accepted by the universal Church, we should reply that dispute was unnecessary, because as a matter of fact all decrees of canonization have been, not tacitly only, but cum strepitu, received by the universal Church, and the mass and office of the Saint accepted and promulgated by the whole Catholic episcopate; so that on their own view we should be *substantially* right, though guilty of a little anachronism, in calling these decrees of the sovereign pontiff permissions and judgments of the Church from the very outset, from the moment of the Holy Father's solemn publication of them in the Vatican basilica. So when we use the word *Church*, we take the decisions come to in the causes of the Saints as in good truth her decisions; or in theological language, by the

word *Church* in this subject-matter we mean the Church *representative et docens* in contradistinction to the Church *credens*.

2. What is the exact meaning of a thing being *de fide*, and if it is not *de fide*, is it necessarily only of human faith? A thing is *de fide* because of the truth of God revealing it. Consequently dogmas are defined by the Church as *de fide*, not *precisely* because she is infallible about them, but because they are *aliunde revelata*. It does not therefore follow that the Church is not infallible about things not explicitly revealed, especially when they affect the salvation of the faithful. Canus* held that the Church was not infallible in the approval of religious orders; but his opinion is almost unanimously rejected by theologians. Thus the Church is infallible upon dogmatic facts, in her precept of holydays of obligation and of hearing mass, in her judgment of lay-communion in one kind, the refusal of the Eucharist to infants, the condemnation of simoniacal and usurious contracts, and the like; because faith, morals, and general discipline are laid down in theology as the three great provinces of her infallibility. Yet her decisions, although certainly infallible, are not necessarily *de fide* on such points, inasmuch as they are not explicitly revealed; simply because a thing is *de fide*, not *propter infallibilitatem ecclesiæ definientis*, but *propter veritatem Dei eam revelantis*. This is the common teaching. Now a

* l. 5. c. 5.

man might say, It is not revealed that such and such a canonized Saint really enjoys the beatific vision; therefore it cannot be *de fide* that he is truly a Saint. What would follow from this? Are we then able at once to refer such a matter to ordinary human faith, with all the liability to error under which mere human faith labours? Certainly not; and this is a question of some importance. An opponent has not so completely got rid of his difficulties, when he has extorted an acknowledgment that this or that is not *de fide*. Theologians reply that there are three kinds of faith, *human*, which rests on human authority, and as such is uncertain and obnoxious to error; *divine*, which rests on divine authority, and is infallible immediately and of itself; and *ecclesiastical* faith, which rests on the authority of the Church defining anything with the special assistance of the Holy Ghost, through which she is preserved from the possibility of error; and this faith is infallible with a participated and borrowed infallibility, inferior in degree to divine faith, but with a certitude raising it far above human faith. If therefore anything be shown to be *de fide ecclesiastica* it is not only entitled to our acceptance, but it even overrules all opposition, as a man, though not formally a heretic, would, to use the common phrases, be rash, scandalous, and impious, if he asserted the contrary; and inquiry would show that an immense proportion of what is involved in hagiology is at least and most certainly *de fide ecclesiastica*.

3. What is meant by a servant of God being called Venerable, and by the decree that he has practised virtue in an heroic degree, and what authority attaches to it? The title of *venerabilis* imports that the *fame* of a man's sanctity has been judicially proved; strictly speaking, according to the custom of the Congregation of Rites, they are styled Venerable in whose causes the commission of introduction has been signed. This *probatio famæ*, as it is called, is effected by witnesses, by historical documents, and by votive offerings and tablets hung up at the tomb of the servant of God, and the custom of the Congregation requires six or eight witnesses; as has been said before, a newly published Life not drawn from the processes cannot be adduced among the documents, but an ancient one, or by an author of approved authority, may be admitted. The commission of introduction is signed by the pope, and addressed to the Congregation. Sometimes in one brief he gives the faculty for proceeding both in genere and in specie; this was done in the cause of St. Philip Neri; sometimes the two faculties are granted in two separate briefs; this was done in the cause of St. Theresa. The signing of the commission does not legitimate the beginning of any cultus, but enables remissorial and compulsorial letters to be uttered in order to the formation of the *apostolical* processes, and by it the Holy See takes the whole matter under its own jurisdiction, and the local bishops and ordinaries can no longer interfere. In 1629 the Congrega-

tion of the Holy Inquisition punished the Clerks Regulars with great severity for having shown public cultus to St. Francis Caracciolo at Naples, before he was canonized; and 1648 the Fathers of the Sick were visited with a like infliction for a similar offence with regard to St. Camillus of Lellis. The resolution of the question, whether it is plain that the servant of God has practised virtue in an heroic degree, precedes the discussion of his miracles. The custom of the Congregation is to discuss the *dubium de virtutibus theologis* at one time, and the *dubium de virtutibus cardinalibus* at another, as was done in the case of St. Francis of Sales; but a dispensation from this was procured and acted upon in the causes of the Blessed Ippolito Galantini, St. Francis Solano, Cardinal Bellarmine, Cardinal Ximenes, and others. It is during this discussion that all singular and unwonted actions of the servants of God, and all deeds seemingly opposed to the divine or natural law, are subjected to the rigorous examination already described, to see whether they may be safely referred to a special instinct of the Holy Ghost, according to the tests supplied by Cardinal Bona, Castellinus, Ven. Louis da Ponte, and others; neither is it lawful to proceed to the discussion of the miracles till the question of the virtues has been settled. The style of the decree is as follows: The relator of the cause propounds the doubt in the presence of the pope; the pope hears the votes of the cardinals and consultors in favour of the decree, but his Holiness, decreeing no-

thing at the time, flies in prayer to the Giver of all virtues, beseeching Him to make known the Sacrament of His Will; then on a subsequent day he sanctions the decree *infallibili suæ vocis oraculo in casu et ad effectum de quo agitur*. Thus the title of Venerable puts the *fame* of a man's sanctity beyond mere hearsay of local rumour, and draws the eyes of Catholics very markedly upon him. The decree of the heroicity of his virtue certifies us that his extraordinary actions have passed the difficult and intricate ordeal of the Congregation, and so far as the virtues are concerned gives us a sentence as much more certain than the decision of the best law-court in the world, as the process is more severe, the tests more sure, and the authority of the judges more weighty; and this is only what sceptical lawyers have themselves admitted.

4. Is the decree of beatification* a judgment, and if so, what sort of a judgment, and how does it differ from canonization? We must distinguish. There are two kinds of beatification; first, *formal*, in which, the virtues and miracles of the servant of God being proved, the sovereign pontiff allows him to be called by the title of "beatus," and grants mass and office in his honour (this is not always done in the decree),

* For the doctrine of the following paragraphs see St. Thomas, Canus, Benedict XIV., Suarez, Bellarmine, Billuart, Bouvier, St. Alphonso, and Ferraris: it is useless to make separate reference, as their doctrine is found within a small compass under its proper head in their respective works.

though generally with some local restriction; the second is called *æquipollent*, and that is, when the pope allows the ancient fame of a servant of God, and confirms the local sentence of the ordinary or delegate approving the cultus paid to him. In the case of *æquipollent* beatification it is more a concession than a judgment, because it proceeds rather on extrajudicial grounds; in the case of formal beatification it is rather a judgment than a concession, although as a judgment it is neither definitive nor final. Secondly, in the case of *æquipollent* beatification it is *most probable* that the decision is not infallible, both because of its proceeding in an extrajudicial way, and because the popes in their confirmatory letters generally insert a clause reserving the right of the Congregation, and thus making the sentence revocable. In the case of formal beatification the decision is *probably* infallible, because it has proceeded in a judicial way upon the examination of the virtues and miracles, because it is a solemn approbation of cultus, because it is intimately connected with morals, and grave inconveniences would result from the possibility of error, and because the mass of the beatus is granted; although Benedict XIV. shows that for this last a moral certainty of the beatitude would be sufficient. At the same time it is by no means certain that it is infallible; the probability against its being so seems to some nearly equal to the probability that it is, because the judgment is not absolute and definitive, because it is not directed to the universal Church, and

because no precept is uttered in the matter, but rather a concession made, or if a precept is uttered, it is to a restricted locality. Thus a man who should maintain that a beatification was erroneous and a cultus approbatus wrong, would not be guilty of heresy, but of scandal and temerity. 3. Canonization and beatification differ in these respects; the first is an ultimate and definitive sentence, the second only preparatory and directed towards a future one; the first is a judgment strictly and properly so called, the second partakes very much of the nature of a concession; the first is directed to the universal Church, the second to a particular province, diocese, city, or religious order, and can never be more than *permissive* to the universal Church. Beatification therefore may be defined to be a preparatory act, importing a cultus permissus, mostly limited to a particular place: whereas canonization is an ultimate act, importing a cultus præceptus, extending to the whole Church. In decrees of beatification the style of the sovereign pontiffs is, *Indulgemus, Concedimus*; in the decrees of canonization, *Definimus, Decernimus, Mandamus*.

Mention ought to be made here of the controversy among Catholic doctors, whether the difference between canonization and beatification is essential or only accidental. Valentia, Tannerus, Henno, Aniaga, Viva, and Diana on the one side maintain, that in beatification the pope is infallible only with a moral infallibility, *infra fidem*, because beatification differs essen-

tially from canonization, so that he who denies the glory of a beatus is not a formal heretic, but simply "rash, scandalous, impious, and savouring of heresy."* The grounds of this opinion are, first, that beatification is not the ultimate judgment of the Church, as canonization is; and, secondly, that the pope's style, *concedimus, indulgemus, impartimur*, as contrasted with his style in canonization, proves this. Then on the other hand, Leytan, Verricelli, Castropalao, Matthæucci, Felix Potestas, Bordonus, and others, maintain that the difference between beatification and canonization is merely accidental; for, first, beatification is proceeded to in the same way as canonization, i. e. with the invocation of the Holy Ghost; secondly, at least an implicit judgment is given that the beatus is in the enjoyment of the beatific vision; thirdly, the same

* A man desirous of signalizing himself by novelty of teaching in the Church without actually incurring the awkward consequences of formal heresy, may find, if he has a tolerably hardened conscience, ample scope in the extensive field of censurable matter, without running foul of one tittle that is de fide; for he may incur twenty-three different censures, and yet steer clear of formal heresy: his doctrines may be savouring of heresy, suspected of heresy, close upon heresy, schismatical, Jewish, pagan, atheistical, blasphemous, impious, erroneous, close upon error, savouring or suspected of error, scandalous, temerarious, seditious, ill-sounding, offensive to pious ears, lax, likely to seduce the simple, insane, fabulous and lying, apocryphal, improbable, and antiquated! Propositions of this last kind are defined to be such as were anciently admitted to be probable, because no certain principle opposed to them was recognized, but which now, although not expressly condemned, find themselves incompatible with a later decree of the Roman chair. Thus we find ourselves at the end of censures where we were started in the principles of theology—at the *Cathedra Romana*. See Ferraris sub Propp. *Damnat.* 21—45.

inconveniences to the holiness of the Church would result from the fallibility of a decree of beatification as from that of a decree of canonization; and, fourthly, the honours paid to a *beatus* are precisely those which Bellarmine says are *essential* to the cultus of a Saint. To the first objection they reply, that the judgment in beatification is ultimate as far as it goes, because there is no new examination for canonization either of the virtues of the servant of God, or of the miracles he wrought in his lifetime, or of the miracles wrought between his death and beatification, but only of the *continuation* of miracles since his beatification: to the second objection they reply, that as well by the style of beatification as of canonization the pope declares the servant of God to be in glory. Hence they conclude with Pignatelli, that the former doctrine "is not from the apostolic See, and therefore cannot stand," and with Conterolus, that "beatification is in effect nothing else but a certain particular canonization celebrated with less pomp," and that, as Ferraris sums up, by the acts of beatification and canonization the faithful are certified that the soul of the beatified or canonized servant of God is in glory, with this difference, that in canonization they believe it as by a form *expressly* definitive and pronounciative, in beatification by a form concessive and *implicitly* definitive. "Hence," says that eminent canonist, "the greater number of classical doctors hold it to be *of faith*, that the

pope cannot err, not only in canonization, but also in beatification."*

5. Is the Church infallible in the canonization of Saints? We must say something by way of prefacing our answer to this question. Canonization is the public testimony of the Church to the true sanctity and glory of some one of the faithful departed. This testimony is issued in the form of a judgment decreeing to the person in question the honours due to those who are enjoying the beatific vision and reigning with God. By this decree he is inscribed in the catalogue of the Saints; he is invoked in the public prayers of the Church; churches are dedicated to God in memory of him, mass offered, the canonical hours recited, and his feasts kept; and, finally, his picture is allowed to be painted with rays and nimbus, denoting the glory that he has with God, and public honours are paid to his relics. This shows the folly of Protestant scholars in supposing that they have arrived at some conclusion or other against the Church, if they can show that the honour of relics, nimbus, and the like, are of pagan origin, imitations of heathen customs. The very little erudition required to dress up any section of Middleton's stale arguments renders it extremely tempting to incipient controversialists. But if these things were imitations of heathen customs, what of it? *Quid ad rem?*

* For some account of this controversy see Ferraris sub vocab *Venerat. Sanctor.* n. n. 11—15 et sub *Papa* n. n. 53—57.

Christians are not obliged to have domestic manners and customs different from those of other men. If the Church of God chooses to take any assignable custom, and make it the subject of decrees, and lay people under censures and penalties who use it out of place or time, the question is one of intrinsic fitness or intrinsic truthfulness; and the origin of the custom is simply one of sterile, however interesting, antiquarianism. Hence, how unmeaning is the cry of triumph raised, because a man discovers what possibly no moderately instructed Catholic ever doubted, that such or such a custom existed in the Roman republic and early empire before the establishment of the Church. How does this touch the real, theological, or intrinsic merit of the question? We find that in cases of *cultus immemorabilis* the diadems, aureoles, splendours, and rays round the paintings of ancient Saints are investigated, and the question whether these ornaments are of the same date with the painting is jealously entertained, and artists sent from Rome to examine and report to the Congregation. We find also, and it gives us some notion how carefully these honours are separated and distributed, that on February 19, 1658, Alexander XII. decreed "*beatorum capita radiolis, non diademate ornari debere.*" Now if a Protestant, with the natural readiness of *his* educated instinct, turns to pagan times for proofs of rays and glories and nimbus, he is welcome; meanwhile a Catholic, with the natural readiness of *his* educated instinct, turns, surely with equal

right, to Hebrew or to Christian times, and finds authority for his nimbus in the transfiguration of his Saviour, in the case of the protomartyr Stephen, and still farther back in the remarkable instance of Moses; and so at last the Catholic scholar has it in antiquity as well as in respectfulness for the customs of the Church of God.*

* 18. etc. Antiquitatem cultus S. Gregorii desumunt Bollandiani ex eo, quod Anastasius VI. post 60 annos a Gregorii obitu in abside Sacelli S. Nicolai, a Callisto II. in urbe constructi, eundem cum aliorum sanctorum insignibus depingi jusserit. Hoc Sacellum in antiquo Lateranensi patriarchio, licet in Pœnitentiariorum collegium commutato, adhuc remanet cum altari, in cujus abside pictura extat, repræsentans in parte superiori imaginis B. Virginis filium in sinu gerentis, duorum angelorum circumstantium, Pontificum Callisti II., et Anastasii IV. neonon SS. Sylvestri et Anastasii. In parte vero inferiori imagines Crucifixi, SS. Dominici, et Francisci, æ SS. Pontificum Leonis III., Urbani II., Paschalis II., Gelasii II., Gregorii II., Alexandri II., Gregorii VII., et Victoris III., hinc inde dispositas, et pontificalibus vestibus, mitra, ac diademato orbiculato, ac titulo *sancti* ornatas. Olim aderat imago S. Nicolai Myrensis episcopi, et loco SS. Leonis III., et Gregorii II., erant imagines, SS. Leonis Magni, et Gregorii Magni, eodem modo ornatae, testibus Panvinio, Severano (de sep. urb. eccl.) aliisque. Ex hac itaque tabula initium cultus S. Gregorii VII. ad Anastasium IV. referendum esse constat. In ea quippe Callistus II. sacelli ædificator, et Anastasius IV. instaurator apparent ad pedes B. Virginis provoluti, ut in antiquis musivis ecclesiarum Urbis conspiciuntur imagines Pontificum, qui dictas ecclesias ædificaverant, vel instauraverant, quorum exempla referunt Ciampinus (de ædif. a Const. constit. c. 4, tab. 23, et in veter. monim. to 2, cap. 13, tab. 23,) et alii. Eorum capita diademate quadrato ornata sunt, sicuti viventes Pontifices pingi solebant, teste Turrigio (in not. ad hist. mart. S. Theod.) cum aliis. Aliorum vero Pontificum capita diadema circulatam ornat, sanctitatis, et cultus ecclesiastici argumentum, juxta interpretes sacrae Scripturae et alios. Idem refert Turrigius cit. Hic Pontifex translato ejus corpore ab ecclesia Avenionensi ad monasterium S. Victoris Massiliensis, miraculis claruisse dicitur, ejusque canonizationem Waldemarus Daniæ rex a Gregorio XI. Carolus Galliarum, et Ludovicus Siciliae reges a Clemente VII. pseudopontifice petierunt. Hic ad quosdam suæ obedientiaæ præsules literas dedit ut processum super ejusdem

All the historical controversies regarding canonization, its essential difference from the superstitious apotheosis of the heathen, all questions regarding the local and episcopal canonizations before the Holy See reserved the matter to itself, when Alexander III.* canonized our own King Edward, St. Bernard (in the bull of whose canonization no mention whatever is made of miracles) and St. Thomas of Canterbury, are irrelevant to our purpose, inasmuch as they do not apply to the cases we are contemplating, neither do they in any way involve the Church or her head. Our question is, Is the Church infallible in the canonization of Saints? Most certainly.

It is proved,

1. By the acceptance on the part of the whole Church of the solemn decrees of canonization which the popes have published for several centuries. If such decrees, or any of them were false, the universal Church would have approved error.

2. The opposite opinion would subvert all the

virtutibus, et miraculis conficerent, quæ si cum aliis monumentis, et scriptoribus conjungantur, Urbani sanctitatem, et miracula plurimum commendant. Porro testatur Philippus Bonarrotius (in obser. ad fragm. ant. vas. vitr. tab. 9, fig. 1 et 2,) morem pingendi orbiculatam coronam circa angelorum capita cepisse initio sæculi V. receptum fuisse in fine VI. et post VII. ad sanctorum imagines fuisse productum. *Bened. XIV. de canonizat. lib. 1. cap. XLI. S. X.*

* There is a question about the first solemn canonization; some say it was Leo III.'s canonization of St. Swibert in 804; Mabillon and Papebroch decide in favour of the canonization of St. Ulrich by John XV. in 993.

cultus of the Saints, because if it could be *once* admitted that the Church had erred in any particular instance, every body might doubt of the legitimacy of the cultus of any, even the most distinguished Saints.

3. The opposite opinion would expose the Church to the contempt and reviling of heretics, and of the demons, which would be contrary to the promises of Christ, and dishonourable to God.

4. The opposite opinion would destroy the note of sanctity in the Church, for it would admit that she *could* pay religious cultus to the damned, God's enemies and the companions of the devils.

5. The Church is infallible in the common doctrine of morals; the canonization of Saints pertains to the common doctrine of morals, and so falls under the infallibility of the Church.

6. The authority of St. Thomas,* is in favour of this. In the passage cited he says that the canonization of Saints is something between things which pertain ad fidem, and things which pertain ad facta, and that the Church is infallible in such matter, because the honour we pay to the Saints is a kind of profession of faith, because the pope can only be certified of the state of any of the faithful departed by an instinct of the Holy Ghost, and because Divine Providence preserves the Church in such cases from being deceived by the fallible testimony of men.

* Quodlib. 9. 16.

7. Sixtus V., in the last consistory for the canonization of St. Didacus, spoke for an hour in assertion of the infallibility of the decrees of canonization, but it may be said that he was then speaking as a private doctor; yet even so, his opinion is of great weight.

8. Besides the Thomists, the Scotists also defend the pope's infallibility in the decrees of canonization; so that these two rival schools agree in this particular; and among moderns Bellarmine and Suarez may be mentioned as asserters of the same.

9. In canonizations by private bishops before the Holy See reserved it to itself errors have been discovered; but none has been discovered in all the very numerous decrees since that time.

10. The following very beautiful passage of Benedict XIV. will not be considered without its weight: * "We ourselves, who for the space of so many years discharged the duties of promoter of the faith, have seen with our own eyes, as we may say, the Divine Spirit assisting the Roman Pontiff in defining the causes of canonization; for in some of them, which had advanced so far with a most prosperous course, sudden difficulties never known before have all at once started up, which retarded their hitherto fortunate career; whereas in others, on the contrary, difficulties, which seemed insuperable, have been removed and silenced with a strange facility from

* De can. i. 44. 4.

things which have unexpectedly come to light, and so the causes have attained their desired end."

The judgment of the Church therefore in the Canonization of Saints is infallible.

Objections answered. 1. "The church in the canonization of Saints rests on human testimony." Yes, yet not on human testimony alone, but also on the special assistance of Divine Providence.

2. "Many have been honoured as Saints who were not so." By particular churches, granted; by the Church universal, no: this explains the case of the robber in the Life of St. Martin, the man killed in a fit of drunkenness mentioned by Alexander III., and the reckoning of Eusebius of Cæsarea among the Saints in the Martyrologium Usuarde. The often-quoted words of St. Augustine, that many bodies are honoured on earth whose souls are tormented in hell, are first of all not his, and, secondly, have no necessary reference to the Saints, or to anything beyond cultus civilis.

3. "The Martyrologies are proposed to the whole Church." Yes, but not as proposing those whose names are contained in them to the cultus of the universal Church, but that men may know to whom cultus is paid in particular places.

4. "Many of the names of Saints have been struck out of the Roman Breviary."—The contents of the Roman Breviary are not proposed to the Church as defined, or as obliging the

faithful; for the historical facts which it contains, though they merit more than ordinary credence, may be subjected to a fresh examination, and may even be criticised by private scholars, provided it is done with moderation and respectfulness, and not without grave reason. The Holy See has itself made changes and corrections in the Breviary from time to time.

5. "The Church cannot judge infallibly of personal facts." Of personal facts considered in themselves she does not judge; but of personal facts which in any given case are essentially connected with the purity of doctrine and morals she can and does judge; and the facts on which the judgment of canonization is founded are such.

6. "There is no need to bring infallibility into this question; because the inconvenience of a person being revered as a Saint who is not one is more imaginary than real; for cultus is an act of practical virtue, namely religion, and requires therefore for its regulation a judgment practically, but not of necessity speculatively, true, just as there is no inconvenience in a Host, prudently supposed to be consecrated, but in reality not so, being adored." *Answer.* The practical judgment is sufficient for the individual in the case of any particular Saint, the speculatively true judgment of the church being presupposed; for, as has been shown, to suppose the Church possibly in error in this is to derogate both from her sanctity and honour. As to the unconsecrated Host, there is no parity be-

tween the two cases; first of all, the Church does not judge this or that Host in particular to be consecrated; and, secondly, Christ is adored under the species, so that supposing Him not present there, there still remains a true Object of adoration, i. e. Christ himself. Whereas if the reputed Saint be not a Saint, he is an object of execration, not of veneration. If it is objected that after all it is God who is honoured in the Saints—true, but the Saints themselves are also *specifically* honoured and invoked.

7. "There may be an error in relics exposed to public veneration without any such grave consequences being supposed to flow from the mistake: why will not the same hold in regard to Saints proposed to public veneration?" First, because the Church does not propose the particular relics as true; and, secondly, because the Saint is the direct object of cultus, relics are not; it is the Saint who is revered in and through them.

The judgment of the Church therefore in the canonization of Saints is infallible.

6. Is it *de fide* that the Church is infallible in the decree of canonization? This is an open question in the Catholic schools. They who maintain the negative argue as follows:

1. St. Thomas places the judgment of the Church in canonization as something between a judgment in matters of faith and a judgment on particular facts, and therefore it would follow that the infallibility of the decree is a pious

belief, but nothing more, inasmuch as it only pertains to the faith *reductivè*.

2. It is de fide that the Church is infallible in the common doctrine of morals; but it is not so certain that the canonization of Saints pertains to the common doctrine of morals.

3. The Church has never defined her infallibility in this matter to be de fide, neither can we collect it from her practice.

4. The great names of Suarez, Vasquez, Canus, Raynaudus and the doctors of Salamanca, are found on this side of the question.

They who maintain the affirmative argue as follows :

1. He is a heretic who asserts that the pope can err in making laws for the universal Church; now the canonization of a Saint is such a law; and as no one is a heretic who does not deny what is de fide, this must be de fide.

2. The Church can define as de fide a conclusion drawn from two premisses, one of which is of faith, and the other morally certain: now it is de fide that whosoever perseveres in virtue to the end will be saved, and it is morally certain from the processes that the Saints whom the Church has canonized persevered to the end. Ergo,

3. In scripture God delineates the qualities of those who shall be saved; therefore He implicitly reveals those who shall be saved: the supreme pontiff with the assistance of the Holy Spirit examines the virtues and miracles, and so pronounces the decree.

4. Bishop Bouvier adds to the arguments quoted by Benedict XIV. the following: We must pass the same judgment on this infallibility that we do on the infallibility regarding dogmatic facts. It seems of *divine* faith that the Church has the right of pronouncing infallibly in the canonizations of Saints; for the Church is infallible regarding precepts of morals, and canonization pertains obviously to precepts of morals. This last argument certainly seems to incline the balance of probability to the affirmative side of the question; and Benedict XIV. says, we know by the decrees of general councils, that it is of faith that the Saints and their relics are to be revered; we know that the sentence of canonization is definitive and infallible, and regards the universal Church; we know that the Council of Constance condemned Wickliffe for denying the beatitude of certain Saints, e. g. St. Augustine, St. Benedict, and St. Bernard; we know that in the bull of the canonization of St. Udalric by John XV. in the Lateran Council, excommunication is pronounced against those who oppose it, and excommunication seems the punishment proper to heresy,* and all these things greatly favour the affirmative sentence.

It seems then *probable* that it is *de fide* that the judgment of the Church in canonization is infallible; but beyond this assertion of a strong probability we must not venture to go, especially

* Yet not to heresy exclusively, as it is sometimes inflicted for blasphemous, scandalous, or suspicious propositions, as is plain from the bull Unigenitus.

seeing such great names for the negative opinion. It is safer to conclude with the wise and learned Lambertini, that each opinion should be left in its own probability, until a judgment shall issue from the Holy See; for when we are treating of setting up a dogma of faith, says the same careful theologian in another place, we must wait for the judgment of the Apostolic See; the mother and mistress of the other Churches, and of the chief pontiff, to whom it exclusively belongs to make definitions of faith, before we venture to brand with the infamous note of heresy those who follow an opposite opinion.

We may however add so much as this. It would seem that the most tangible ground any one can have for saying that it is not *de fide* that the pope is infallible in canonization is this—that it is not beyond all controversy certain that the matter of canonization affects in any real or intimate way the morals of the universal Church. It is hard to see however how this can be maintained with anything like plausibility; the direct or indirect effects of canonization have been enumerated in another place, as well as the degree to which all ranks and parties in the Church are committed to it; so we need not repeat them here. But it may materially assist us in deciding this question, to consider the controversy about the infallibility of the pope in the approval of religious orders. Melchior Canus denied this infallibility, but the almost universal teaching of Catholic doctors is against him. Sessa, Diana, Leytan, Viva, Matthæucci, Barbosa, Valentia, Azorius, Bellarmine, and Bannes, are

all arrayed against him by Ferraris, and Benedict XIV. equally gives sentence against him, and speaks of his opinion as being generally rejected. The ground on which it is considered that the pope is infallible in the approbation of a religious order is, that the rule to be approved is a comment upon or interpretation of the evangelical counsels intimately affecting the morals of the Church. To this it is objected first of all, that religious orders are nowhere revealed by God, and therefore cannot be the subject-matter of the pope's infallibility; and, secondly, that their existence is but contingent, as they can be suppressed, and in point of fact many have been so suppressed. To the first objection it is answered, that religious orders are not revealed as to their existence, but that they are so as to their lawfulness and sanctity indirectly in the principle that the Church is holy and has an infallible head; to the second it is replied, that they are contingent as to their existence, not as to their lawfulness and sanctity. Thus every one must see that it is their connexion with the morals of the Church which brings them under the exercise of the pope's infallibility. For example, the question arises whether a man can lawfully give up his right to receive fraternal correction before his fault is laid before superiors. Sanchez at once decides that he can; Philarchus as positively declares that he cannot; the theologians of Salamanca rule that a man may yield his right, but that another may not take the advantage of this concession. St. Alphonso sees his way to adopt the first opinion

by the following process:—the constitutions of the Jesuits distinctly assert the right to this renunciation, and it is one of their maxims of perfection; but Paul III. and Julius III. approved these constitutions, especially those that were most attacked and contradicted, and Gregory XIII. in the Bull *Ascendente Domino* excommunicated those who should any longer impugn them; now, says St. Alphonso, the Church cannot err in the approbation of religious orders, because such approbation has reference to the matter of morals; whereupon he declares that Piliarchus has incurred the charge of rashness and impiety for his attack upon the said constitutions. Here is a case where the practical effect of this approbation is seen at work, and a judgment of moral theology come to upon the strength of it. Yet surely canonization has far more numerous and more important bearings upon Catholic morals than the approval of a religious rule, and the existence of the cultus of a Saint *canonized by the Holy See* is not contingent as the existence of a rule is; and if it is decided by the general teaching in Catholic schools that the approval of a rule is intimately connected with morals, much more may we consider the connexion of canonization with morals as a fact about which no legitimate question can now be raised, the whole controversy about *Dogmatic Facts* having thrown a much stronger and clearer light upon matters of this sort.

7. Is it *de fide* that the canonized Saint is really a Saint? Those who maintain the negative side in the last question argue thus:—1.

If the infallibility of the Church in canonization is not *de fide*, a fortiori it is not *de fide* that each canonized Saint really enjoys the beatific vision: for, first, it is plainly not a matter of *immediate* revelation, and, secondly, if the Church's infallibility in this respect is not *de fide* itself, the glory of any particular Saint is not a matter of *mediate* revelation.

2. Nothing can be put by the Church among the dogmas of faith which is neither implicitly nor virtually revealed: now the sanctity of any one in particular is neither implicitly nor virtually revealed. This is denied by those who take the affirmative side, in their third argument quoted in the last question. Supposing however the present objection valid, it will, as its own partisans are careful to assert, by no means follow that cultus could be denied with impunity to any Saint, just as adoration could not be refused at the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, although it is not *de fide* that that particular Host is consecrated.

They who maintain the affirmative say—

1. That St. Thomas says that the honour we pay to the Saints is a kind of profession of faith with which we believe in the glory of the Saints; but the faith wherewith we believe in the glory of the Saints is divine faith; therefore the faith wherewith we honour a particular Saint is divine. This seems inconclusive, because the glory of the Saints *in general* is revealed, whereas according to the hypothesis of the opponent, the glory of the *particular* Saint is not revealed, so that as an answer to the last objection it is

a *petitio principii*. Supposing however the glory of a particular Saint to be implicitly revealed, as in affirmation 3 of the preceding question, then it seems valid in fact, but informal in statement.

2. That the assistance of the Holy Spirit is itself a revelation; but this seems untenable; else the fathers of the councils would become inspired writers and speakers, and their definitions the Word of God; for it is one thing to preserve a person from error when he speaks, and another thing to tell him what to say.

This question like the last, with which it is nearly identical, or at least involved in it, must remain in its uncertainty, until it has been defined. All we can do is to conclude practically with St. Bonaventure, that it would be a most incredible and most horrible thing to doubt of the true beatitude of any one whom the Church has canonized; with Melchior Canus, that a man who did so would be temerarious, impudent, and irreligious; with Benedict XIV. that he would be rash, give scandal to the Church, dishonour the Saints, favour the heretics who deny the authority of the church in canonization, and would himself savour of heresy, as preparing the way for infidels to deride the faithful; that that man would be an asserter of an erroneous opinion, and obnoxious to the heaviest penalties, who should dare to affirm that the sovereign pontiff had erred in this or that canonization, or that this or that Saint canonized by him was not to be revered with the *cultus duliæ*; and, finally, with the Dominican Billuart, that

whosoever should deny that any one canonized by the Church was a Saint and in glory would not certainly be a formal heretic, but would be, first, temerarious, because he would contradict the common opinion of the Church in a matter excellently well founded, and whose opposite has no adequate foundation; it is the most insolent madness, says St. Augustine, to dispute whether that ought to be done which the whole Church does; secondly, scandalous, as drawing the faithful away from the cultus of the Saints; thirdly, impious, as insulting and dishonouring the Church and her Saints; and, fourthly, he would savour of the heresy of the sectaries who deride the canonizations of the Church, and deny the cultus and invocation of Saints. Still let us remember, for the very possibilities of charity are dear to a disciple of the Cross, the words with which Pritanius closes a similarly severe conclusion: *Suspicionem hæresis memoravi, non autem hæresim formalem.**

These then are the tests which we venture to propose, in order to render the study of the Lives of the Saints, even the most mystical and supernatural, safe as well as edifying. These are the points on which the reader should keep his eye steadily fixed, not with monotonous gaze, but with a glance which can fall easily and at once on the point which happens to be most to his purpose:—1. Analogy with the faith; 2. analogy with the received opinion of doctors and

* St. Bonaven. ap. Catharinum li. and Raynaud in corona aurea R. P. p. 153, Canus. l. 5. p. 166. Scacch. de not et sig. Sect. 1. Cap. 8. Pritan. de ingen moderat. lib. 1. c. 17. ap. Bened. i. 45.

the faithful ; 3. dissimilitude to heresy and fanaticism ; 4. harmony with what is recorded of other Saints ; 5. corroborations in the Lives of Saints who spent their days in practical activity and outward philanthropy in the world, for strange events in the lives of mystical and cloistered Saints ; 6. a consideration of the date of the Saint, of the character of his biographer, and of the authority of the imprimatur attached to the Life ; 7. an inquiry as to how far the Church has committed herself in the matter. The claim of anything to be received in spite of prima facie objections will vary in force according as one or two or more of these tests may be found to tell in its favour ; and the force will vary farther according to the importance of the tests which concur in behalf of the claim, and their value will perhaps be found to be proportioned to the order in which we have placed them. Besides this, the tests will not only enable a man to get over prima facie difficulties, but will enable him to discern what amount of credibility or authority he is to give to any point in question, and where it will be unsafe for him to proceed farther, either as leading him to tamper with the analogy of faith, or to trespass beyond the limits of a sober criticism. *In most matters it is safer to believe too much than too little ; in hagiology it is safer to believe too little than too much.* This is not said off hand, and may be valuable as a rule.

It may be asked, If these seven tests are classed in the proper order of their importance, how comes it that the authority of the Church

is mentioned last? Because, although its importance on the general bearing of the question is immense, its influence upon particular facts is much below this. It does not lay an actual hold of particular instances, as the first five tests do, and though much more weighty in itself, it does not come so near to single cases as the sixth test, which approaches them, though it cannot be said to touch each case in particular, so as to give a distinct authority to it. Putting aside, out of humility and as unfit for argument, as well the miracles quoted in the decrees, as the remarkable actions occasionally eulogized in particular bulls, the Church does not select and indicate for authorization and approval the several facts recorded of the Saints; she hangs a glory round the Saint and the character of his sanctity, which does indeed indirectly illuminate the particular examples of his virtues and gifts, but not to such a degree as to remove them each from the light of their own probability drawn from their intrinsic evidence or the outward testimony which they can legitimately claim. Yet on the other hand we must remember the curious and significant fact that Benedict XIII. made his bulls of canonization extremely short, expressly alleging his fear lest otherwise people should think lightly of what was omitted in the bulls. Thus the seventh test is rather directed to the temper of mind and the degree of respectfulness with which we are bound to proceed to the examination of particular cases, than to our direct judgment on the cases themselves; and as this temper and

respectfulness are moral matters and of primary importance when we come to handle truth, so it is also of primary importance to know the meaning of this or that action or judgment of the Church, and how to graduate the scale of her various approvals according to her own mind and intention.

These remarks are offered in answer to questions and difficulties put before our notice ; and it is hoped that the clergy especially will bear with what will seem to them very old and elementary matter, as even that has been found not without its difficulties to inquirers who deserve an answer. Great pains has been taken to moderate the expressions of opinion, to adhere to the theologians principally followed in the schools, and especial jealousy has been used to prevent anything from being overstated, or even dubious examples from being quoted ; and now if it does not seem like using very great words for a very little matter, we would conclude by submitting the whole, in substance, form, and language, not only to the Holy Roman Church, as in devout obedience bound, but to the judgment and authority of our own immediate superiors, who speak the voice and represent the will of God to us.

Many years ago the late Mr. Southey mentioned to the writer of this Essay, that when he had safely housed his fine copy of the Bollandists in his library, he set to work to read it through. This feat he accomplished by putting a card at the top of a column, and drawing it rather rapidly down, his quick eye following the

receding card, and if it lighted on any word that was a sign-post to something of interest, he looked into the passage; if not, he sped on; and he said that the result of the whole voluminous collection was only the matter for All for Love and the Pilgrimage to Compostella, a very attenuated duodecimo brochure of sparsely printed verse! Every one who knew Mr. Southey's studious habits will easily take this for a conversational exaggeration; yet it serves to illustrate the different value we set on things according to our positions. The object of this Essay is to put a very different price upon the Lives and Legends of the Saints; such a value as one would put, who, with faith in St. Philip's method, had used the narration of Saints' Lives as a weapon of missionary warfare, and had seen, not the breathless interest only or the ready tear of peasant crowds, but the abiding influence for good, the heightened love of God, and the more persevering pursuit of virtue. If it is a problem to some, who have to deal with converts of the lower orders, how to destroy in them the lingering sympathies with dissent, and the sectarian humours only superficially catholicized, and to give them the tone and feeling of children of the Church, let missionaries try the recitation of the Lives of Saints, after the fashion of the Oratory, in lieu of sermons, not too frequently, but as the feasts furnish occasions: let them relate the acts of St. Cecilia, St. Agnes, St. Martina, and those early Saints, whose blood made Rome, our holy city, the Jerusalem of Catholics, or let them tell the stories of some

of our own simple Saints, such as St. Winefride, St. Ebba of Coldingham, St. Wilfrid, and St. Edmund of Canterbury, so as to give them sympathies with their own native land as it was beneath the sweet and blessed yoke of faith; and by the grace of God and the good offices of the Saints, they will see how quickly a Catholic mind will be formed in their people, and how successfully the debasing alloy of old Protestant ideas will be drawn off from them. If we have succeeded in drawing out as strongly as we might have done, how *imitation* is the grand, if not the sole aim, of the Church in canonization, we may add that it does not at all appear how that end can be adequately answered except through Lives of Saints. The recitation of the divine office is confined to clergy and religious, and even if it were not so, the beautifully and admirably compressed lections are more suited to quicken the memory than to inform it. It certainly does seem as though the Church would fail in accomplishing the object of canonization, were it not for that huge body of literature which we call hagiology.

Let us not then hastily reject the Lives of Saints as dangerous reading, or indulge in immoderate expressions of exaggerated apprehension as to their effects. St. Alphonso Liguori, in old age as in youth, after the toils of his episcopal day, was ever found by the light of his midnight lamp conning the Lives of Saints. What must we think of the importance of this reading, when we find St. Catherine of Sienna telling her confessor, that, without any reading at all, the Holy

Ghost had miraculously given her an entire knowledge of the Lives and customs of the Fathers of the Desert, and of the actions of some other Saints, particularly St. Dominic, and that she could think of nothing else? It was thus that the Blessed Spirit tutored one who was so specially His spouse. Let a man read the Lives of the Saints, said St. Philip Neri, who was constantly poring, especially in his latter years, over the Chronicles of the Fathers of the Desert, finding matter for prayer and tears, not for scandal or surprise, in the strange simplicity of those records of spiritual prowess and wisdom; and as has already been said, the unaffected marvellous legend of the Blessed John Colombini, the "poor sheep of Jesus," was a prime favourite of his, put into the hands of many of his penitents. By devout patience, by discreet moderation, by a manly distrust of our own cold-heartedness, above all, by an earnest covetous appetite to be edified and made better men, and by slow reading, not the least important of the conditions, there is no study after that of the Sacred Scriptures, which will yield a man more profit for his soul, than an assiduous perusal of the biographies of Saints. Ah! what better can they do who are exiles in *via*, than trace and kiss the footprints of those who are now welcomed and crowned in *patria*?

F. W. FABER.

St. Wilfrid's,
Feast of our B. Lady's Expectation,
 M. D. CCC. XLVII.

THE LIFE
OF
ST. ALPHONSO LIGUORI.

BOOK I.

CHAPTER I.

In all ages of the world, the Almighty has raised up extraordinary men to supply the wants of humanity; and incessantly watching over the welfare of His Church, has, in every succeeding century, provided chosen vessels to defend and to edify it.

In the 18th century, those two most dangerous extremes, impiety and over-strained rigidity, had united to undermine the edifice of the church. Like ravenous wolves in sheep's clothing, libertine philosophy and despairing rigour had striven to penetrate into the heart of the church. A servile fear had expelled the charity of God; the sacraments, those fountains of life, were abandoned or turned into derision; the Divine Eucharist, the life-spring of Catholic piety, had become an object of dread, and the spirit of Christianity seemed passing away—but the eye of an Omniscient Providence watched

over it: to confound impiety, to fight against Jansenism, to awaken faith, and kindle love in its source, the sacrament of the altar, God gave to His Church and to the world, a man after His own heart, Alphonso Liguori.

Joseph de Liguori, of an ancient patrician family in Naples, and Anna Caterina Cavaliere de Brindes, were the happy parents of Alphonso. Illustrious by birth, and also by his military talents, and the public offices which he filled with integrity and prudence, Don Joseph was, moreover, a man of exemplary piety, and by his devotion to the Passion of our Lord he obtained many signal graces. His wife was a woman of singular virtue, and descended from parents equally remarkable for their piety and their rank. Devoted to prayer, loving the poor, and denying herself, she practised mortification, abstained from worldly amusements, and was to be found most frequently in the house of God.

Happy the man who on his entrance into life is animated by the watchful eye of a virtuous and tender mother; her very look has a magical influence over the soul of her child; and St. Alphonso had this unspeakable happiness. He was born on the 27th of September, 1696, in the vicinity of Naples at Marianella, where his parents had a country-house; and two days after he was taken to Naples, to be baptised in the church of Saint Mary of Virgins. The day on which he was born, was the feast of the martyrs Saints Cosmas and Damian, and he received

their names, being called Alphonso Mary Antonio John Francis Cosmas Damian Michel-Angelo; the first names in memory of his ancestors, the others in honour of these Saints, and of the archangel on whose day he was baptised. From the hour of his birth, he was placed in a special manner under the protection of the Blessed Virgin, that in all his necessities he might find in her an advocate and mother.

If it be true, as St. Ambrose has said, that at their birth the just bring joy and consolation, what happiness must not Don Joseph and Donna Anna have experienced on seeing their first-born son! It was with the most lively and tender gratitude that they received him from the hand of God, and they testified this, by consecrating their infant in a special manner to his Heavenly Father. Their joy was increased when Saint Francis Jerome of the Society of Jesus foretold the future sanctity of the little Alphonso. This Jesuit foresaw with a prophetic eye how dear to God, and how beneficial to the Church, the infant would become. He took him from the arms of his mother, and blessing him he said, "This little child will live to a great age, even until ninety years; he will be a bishop, and will perform great things for Jesus Christ." These words proceeding from the lips of a man renowned for his sanctity, were received as a prophecy, and Alphonso was henceforth regarded as a special gift from Heaven, destined to procure the salvation of souls and promote the glory of Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER II.

CONTRARY to the usual custom among the nobles, the early education of Alphonso was not confided to strangers, his mother superintended it herself. This noble lady knew her duty, and would allow no other to instruct her son in the knowledge of religion. The brother of Alphonso, Don Gaetano, has recorded, that every morning after having blessed her children, she made them pray to God, and every evening she assembled them around her, and taught them the elements of the Christian Faith, reciting the rosary with them and other prayers in honour of different saints. She was careful in preventing them from associating with other children of their age; she wished that grace should anticipate in them the malice of sin, and that they might early be taught to hate it; she therefore took them every week to confess in the Church of the Oratorian Fathers of St. Jerome, to her own director, Father D. Thomas Pagano. It was thus she guided her dear Alphonso, and made him truly holy. Above all she endeavoured to kindle in his heart a tender love for Jesus Christ, and a filial confidence in Mary; and if the mother was so careful to cultivate holiness in her son, Providence was not less attentive to enrich him with grace. He was born with a heart so ready to receive the impressions of grace, that piety

and love of virtue seemed natural to him. One might say, that in him virtue anticipated age, so early did he show maturity in his devotions.

Even in childhood, he knew not the ordinary amusements of infancy, but placed all his delight in erecting little altars, and celebrating in his childish manner the feasts of different saints. When he was more advanced in age, and had tasted in the practice of piety the sweets of celestial communications, he might be seen continually presenting himself before God, and putting a holy effusion of heart into his intercourse with Him. Thus he so early began to receive those precious graces which God bestows on souls destined to the highest degrees of sanctity.

At this time the Fathers of St. Jerome directed a fervent Congregation, having for its object the spiritual welfare of the young nobility. The parents of Alphonso did not neglect such an opportunity, but placed him under their care, when he was only nine years old, and his exemplary conduct and great devotion were the admiration of these holy fathers. He came early every Sunday morning to the Congregation; and although so young, he was docile and submissive to the slightest command of the superiors, attentive and recollected; during the devotional exercises, greedily swallowing the general instructions, and even over-anxious in his desire to profit by them. He regularly confessed to Father Thomas Pagano, and when arrived at the proper age, received the Holy Communion from his hands. It was a lovely spectacle to

see this young child on his knees hearing mass with singular devotion, and approaching the holy table with the greatest fervour. He prepared himself always by the aid of little books of piety which he devoutly held in his hands, and never retired without kneeling long to make acts of thanksgiving.

As Alphonso advanced in age, his mother redoubled her solicitude; not content with all he learned under these excellent fathers, she took care to instruct him herself on the manner of performing his devotions, and acquitting himself of his other duties. She spoke to him of the enormity of sin, of the hell which it merited, of the great displeasure the slightest fault gave to the heart of Jesus Christ. All this made much impression on him, and D. Anna rejoiced to find in her son a soul so docile and a mind so upright. What was most admirable in this young child, was his constancy in his devotional exercises. When the hour arrived for his joining his mother in some devout practice, he presented himself before her, nor was he less punctual in other pious exercises which he imposed upon himself.

When he had attained his twelfth year, his aptitude for prayer was not only more than ordinary, it was sublime. Among many traits which proved his wonderful piety, there is one very remarkable, related by an eye-witness, Don Anthony Villani, the relative of Peter Sersale, brother to the cardinal of that name. The Fathers of St. Jerome were in the habit every Sunday after Vespers, of taking the young gentle-

men of their Congregation to some country-house to amuse themselves. It happened on one occasion that they went to the house of the Prince de la Riccia, situated on the mountain of Miradois. The young people began to amuse themselves with a game called the game of oranges. Alphonso was asked to join, but excused himself on the plea of not knowing the game; his companions, however, urged him so much, that at length he consented. Fortune favoured him, and he gained thirty times running. This success made his companions jealous, and one, older than him, exclaimed in a rage, "It was you who did not know the game, was it!" adding in his fury a very indecent expression. Alphonso reddened when he heard it, and with an air of severity turned towards his companions and said, "How is this, shall God be offended for the sake of a few miserable pence? take back your money;" and throwing on the ground what he had won, he turned his back on his companions with a holy indignation, and secreted himself in another part of the garden. But this was not all, for when evening came, and the young people were about to return, he was nowhere to be found. They called him, but they called in vain, and as night was approaching every one went to seek him. What was their surprise when they discovered him on his knees, before a picture of the Blessed Virgin which he had with him, and had placed upon a laurel branch. He was quite absorbed, and so ravished in God,

that it was some time before he came to himself notwithstanding the noise his companions made.

Anthony Villani, who was present at this scene, being once on a visit at Ciorani, (one of the houses belonging to the Order of Redemptorists, founded by St. Alphonso,) and talking of his virtues, said, while his eyes filled with tears, "He was a saint even in his childhood," and then told the anecdote above related.

To the latest period of his life Alphonso continued to acknowledge his obligations to his mother, for the great care she had taken of him during his childhood; he regarded the happiness of having had such a mother, as one of the greatest blessings he had ever received from God, and was wont to say, "If I must admit that there was anything good in me as a child, and if I were kept from wickedness, I owe it entirely to the tender solicitude of my mother." His father being often obliged to make excursions with the galleys, could not apply himself as he would have wished to the education of his children, and consequently this fell upon his mother; he once said, "At the death of my father, I refused to go to Naples, offering to God the sacrifice of a duty which nature claimed from me; but when my mother is dying, if I am not otherwise prevented, I shall not have the courage to refuse assisting her."

CHAPTER III.

THE education of the young Alphonso was not conducted in a public school, as is usual with the nobility, but excellent private masters were procured for him to teach him belles-lettres; for D. Joseph and D. Anna, fearing that in a college the innocence of their son would run some danger, and that intercourse with other young men might tarnish its lustre, would have him continually under their own eyes, and sheltered from every occasion of sin. His grammar master was the learned Dominic Buonaccio, a native of Calabria, and a man of piety and irreproachable morals. Although he was chiefly appointed to teach him belles-lettres, he did not neglect to inculcate upon him the importance of living as a good Christian, and to show him how much vice defiled and dishonoured a man. Certainly his master found little difficulty in conducting his education; his naturally happy disposition and inclination towards virtue, much abridged the lessons of this good priest, as well in reference to science as to spiritual matters. It may be said, that nature and grace rivalled each other in enriching with their gifts this noble young man. His mind was quick and penetrating, his memory faithful and retentive, and he combined great docility with an ardent desire for instruction. These excellent qualities produced rapid pro-

gress in his studies, and gave great satisfaction both to master and parents.

As the father and mother of Alphonso would not only make their son a man of letters and a good Christian, but also an accomplished gentleman, they took care to adorn his mind with every other species of knowledge necessary to form a distinguished education. He was yet a child when they gave him masters in drawing, painting, and architecture. He succeeded admirably in all these arts; even in his old age he sketched pictures sometimes of the infant Jesus, or of Jesus crucified, or of the Blessed Virgin, and engraved several copies for the use of his Congregation. At the house of Ciorani, wishing to make them understand in a palpable manner what a mass of abomination man is in himself, he designed with smoke the corpse of Alexander the Great, surrounded by vermin and all disfigured, with this inscription underneath, "Such is the end of all human grandeur." Verses were afterwards found which he had made on the subject. In the refectory of the House of Iliceto, is another skeleton designed by him, of a large size and surrounded by filth and vermin. They preserve also in the church of this house an ancient portrait of the Blessed Virgin, which had been retouched by the pencil of Alphonso, and restored to its original lustre. There also is a beautiful landscape of his in oil on the draperies which ornament the grand altar. It represents the mystery of the Nativity, the infant Jesus adored by the shepherds,

the holy Virgin and St. Joseph. Our Saint was not less skilled in architecture; if he did not sketch the plans for the new houses of his Congregation, the architects had always to submit to his criticisms. His father, who was exceedingly fond of music, wished him also to excel in that art. He gave orders that he should apply himself three hours daily to study music with a master, and so much importance did he attach to this, that if he could not himself assist at the lesson, he locked the door upon master and pupil while he went about his own affairs. Before Alphonso had attained his twelfth year, he touched the harpsichord with the hand of a master.

In his later years he regretted the time he had spent in acquiring this accomplishment. "Fool that I have been," said he one day, looking at the harpsichord, "to have lost so much time on that! but it was right to obey my father, and he would have it so." He excelled so much both in music and poetry, that even in his old age he wrote and composed wonderfully well. Among others there is a little duet between the soul and Jesus suffering, which he caused to be sung between the catechising and the sermon, in one of the churches of Naples, while they gave spiritual exercises there. This talent for Latin and Italian poetry would have taken a higher flight had he not had in view that which would encourage the devotion of the people, rather than that which would gratify the taste. We may see this in the numerous hymns he

composed, among which are many that excel, forcing us to recognise in them the hand of a master.

Having finished the study of belles-lettres, and learned the Greek and the French languages, he applied himself to the study of philosophy and mathematics. We need not inquire whether he succeeded; the proof may be found in the different theological and metaphysical works which he afterwards published against the modern infidels. He succeeded equally in geography and cosmography, and knew these sciences so well, that he taught them to the students in the principal establishment of the order which he founded.

D. Joseph, ambitious of seeing his son distinguish himself in the magistracy, from the talents with which he was adorned, wished him, when his philosophy and other studies were finished, to apply himself to civil and canonical law. He gave him two learned masters, who enjoyed a great reputation in Naples. Alphonso was no less successful in this new career. His progress excited general admiration, and all prognosticated that the young Liguori would one day fill the most brilliant offices in the Neapolitan magistracy.

He who in his infancy knew how to disembarass himself from the amusements of his age, did not change in his youth; he was never eager to pursue even the lawful pleasures his parents were willing to procure for him: on the contrary, he gave himself up with ardour to labour

and study, as if he had been born in an inferior rank. Everything served for food to his application ; and if his fondness for science made him delight in study, D. Joseph, on his part, spared nothing to encourage these happy dispositions, putting every thing in operation to second and promote them. Among these numerous occupations, all the recreation he was permitted to take, was with D. Charles Cito, at whose house he was allowed to pass an hour in the evening, to play at cards with other young people of irreproachable character who visited there. The favourite games of the young men were *terzillio*, *ombre*, and such like, then usual in good society, in which the mind found recreation and exercise, while the morals received no damage.

These amusements had very strict bounds, D. Joseph wishing that they might be rather a means of advancing than retarding him in his studies, and that the short relaxation might enable him to resume them again with renewed vigour. He was always displeased when his son stayed beyond the appointed time ; for it sometimes happened that Alphonso was rather late. On one of these occasions, wishing to mortify him, he removed all his books from the table, and substituted for them packs of cards. Alphonso on his return was stupified and amazed, but his father looked at him and said, "Behold your studies, these are the authors who render you so very exact in returning at the appointed hour." This mortification was felt most sensibly, and nothing else was necessary to make

him blush and strive more punctually than ever to obey his father's injunctions.

In his old age he mentioned, that at the same time he had been very fond of hunting, but never indulged in it except on days when he was dispensed from study, adding, that the birds were fortunate that had to do with him, for notwithstanding all his endeavours, he rarely killed one. He would then seem to regret having spoken of such things, and say, "I abandoned the chase of birds, to hunt for souls," making all who heard him feel how agreeable this was to God, and how full of consolation for apostolic men.

Such were the useful and interesting occupations of the young Alphonso; and we believe his parents were wise enough to interdict other accomplishments usually taught, and regarded by worldly persons as indispensable. They looked upon dancing as a dangerous amusement for the soul, and on fencing, as exposing both soul and body to many dangers.

CHAPTER IV.

ALPHONSO devoted himself so successfully to the study of jurisprudence, that before his sixteenth year he was master of it. According to the register deposited in the hands of D. Caracciola d' Avellino, who had the charge of conferring on the young candidates the grade of Doctor, he received his degree on the 21st of

January, 1713, amidst general applause. He had previously obtained a dispensation of three years and nine months, being little more than sixteen years old.

Although so young, he might from that time be seen constantly before the tribunals of Naples, listening with an ardent avidity for instruction to the numerous decisions of council, so much respected in that town. At first his father placed him with a celebrated advocate called Peronni; but after the death of this man, he was placed with another jurisconsult, not less esteemed, of the name of Jovene. It was about this period that our Saint began to deny himself all kinds of amusement, and even to renounce the agreeable soirees in the house of D. Cito. He associated only with the president, Dominic Caravita, a man as pious as he was learned, inferior to none in the science of civil and canon laws.

His house was then a species of academy for studious young men. The most virtuous and learned in legal matters used to meet there. The president took great pleasure in seeing himself surrounded by so many young candidates for fame, and he did all in his power to render them skilful in discussing points of law, and in the choice of proper words. Every evening he held conferences, in which they treated the most difficult questions, each arming himself with the point of law he judged most favourable to his opinion, while the president adopted or rejected their conclusions.

Alphonso had not yet attained his 20th year, when he saw himself surrounded by numerous clients, and seated before the tribunals side by side with the most distinguished advocates. His father's family at that time included many friends and relations among the principal senators. D. James Salerno, uncle of Alphonso, and husband of Antoinette de Liguori, his father's sister; D. Joseph Cavalieri, the brother of his mother; the regent de Miro, who loved him with paternal tenderness; the governor D. Muzio de Majo was strongly attached to his family, and many others besides. These men of quality, knowing his talents, his good conduct, and desire of advancement, united all their endeavours to procure him distinguished clients. He himself knew so well how to gain public esteem, that in a short time the most important causes were confided to him. Those who knew him in those days bear witness to the remarkable talent he exhibited as advocate. They admired his general information, his clear views, his precision in expressing himself, and his great probity and detestation of all chicanery. The rules by which he regulated his conduct as a lawyer, cannot be too generally known; for if they were imitated, the whole face of society would be renovated. They consisted of twelve—

1st. Never to accept unjust causes, for they are pernicious to the conscience, and hurtful to honour.

2nd. Never to defend a cause by illicit and unjust means.

3rd. Never to burden clients with superfluous expenses.

4th. To defend the cause of our clients with the same care as we would our own.

5th. To study carefully the details of a process, in order to draw arguments from them that may effectually help the defence.

6th. As the dilatoriness and negligence of lawyers are often prejudicial to clients, it is necessary to reimburse the loss caused in this way, otherwise we sin against justice.

7th. To implore the assistance of God that we may succeed, because God is the protector of justice.

8th. A lawyer must not load himself with matters which surpass his talents or his strength, or if he foresee that he will not have leisure to prepare his defence.

9th. Justice and probity should be the characteristics of a lawyer, and he ought to preserve them as the apple of his eye.

10th. A lawyer who loses a cause by negligence, contracts the obligation of making up all the losses of his client.

11th. In the defence of a cause it is necessary to be true, sincere, respectful, and reasonable.

12th. The qualities requisite for a lawyer, are knowledge, diligence, truth, fidelity, and justice.

Guided by such rules, is it to be wondered that he gained an ascendancy over all hearts, and so enchanted his audience when he spoke,

that not only the judges, but even his adversaries, often ranged themselves on his side: such must ever be the ultimate effects of truth and honour! Adorned with virtues, and endowed with talents, all desired to confide their interests to his care, and sought to have him for a defender.

If Alphonso desired to strike out a brilliant path for himself as a lawyer, he was no less anxious to increase in virtue and render himself dear to God. Two years after receiving the gown, he advanced from the Congregation of young nobles to that of Doctors, established in the house of the Fathers of St. Jerome, that is, the Fathers of the Oratory. He was admitted on the 15th August, 1715, being then nineteen years old. This Congregation was, as it is now, the edification of the town of Naples, because of the great good done by its members. These priests, animated by the spirit of St. Philip their founder, omitted nothing that could inspire their pupils with the spirit of Jesus Christ, and render them as dear to God, as they were useful to the state. Alphonso responded to all the care they had lavished on him; in his infancy he had tasted the milk of piety among these fathers, and there he would also in his young manhood fortify himself with more solid nourishment.

Besides frequenting the Congregation, Alphonso often visited F. Thomas Pagano, his spiritual director, whom he regarded as his Guardian Angel. To him he exposed all his doubts and fears, and never deviated from his counsels. It

is certain that as a young man and a lawyer, far from relaxing in his piety and devotion, he only made more and more progress. He frequented the sacraments, he visited the sick in the hospitals, he loved prayer, to which he joined the mortification of his passions and his senses. He never went to the law courts before he had heard mass and finished in the church his other devotional exercises.

Every eight days he went to the Congregation, acquitting himself with diligence of all the duties prescribed to the members. D. Deodat de Senlis, a gentleman of the town of Vitri, has recorded, that at this time he remembered him devoting himself with the other brethren to the service of the sick in the Hospital of Incurables, and though clothed in his lawyer's gown, making their beds, and giving them food with exemplary devotion and charity.

In this Congregation every one admired him for the modesty and profound recollection with which he acquitted himself of his functions. He ever after retained a great attachment to these Oratorian Fathers, and never failed to visit them when he came to Naples, going there even during the few days he was in that town after being made Bishop.

If Alphonso gave himself to piety with so much assiduity, his father was no less anxious to confirm him in these dispositions. He wished his son annually to make with him the spiritual exercises in the house called Conocchia, kept for this purpose by the Jesuits, or in the house

directed by the Missionaries of St. Vincent of Paul; and if sometimes he was prevented by excursions he was obliged to take in the galleys, he wished Alphonso to make the retreat alone, to regulate the affairs of his conscience. Alphonso afterwards spoke of these retreats as having made a great impression upon him, and of having drawn from them the most salutary fruits.

It was at this time also that he began to have a most especial love for the holy virtue of purity, regarding it as the most precious ornament of his soul. During the whole period of his youth no one ever remarked in his conversations with young companions a sign or a word that could indicate a shadow of impropriety. Everything about him proclaimed his modesty, and at all times he practised the most perfect personal respect.

A life so exemplary could not fail to produce the most abundant fruits; and although all the good resulting from it in the edification of others will only be known in heaven, yet it has pleased Providence that one instance should be upon record—the conversion of a slave in his father's house. D. Joseph, as commander of the galleys, had several slaves in his service; one of them, whose dispositions were good, was selected to wait upon Alphonso. He soon after manifested an inclination to become Christian, and when asked what had made him think of such a thing, he replied, "The example of my young master has made a great impression on me; for

it is impossible that that religion can be false, which makes him lead a life so pure and holy." Father Mastrilla, of the Congregation of St. Jerome, and a relation of Alphonso, undertook to instruct him; but soon after he became sick and was sent to the hospital. One evening he seemed very uneasy, and expressed a great desire to see his master immediately, who came to him as soon as he was told, Father Mastrilla being also sent for. Immediately on their arrival he requested to be baptised, saying, "I have seen the Madonna, St. Joseph, and St. Joachim, and they have told me I must be baptised now, because they would have me in Paradise." The priest replied that his illness was not dangerous, and besides he was not sufficiently instructed to receive baptism. "Let your Reverence interrogate me," replied the slave, "for I am prepared to answer all your questions." In fact, he replied with the utmost precision and accuracy to every question. He was baptised, and then bid to repose a little after the fatigue. "This is not a time to rest," he said, "for I must go immediately to Paradise." They all laughed at his reply, for his sickness was not a dangerous one; but in about half an hour this poor slave, his countenance radiant with joy, surrendered his pure soul into the hands of his Creator. He was the only one among many Mahomedan slaves who had ever become Christian, notwithstanding the numerous attempts that were made to convert them.

Alphonso was now approaching his twentieth year, and seeing the progress he daily made in the career of the law, every one prognosticated, that with such distinguished talents, and such powerful family interest, he would, ere long, attain the highest magisterial dignities, and occupy one of the most important places in the Neapolitan senate. These rare prerogatives were still more enhanced by all the qualities that could be wished for in a young nobleman. A great soul, a noble love of glory, amiable and engaging manners, joined to irreproachable conduct, made the first families in Naples anxious for him to form a matrimonial alliance with their daughters. Among all the parties who presented themselves, the choice of D. Joseph fell upon D. Theresa, the only daughter of D. Francis de Liguori, Prince of Presiccio, a rich heiress, who was also nearly allied to the family. Every one believed that the Prince D. Francis would have no more children, and D. Joseph expected to acquire for Alphonso a considerable fortune.

He spoke to the prince and princess, through the medium of another relation, D. Vespasea de Liguori. The prince entered warmly into the arrangement, regarding it as an honour for his daughter to become the wife of such a young man. The affair was considered as arranged. The two families continually interchanged visits, and if the betrothal was delayed, it was only until Alphonso had advanced further in the law, and the princess had attained a more ma-

ture age ; as for Alphonso, he took no part in the matter, and showed not the least intention of marrying.

While this affair was in progress, the princess, contrary to all expectation, became pregnant, and this incident changed immediately the designs of D. Joseph, who no longer found in the marriage the advantages he had originally contemplated for his house. His ardour cooled, and when the princess was brought to bed of a son he withdrew himself entirely. This coolness caused great displeasure to D. Theresa, and still more to her parents.

At the end of a few months the infant died, and the father of Alphonso began again to frequent the house, and to speak of his original proposals. Although they felt themselves aggrieved, the prince and princess were willing to renew the negociations ; but Theresa, who had seen herself despised because of the birth of her infant brother, would not listen to these new proposals. "When my brother was alive," said she, "I was not considered a suitable match for Alphonso de Liguori ; but now he is dead they think it advisable—it is my fortune, and not myself, whom they seek. I know enough of the world, and now I wish to have nothing more to do with it. I desire to take Jesus Christ for my Spouse." She put her resolution into practice, and entered into a convent of the Holy Sacrament, or of St. Mary Magdalene de Pazzi : her vocation being evident, she took the veil on the 8th of March, 1719.

This rupture between Alphonso and Theresa was an arrangement of Providence, to withdraw both of them from the dangers of the world. God blessed the step taken by Theresa, and she became an eminent Saint. From the moment she entered the convent she gave herself entirely to Jesus Christ, and spared no sacrifice in order to please Him. Her life was short, but full of merits, and she died in the odour of sanctity the 30th of October, 1724. Soon after her death, Alphonso, at the request of the superior of the convent, wrote the edifying Life of her who had been intended for his wife.

A circumstance occurred about this time which shows the perfect submission of Alphonso to his father, and the strictness with which D. Joseph required this virtue from his son. One evening there was at the house a party of ladies and gentlemen, and it happened that one of the domestics showed stupidity in attending to the guests as they arrived. His negligence displeased D. Joseph, who scolded the servant, and reproached him with his inattention; it was an involuntary fault, yet D. Joseph did not cease to grumble at him as he went and came. Alphonso was sorry for the man, and said to his father, "What a noise you make about it, my father; when once you begin, you can never end." This speech displeased D. Joseph, who being in bad humour with the servant, was angry that Alphonso should take his part, and so far forgot himself as to give his son a blow in the face. Alphonso was confused, but said not

a word, and, deeply humiliated, withdrew immediately to his room. The hour of supper came, and as he did not appear his mother went to call him, and found him bathed in tears, deploring the want of respect he had shown towards his father. He confessed how wrong he had been, and begged she would intercede for him and obtain forgiveness; accompanied by his mother, he went to his father and asked him to forgive him. D. Joseph, affected by his submission and repentance, embraced him and blessed him, and if the fault of his son had wounded him, he was more touched and consoled by seeing him so sincerely humble. This single anecdote shows how respectful Alphonso continued to be towards his father, although he was then old enough to be one of the first advocates at the Neapolitan bar.

CHAPTER V.

ALPHONSO had never ceased to distinguish himself in the practice of virtue; but man has nothing more to fear than his own inconstancy. The passions are born with us, they grow with our growth, and however much they may be deadened by education and grace, they are nevertheless alive and ready to be reanimated by the first occasion that awakens them, and delivers us up to the combat. Alphonso confessed in his old age, that at this period of his

life his piety became cold, and that he was in danger of losing his soul, of losing his God. His father obliged him to accompany him into society; he frequented the theatres, and often, although always by obedience, he took part in a private play. These were, it is true, innocent amusements, yet his mind was dissipated little by little, and at length he no longer exhibited great ardour in the pursuit of virtue, and no longer tasted that divine manna which had once formed the delight of his heart. Added to this, were the applauses he received on all sides, the proposals of marriage, the flattering messages brought by valets, the compliments which were showered upon him by ladies and their relations; in short, everything flattered his passions, his heart was tainted, and he lost his first fervour. In this state of spiritual coldness, the slightest cause was sufficient to make him omit some one of his pious practices: he has said himself, that if he had remained much longer in this dangerous position, he could not have avoided soon falling into some great sin; but the watchful eye of that Providence which guided him, failed not to send him timely aid, and with a peculiar and paternal care made him enter into himself.

Alphonso was on terms of the most intimate friendship with D. F. Cape-Celatro, Duke of Casabona, a young man of his own age, whose morals were unexceptionable. Alarmed at seeing his friend beginning to be negligent in the service of God, or perhaps wishing to kindle his

own fervour, he proposed that he should join him in making a retreat during Lent in the house of the Missionaries of St. Vincent of Paul, which was then, as it is now, one of those institutions, where by means of spiritual exercises the heart is animated and purified, and in the furnace of Divine Love the dross contracted in the world is separated from the gold. Alphonso with his friend and some others went there the 26th of March, 1722. The retreat was conducted by F. Vincent Cutica, who was then superior. This holy missionary, so justly celebrated for the unction that flowed from his heart and his lips, made his hearers weigh well the comparative value of time and eternity; he showed them so clearly the loathsomeness of sin, and the beauty of virtue, that these exercises produced a rich harvest to the Divine Father of the Christian family.

Alphonso was among those who profited most. Grace, which followed and pursued him incessantly, struck at the door of his heart, making him feel how he had fallen from his first fervour; he saw that in following the world, he was pasturing on its vanities, that he was loving God but in a secondary manner, and taking his place at the table of the Lamb rather as a guest already satiated, than as one burning with desire. The retreat passed in meditation was for him as dew falling on a parched soil; it made the seeds of piety revive and fructify, where the thorns of passion had begun to choak them. The Divine Light penetrated his soul at a pro-

pitious moment. He deplored his tepidity, and made a solemn promise to God to quit that mode of life which he had so inconsiderately engaged in, and over which he lamented and wept. Even in old age he remembered this period of his life with horror; never ceasing to regret and repent it. How much he deplored his wanderings, may be seen in his "Visits to the Blessed Sacrament," where he says, "Believe me, all is folly; festivals, spectacles, company, games, these are the joys of the world, but joys full of gall and bitterness." "Believe me," he adds, "for I have made the experiment, and bitterly deplore it!"

A lamentable and recent event completed his spiritual restoration. The Fathers of the Mission of St. Vincent had been giving a retreat in their house at Florence, to a gentleman who had lived in criminal intercourse with a lady who died before making her peace with God. While this gentleman, in the bitterness of his repentance, was imploring the Divine Mercy for the companion of his guilt, she appeared to him and said, "Pray not for me, for I am damned;" after which, to convince him of the reality of her reappearance, she placed her hand on the table before which he knelt in prayer, and the part which she touched was burned.* This event caused Alphonso to reflect very deeply, and he was so much touched by it, that he resolved to

* This table is still preserved in Naples, being brought from Florence by one of the Fathers.

detach himself from the world, and, above all, to think no more of marriage, nor of the vanities of the age. Prostrate before the crucifix he formed the resolution always to preserve his chastity, and resolutely apply himself to the salvation of his soul. Heaven granted him all the graces for which he asked on this occasion, and if he had asked more he would have obtained them. But the Lord delayed to another opportunity the benedictions He had designed for him in His eternal decrees. Alphonso always acknowledged that these holy exercises had been for him one of the greatest blessings he ever received from the Divine Mercy, and often said, that under God, he owed it to his friend, Cape-Celatro, that he had not been the slave of the world and a prey to his own passions.

From the manner in which he sometimes spoke of this period of his life, we might be led at the first glance to imagine he had lost his innocence, but it was not so. The saints always speak in exaggerated terms of their faults; and besides, we have the testimony of many who directed his conscience, that he had never committed a mortal sin. On one occasion, speaking of himself, he said, "I have frequented the theatres, but thanks be to God, I never committed even a venial sin there, for I went to hear the music, which absorbed all my attention, and hindered me from thinking of any other thing." Even at the time when he lived carelessly, every one regarded him as a holy young man of pure and irreproachable manners. And his intimate

friend, D. Balthazar Cito, on being asked if he ever perceived any lightness in his conduct, replied, bowing his head respectfully, "No ; he was always a most virtuous young man ; I should blaspheme if I said otherwise."

Among many other fruits which Alphonso gathered in this retreat, was an especial and tender confidence towards Jesus present in the Blessed Sacrament. Besides approaching the Holy Table several times a-week, he went every day to visit the Holy Sacrament in the Church where the forty-hours' adoration was made, and there he remained, not a few minutes, as devotees ordinarily do, but for hours in contemplation, edifying every one around him, while he filled his own heart with the sweetest consolation. It was a beautiful sight to see him at the foot of the altar, decorated with the insignia of his rank. He often purchased flowers to adorn the altar of his parish church ; and during his whole life he had a particular devotion for ornamenting altars, procuring the rarest seeds, and cultivating them himself to embellish the altars of the churches of his Congregation. He envied those innocent creatures, (he says in one of the hymns he composed,) for being destined to rest night and day near their Creator. He recommended this practice to the rectors of the houses of his Congregation, for he loved to see the altars adorned with the most odoriferous flowers. As a recompense for the homage he paid to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, it became the source of all the graces bestowed upon

him through life. If he disengaged himself from the world and conquered his own nature, he confessed he owed it entirely to Jesus in the Holy Sacrament.

The following year, in March, 1723, his father being in Naples, they withdrew together to the house of the same Missionary Fathers to make another retreat. And as abundant rain renders the earth fruitful, he received still more grace, and was confirmed in his resolution of observing celibacy, and consecrating himself more than ever to God; he determined to yield up his birthright to his brother Hercules, although he had not yet decided to abandon the law. It was thus that grace gently prepared him for the designs God had upon him; and without seeing the consequences, he disentangled himself from everything that could obstruct the benedictions of Heaven.

CHAPTER VI.

THE treaty of marriage with Theresa de Liguori having been broken, D. Joseph projected another with the daughter of Dominic del Balzo, Duke of Presenzano, an amiable and noble lady, and, without consulting his son, he made proposals to the prince, who at once agreed to them. After the first overtures, the two families began to visit; but all this displeased Alphonso, who had other objects than

the world and its pleasures to occupy his mind. He had not the courage, however, to speak openly to his father, who he knew would be very indignant at his resolutions; and with the view of temporising, he frequented the house of Pre-senzano, although very unwillingly, and often said afterwards, that in the midst of amusements there he felt upon thorns, and thought only of the moment when his martyrdom would end.

When D. Joseph saw the indifference of his son, he did all in his power to overcome it, by placing before him the singular good qualities of the lady, her superior education, her cultivated mind and manners, all which rendered her a desirable match; but Alphonso not daring to refuse decidedly, excused himself by saying, that weakness in his chest, and tendency to asthma, warned him not to think of marriage. His father attributed all these excuses to bashfulness, and continued to take him often with him to the house of the duke; and not to displease his father, he accompanied him thither, but occupied himself with anything but striving to please the lady, taking part in the conversation with so much modesty and reserve, that no one could suspect what was passing between the families. On every occasion he behaved with the greatest circumspection;*

* It happened one evening at the Duke's house that he was invited to touch the harpsichord; he willingly consented, when the young lady proposed to accompany him in a song; she rose and stood near him, turning her face towards him; he immediately turned his head to the other side, and she thinking it accidental

yet D. Joseph did all he could to hasten the marriage, while Alphonso continued to excuse himself on the plea of bad health. Seeing at length that his excuses were unavailing, he opened his mind to his mother, and declared to her that nothing would induce him to connect himself with the world, begging her to persuade his father to cease his importunities. D. Anna was vexed at her son's determination, for she was as anxious for his marriage as her husband could be, and tried to persuade him of the advantages he would derive from his father's arrangements, and the displeasure his refusal would cause—but to no purpose; he expressed his resolution to throw all possible difficulties in the way of his father negotiating any marriage for him, and the young lady herself, seeing his coldness, declared her unwillingness to marry a young man who would hardly look at her.

Things were in this state, when God, who had other designs upon Alphonso, changed the aspect of affairs, and demolished at one blow all the worldly hopes of D. Joseph for his son. The tribunals of Naples were at this time occupied with a feudal process of great importance, between the Grand Duke of Tuscany,

moved round; no sooner had she done so, than he again turned from her. The young princess perceiving the truth, was offended, thinking his indifference proceeded from contempt; and turning to the company, she said, "It would seem the young gentleman has suddenly become moon-struck," and so saying she withdrew. He was much mortified, but the others were edified by his admirable modesty.

and one of the most powerful nobles of the realm: about six hundred thousand ducats depended on the decision. Alphonso undertook the cause of the nobleman, and after an entire month passed in the most careful study of the case, he believed he had discovered facts so evident, and reasons so strong, that they could not fail to gain a decision in favour of his client. The day at length arrived. Dominic Caravita occupied the president's chair. Alphonso advanced with an air of triumph, which announced his certainty of victory. He began his speech, gave his reasons, quoted the laws and arrets, and, in short, did all that could be done to defend the cause he advocated. The lawyers were filled with admiration of his eloquence, and the solidity of his arguments, and no one doubted the young advocate's success; even the President Caravita could not help showing in his countenance the decision he was about to pronounce in his favour. But amidst the general admiration and certainty of success, all at once he lost his process, and lost it with dishonour!

Notwithstanding he had carefully examined over and over the details of the process, he was completely mistaken regarding the sense of one document, which constituted the right of the adverse party. The advocate of the Grand Duke perceived the mistake, but he allowed Alphonso to continue his eloquent address to the end without interruption; as soon, however, as he had finished, he rose, and said with cutting coolness, "Sir, the case is not exactly

what you suppose it to be; if you will review the process, and examine this paper attentively, you will find there precisely the contrary of all you have advanced." "Willingly," replied Alphonso, without hesitating, "the decision depends on this question—whether the fief were granted under the law of Lombardy, or under the French law." The paper being examined, it was found that the Grand Duke's advocate was in the right. "Yes," said Alphonso, holding the paper in his hand, "I am wrong, I have been mistaken." A discovery so unexpected, and the fear of being accused of unfair dealing, filled him with consternation, and covered him with confusion, so much so, that every one saw his emotion. It was in vain that the President Caravita, who loved him, and knew his integrity, tried to console him, by telling him that such mistakes were not uncommon, even among the first men at the bar. Alphonso would listen to nothing, but, overwhelmed with confusion, his head sunk on his breast, he said to himself, "World, I know you now; courts of law, never shall you see me again." And turning his back on the assembly, he withdrew to his own house, incessantly repeating to himself, "World, I know you now." What annoyed him most was, that having studied and re-studied the process during a whole month, without having discovered this important flaw, he could not understand how it had escaped his observation.

He entered the house unconscious of the way

he had come, ascended to his chamber and shut the door. His father was absent, and his mother did not notice his distress. When the dinner hour came, they called him in vain; they knocked at his door. He said he would eat nothing; they insisted, but he would not reply. The hour of supper passed in the same manner. This was something so new that all the household were alarmed; neither his mother nor any one else could imagine the cause, and their uneasiness was excessive. Next day when D. Joseph returned, his wife recounted to him her vexation; he immediately went to his son's room, but was refused admittance; his mother wept, and his father was not less annoyed, but vexed by his obstinacy he began to get angry. It was not until the third day that, overcome by his mother's tears, he consented to open his door. They pressed him to eat, and with difficulty persuaded him to take a slice of melon, which he afterwards declared seemed to him more bitter than gall.

After this tempest, the Divine Light began to dawn on his soul; he looked at the world with the eyes of faith, and seeing its vanity, determined to break with it for ever. He surrendered himself to the impulse of grace, but not unreservedly, and God (who possessed part of his heart) delayed to a future day taking complete possession.

CHAPTER VII.

God, in the accomplishment of His designs on the hearts of His elect, usually leads them gently towards the desired end ; but it was not thus with Alphonso ; the Almighty would master him by means trying to human nature. When rest had calmed his spirit, and when he had reconciled himself to God by repenting the transport of grief and indignation in which he had indulged, he took leave of his clients, renounced his intimacies, and lived in the house of his father the life of a hermit. Grace daily gained more empire over his soul, and his greatest pleasure was to spend his days partly in the church and partly in the Hospital of Incurables, or if he did remain at home, it was to meditate on the Lives of the Saints, and converse with God in reading books of devotion. These occupations daily gave a new charm to his soul ; but it was, above all, in the presence of his Divine Saviour, in the church where they made the forty-hours' adoration, that he enjoyed a foretaste of Paradise ; and often he was so absorbed, as to be unconscious of all around. He thus drew on himself the observation of those who were present, particularly certain priests, who, like himself, had a great devotion towards the Blessed Sacrament.

This behaviour of Alphonso, so conformable to the designs of Providence, was for D. Joseph,

a subject of the greatest affliction ; he imagined his son was out of his mind and had become good for nothing. "What project can he be meditating?" said he to his mother ; and D. Anna, sharing his uneasiness, could throw no light on the subject. They suspected something ; they guessed his designs, but knew not how to put a stop to them. D. Joseph had the happiness of his son sincerely at heart ; nevertheless, he deviated from his duty in regard of him. Such is the effect of passion, even in the well-intentioned, when they do not timely submit themselves to reason. The Lord, who destined Alphonso to become a corner-stone in His church, would polish and prepare him by blows of the hammer, to render him more agreeable in His eyes. The father and the son were both to suffer, although their views were very different from each other.

A few days after the events we have related, D. Joseph brought to his son a process, which interested the family, desiring him to examine it the next day. "Give it to some other person," replied Alphonso ; "the tribunal is no longer a place for me ; henceforward I will occupy myself only with the salvation of my soul." This reply, which D. Joseph hardly expected, although he had some presentiment of the truth, fell on him like a thunder-bolt, and he burst into tears. He could not bear to contemplate a resolution which he believed would give a mortal blow to the glory of his house. His wife tried to console him, and to persuade him that after

the crisis was past their son would return to his former occupations; but he would not believe it; "No," he said, "Alphonso is too obstinate, he will not change his resolution." Yet he continued balancing between hope and fear; while Alphonso, looking only upon God and his own soul, persisted in his determination, caring nothing for the temporal interests either of himself or his family.

But God, who wished to withdraw him entirely from the world, and take complete possession of his heart, prepared another trial for him. It was on the 28th day of August, a day ever memorable in the annals of Alphonso, that the birth-day of the Empress Isabella, the wife of Charles VI., was celebrated. There was a grand fete at the Court, and D. Joseph would assist at the ceremony of kissing hands, and ordered his son to prepare to accompany him. He coldly excused himself, but his father continuing to insist, he abruptly replied, "What would you have me do there—all that is but vanity." Irritated by this answer, D. Joseph said in a transport of rage, "Do what you will, and go where you will!" Alphonso, seeing his refusal had provoked his father, felt some scruple, and replied, "Do not be annoyed, my father, I am ready to go with you." D. Joseph, however, was too angry to listen to him, and only continued to repeat, "Go where you will—do what you will!" and turning his back left the room, and stepping into his carriage drove straight to his country-house overwhelmed with chagrin. Alphonso,

overcome with distress at witnessing the vexation of his father, exclaimed, "My God, if I resist I do wrong, and if I consent I do worse; I know not how to act!" In great affliction he left the house, and went straight to the Hospital of the Incurables, in the hope of finding some consolation. He sought a solace for his anguish, and in beholding the miseries of others he learned to support his own. He saw this world in its true light, a place of probation and suffering, and not of enjoyment and repose. He saw it as it is, a battlefield, where the Christian must fight, to gain the victory and the crown. Almost overpowered with his own sorrows, he was striving to assuage the miseries of others, of the poor and needy, when in a moment a light shone around him, the building in which he was standing seemed to be overthrown, and he heard a loud voice saying to him, "Forsake the world and give thyself entirely to Me." Awed and astonished by what had occurred, he nevertheless continued assisting the sick; but when he was about to leave the Hospital, and had reached the staircase, the house again seemed falling around him, and he heard the same voice, not the less powerful that it was interior, saying, "Forsake the world and give thyself entirely to Me." He stood still, and then, like another St. Paul, gave himself up to the Divine Call. Weeping, he exclaimed, "Lord, I have too long resisted Thy grace; here I am, do with me what Thou pleasest." Confounded and overpowered, he quitted the Hospital, and

proceeded straight to the church of the Redemption of Captives, dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, a favourite resort of his, because of a magnificent statue of the Virgin which was there. He cast himself at the foot of the altar, imploring the assistance of his Divine Mother—and who ever implored her assistance in vain? Strengthened by her aid, he renounced the world, he renounced his birthright, he gave himself a perfect sacrifice to his Saviour and his Divine Mother, vowing to enter into the Congregation of the Oratory of St. Philip Neri. While his lips pronounced the vow, his heart confirmed it, and his hand sealed it. Drawing his sword from its scabbard, he laid it on the altar of our Lady of Mercy, as a pledge of his fidelity; and from henceforth this memorable day was ever present to his mind; he never ceased to call it the day of his conversion, nor ever visited Naples without going to this church to return thanks to his Divine Benefactress.

CHAPTER VIII.

ON the evening of this memorable day, Alphonso went to his confessor, Father Thos. Pagnano, and confided to him what had happened, declaring his resolution immediately to join the Fathers of the Oratory. "This is not a thing to be decided hastily," said his reverend director; "I must think it over during a year before

I give you a reply." "A year!" cried Alphonso; "I will not wait another day." Pleased with his fervour, Pagano arranged with him that they both should recommend the important affairs to Jesus and Mary. The young man returned to his father's house in body, but his heart and soul were in the house of the Oratory.

For three days after these remarkable events he tasted no food; he would do penance for not having sooner obeyed the call of grace: but if his body languished for lack of sustenance, his soul was filled to overflowing with the manna of heaven. He excused himself from eating under various pretences, and was not at first observed; but his father, who had been absent for a day, having heard of his son's refusal to eat, was extremely vexed, and again began to importune him on those points where their views were so opposite. He urged him with all a father's tenderness to resume his place at the bar, pointing out to him the loss his refusal would occasion to himself and the whole family; but when he saw he made no impression, he relapsed into anger. These scenes were repeated daily, and those only who have experienced them can fully comprehend how they rend the heart. Alphonso continued firm; he leant upon the Rock of Ages, he trusted in his God, offering up to Him the anguish he was suffering. He daily saw his director, who with the other fathers advised him to proceed slowly and by degrees, hoping for a favourable turn in his father's sentiments.

It happened one day that D. Joseph, very

much provoked at the thought of his son's splendid talents being lost in inaction, at what he considered the inutility of his present mode of life, could not refrain from saying to him in the bitterness of his heart, "Would to God that I were removed from this world, or that you were withdrawn from it; for I have no longer the courage to look at you!" The expression of such feelings quickened the resolution of Alphonso. "Am I," said he to himself, "an object of such horror to my father! then God is my only Friend; from henceforth I must be satisfied with Him alone." He then renewed his vows, offering himself without reserve as a living sacrifice to the Lord. He had not yet declared his intentions, but summoning up courage he said to him soon after, "My father, I see how much you grieve on my account, and yet I must assure you I am no longer for the world. Inspired by God, I have formed the resolution of entering the Congregation of the Fathers of the Oratory; I beseech you not to be offended, but to give me your benediction." At these words his father stood motionless with consternation, and then bursting into groans and lamentations, he withdrew to his chamber plunged in profound grief.

The devil, finding himself vanquished by the resistance of Alphonso to the storm, determined to undermine his resolution by the more dangerous temptations of the heart; and from this time his father employed the most tender entreaties, the tears and mediation of friends.

He engaged on his side Father de Miro, who supposing Alphonso was merely influenced by a melancholy humour, strove to make him change his purpose, urging on him the propriety of employing his talents for the honour of his family, of considering the interest they possessed with the Austrian court, and the brilliant prospects of his brothers, which would be so entirely overcast if he persisted in his present plan; the Father finished by affirming it was no divine inspiration which guided him, but an illusion of the devil. In spite of all these attacks he remained firm, and when de Miro persisted, he replied, "Rev. Sir, be assured, I am convinced God calls me out of the world. He wishes me to embrace the ecclesiastic state; I ought, and I will respond to the call of God, and not to the wishes of my father." D. Joseph then employed other friends to intercede with him, but without success, his constant reply being, "God has called me, I cannot resist Him." So persuaded was he of his vocation, that his uncle Mgr. Cavalieri being then in Naples, he applied to him for protection and support. When his parents endeavoured to engage this learned prelate on their side of the question, he replied, "Have not I renounced the world and my right of primogeniture to secure my salvation; how then could I advise your son and my nephew to do the contrary, without risking his salvation and my own?"

In the midst of these trials Alphonso had many defenders of his cause: his uncle, the

Bishop, another uncle, the Canon Peter Gizzio, and several ecclesiastics, who succeeded at length in obtaining a reluctant consent from his father that he should enter the Congregation of the Oratory. After this forced acquiescence, he could not avoid presenting his son to the Archbishop of Naples, Cardinal Pignatelli: his Eminence was struck by the resolution of Alphonso: "What," said he, "is it your son who wishes to become a priest?" "It has pleased God it should be so," replied his father, while the tears stood in his eyes; "it is but too true he has taken this resolution." Even after this decisive step he continued to throw difficulties in the way. He would not supply him with money to furnish his ecclesiastical dress: Alphonso however found means to get what was necessary, and suddenly appeared one day clad in ecclesiastical costume. At this sight D. Joseph uttered a piercing cry, and threw himself on his bed overcome with grief. For a whole year after this occurrence he never once spoke to his son.

CHAPTER IX.

If the heart of his father repudiated his son, it was not thus with his mother. She recognized the will of God, and in recognizing she cheerfully submitted to it, doing all in her power to soften the feelings of her husband, and justify the conduct her son had pursued. The world

in general condemned him ; for when has it acted otherwise than as our Saviour foretold ? The lawyers and senators who were formerly his friends, now accused him of egregious folly ; the President de Maio in particular passed him as a person unworthy of notice, but a day came when this man judged differently. On his death-bed, that awful moment when we begin to see the world in the light of God's countenance, Alphonso went to visit him, and when he entered, the President exclaimed, " O Alphonso, you have found happiness in the part you have chosen ! But as for me, who am now about to appear before the tribunal of God, I must render an account to Him of all the judgments I have passed in acquitting or condemning others, miserable being that I am ; but you have chosen the sure path ; O how I regret not having done the same ! "

It was about this time Alphonso one day met a celebrated advocate, who had been opposed to him on an important case in which he had carried off the victory. He was in his ecclesiastical dress ; the advocate advanced and congratulated him on his choice, adding, " God forgive you for not taking this step a year sooner, and saving me the disgrace of the defeat you gave me in that cause. "

If God generally tries by the loss of friends those whom He calls, He as surely recompenses the sacrifices made for Him a hundred fold. One of the first fruits of his sacrifice was the Rev. Joseph Porpora : this priest had often been

edified by his devotion when he saw him prostrated for hours before the Blessed Sacrament, but without knowing him. At length he saw him dressed as an ecclesiastic, and soon discovered who he was. He wished to make his acquaintance, but was restrained by a feeling of human respect. One day however on leaving the Church, seeing him joined by an intimate friend, the Rev. John Mazzini, he felt such an ardent desire to share his friendship, that he could no longer restrain himself, and darting suddenly forward exclaimed, "And I also, I wish to belong to you!" He then embraced and congratulated him, foretelling the blessings Heaven had in store for him, and desiring from henceforth to be his friend and companion; from that moment they seemed to have but one heart and one soul, every day they met together before the Blessed Sacrament, and mutually excited each other to advance in the path of perfection.

After Cardinal Pignatelli had given Alphonso the ecclesiastical habit, he attached him to the parish of St. Angelo. He immediately went to offer his services to the curate of the church, and every day afterwards he might be seen serving at mass, and on feast days assisting at every ceremony. This was to him a foretaste of Paradise. His devotion and modesty at length turned the tide of public opinion, and those who had proclaimed him a fool, now spoke loudly in praise of his generosity in sacrificing such brilliant prospects for the love of God.

But that which excited the greatest admira-

tion, was to see him on the Sundays perambulating the parish, singing hymns, and carrying the crucifix, to assemble the children together, and lead them to the church to be catechised; nothing contrasted so strongly with the remembrance of the advocate who so lately had electrified the tribunals by his eloquence. Above all, he was most indefatigable in instructing and preparing them for their first communion, to dispose them to receive with benefit the Bread of Angels. If he had been a model of Christian virtue in the world, he was no less a model of ecclesiastical virtue in the church. The glory of God, the salvation of souls, his own salvation; these were the motives which actuated him, without any mixture of ambition or human interest. But virtue only is not sufficient for a minister of the gospel, he must also have learning; he therefore applied himself with ardour to the studies befitting his new position; and if in his worldly career he frequented the houses of the most eminent men of the law to gain knowledge in his profession, he now frequented the company of the most learned ecclesiastics, receiving daily lessons from D. Julius Torni, one of the most learned theological professors, who was afterwards elevated to the episcopacy. The elegant accomplishments of which he was already master, he would also consecrate to the glory of God: his musical and poetical talents he employed in composing sacred pieces for the use of the people, and soon

had the satisfaction of seeing them replacing dangerous and loose songs.

From the time he assumed the clerical costume, his mode of living became stricter than ever. Prayer and study occupied him alternately; he mortified his senses, refusing them every species of indulgence. In accordance with the practice of St. Paul, he mortified his body, keeping it under subjection; fasting, discipline, hair-shirts, all kinds of penitential exercises he practised, in order to follow more closely the steps of his Divine Master. His abstinence and simplicity were remarkable; every Saturday he fasted on bread and water in honour of the Blessed Virgin; his clothes were as plain as possible; for some little time to please his father, he allowed himself to be followed by a footman, but soon disembarrassed himself of this encumbrance, and perambulated the streets of Naples alone, like the poorest of the priesthood. And thus bidding adieu to the vanities of time, and enriching his soul with treasures for eternity, he became the edification of the whole city.

CHAPTER X.

A YEAR after Alphonso had assumed the ecclesiastical habit, he received the tonsure from the hands of Mgr. Mirabello, Archbishop of Nazareth, on the 23rd of December, 1724. On

the 23rd of September following, he was promoted to minor orders, with a dispensation from Cardinal Pignatelli, and in December succeeding was made sub-deacon by Mgr. Javitti, Bishop of Satriano. He then entered as novice in the Congregation of the Missions, which counted among its members the elite of the clergy, and clerical nobility. He was not a person to perform superficially the duties of his state; he applied himself with remarkable diligence to the observance of all the rules and practices of piety it prescribed; he accompanied the missionaries into the country, catechising the children; and such was the effect even of the small part he took in the missions, that all eyes were turned on him alone, and at the moment of departure, it was he whom all regretted. But he did not confine his assistance to this Congregation; he frequented the house of the Fathers of St. Vincent of Paul; he associated himself to a congregation called the Congregation of White Monks, proving his zeal in endeavouring to procure the aids of religion for condemned criminals.

As we have formerly given the rules he laid down for himself as a lawyer, it is fitting we should give here the rules which guided him as a candidate for the priesthood.

1. The clerk, in order to sanctify himself, ought to frequent the society of holy priests, to be edified by their good example.

2. He ought to spend at least one hour daily in mental prayer, in order to live in fervour and recollection.

3. He ought to visit frequently the holy Sacrament, particularly where it is solemnly exposed.

4. He ought to read the Lives of holy priests, to furnish him with rules for his conduct, and excite him to imitate them.

5. He ought to honour the most holy Virgin Mary, the Mother and Queen of the Church, and consecrate himself particularly to her service.

6. He ought to take the greatest care of his reputation in all things, sustaining the honour of the ecclesiastical state.

7. He ought to fly worldly conversation, to avoid familiarity with laymen, and particularly with females.

8. He ought to be obedient to his superiors, fulfilling their commands, because it is the will of God.

9. He ought to wear the cassock and the tonsure, to be modest without affectation, fastidiousness, or severity.

10. He ought to be quiet and gentle in the house, exemplary in the class, and edifying in the church, particularly during divine service.

11. He ought to confess every eight days, and communicate still oftener.

12. In short, he ought to have negative sanctity, that is to say, to live free from sin, and he ought to have positive sanctity, namely, to practise every virtue.

Edified by his sanctity, the Cardinal Archbishop, by dispensation, gave him deacon's orders

on the 6th of April, 1726; and satisfied with his zeal and talents, gave him permission to preach in all the churches of Naples.

It was in the church of St. John at the Latin Gate that he preached his first sermon from these words of Isaiah; "O that Thou wouldst bend the heavens and come down.....the waters would burn with fire." (lxiv. 1, 2.) And the fire of his eloquence was directed to show the amazing love of Jesus Christ towards us, and our monstrous ingratitude towards God. Such was the effect of this sermon, that invitations to preach poured in upon him from all quarters; his usual subject was the dogma of the Eucharist, and it rarely happened that he did not preach in the church where the Blessed Sacrament was solemnly exposed. He taught so forcibly the enormity of sin, and the injury it does to God, that he electrified his audience, and drew such crowds to hear him that other churches were deserted. Although he was only in deacon's orders, the Fathers of the Mission sent him into different parts of the kingdom, where he attacked vice with such eloquence that he did much to promote the glory of God in the salvation of souls.

The vexation of D. Joseph because of his son's forsaking the law, was much increased by his fear that his multiplied fatigues and austerities would shorten his days. His mother shared this anxiety, although she rejoiced in the life he had embraced; nor were their fears vain: overcome by constant exertion, his body sunk under

it, and he became so ill that the physicians lost hope, and one night sent in haste for some one to administer the last Sacraments. In this extremity he placed all his confidence in the Blessed Virgin, and eagerly asked them to bring the large statue of our Lady of Mercy, from the church where, at the foot of this statue, he had renounced the world and consecrated himself to God. They brought the miraculous image without delay, and placed it before his bed: his prayers were heard; our Mother is so ready to hear! He immediately felt himself better, and was pronounced out of danger.

On the 21st of December in the same year, he was elevated to the priesthood, and if he before burned with zeal to promote the glory of God, from henceforth this fire seemed to consume him; descending from the altar he might be seen rushing like a lion on his prey, to attack the strongholds of Satan. The Cardinal, struck by the prodigies of grace which he operated, appointed him to give spiritual exercises to the clergy of Naples. Some one in authority severely criticised the Cardinal for this, saying, "There are people who would build in any case, without troubling themselves to inquire whether or not there be cement to build with;" but his Eminence had good reason to congratulate himself on his choice, because of the numbers who attended, and the benediction poured out on his labours, so that all Naples spoke of the virtues of Alphonso, and the apostolical spirit which animated him.

CHAPTER XI.

THE labours of Alphonso as a priest were, if possible, greater than while he was only deacon. Everywhere he was sought after, curates desired him to preach in their churches, congregations besought him to give spiritual exercises, and many monasteries desired with avidity to participate in the fruits of his powerful eloquence. Animated only by the Spirit of God, he preached Christ crucified, and far from studying fine phrases and eloquent expressions, he avoided with the utmost care the vain ostentation of a superfluous erudition. To a style simple and popular, he knew how to add all that was solid and energetic; besides, every thing concurred to give effect to his mission: his noble birth, his rare talents, and supernatural gifts confounded the proud. What rendered his eloquence most persuasive was his modesty, his recollection, his profound humility, and contempt for the world. His sermons had nothing of a florid or pompous style, he sought only to make himself well understood by the people, and yet they were attended by the highest, the noblest, the most learned and talented of the city of Naples, who might be seen leaving the church where he had preached, with their heads bowed down on their breasts, showing every mark of compunction. Nicolas Capasso, a man celebrated for his learning and

talent for satire, used to attend these sermons; on one occasion Alphonso met him, and said laughing, "I see you always at my sermons, you are probably about to publish some satire against me." "No," replied the other, "when I go to hear you preach, I listen with pleasure, because I see that you forget yourself in order to preach Christ crucified." How powerful is the gospel in the mouth of a man who announces it in all its purity!

His time was fully occupied either in the city of Naples or the adjoining districts, where he was frequently sent on mission with the Fathers of the Congregation, and he was never known to excuse himself from want of time, or negligently to fulfil any duty to which he was appointed. The Congregation enjoyed a benefice attached to a chapel, for which the testator had made it a rule, that it should be served by a single individual, and that the person appointed should be the most indefatigable of all the Institute; and although Alphonso was the last who had been admitted, he was chosen by universal consent to undertake the charge. It was about this time, that while giving spiritual exercises to an immense crowd assembled in the Church of the Holy Spirit, his father happened to pass as he was returning from the royal palace; hearing the voice of his son, an irresistible feeling of curiosity constrained him to enter and listen; before long he was moved to tears, and touched to the heart at the recollection of his violent and

harsh conduct towards him; full of such thoughts he returned home, and scarcely had Alphonso entered the house, when he ran to his room, and embracing him tenderly, said, "O my son, what do I not owe you; it is you who have to-day taught me to know God! I bless you—I bless you a thousand times for having embraced a state so holy and so agreeable to God!"

Notwithstanding his incessant labour to promote the salvation of others, he did not neglect his own; every day he consecrated some hours to meditation, without including the time spent in reading the Lives of the Saints, which he used to call the Gospel in practice. Every morning he said mass with so much devotion that it occupied a considerable time, besides long preparation, and returning thanks afterwards. Not a day passed without his visiting Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, in the church where the "Quarante ore," or forty-hours' adoration was made. And these visits were not short ones, as they too frequently are with others, but sometimes for hours he might be seen contemplating with love unutterable his Divine Redeemer; never forgetting the "Quiescite pusillum," the repose which Jesus Christ recommended to His apostles, he from time to time suspended his apostolic labours to "enter into his chamber, shut the door, and commune with his God."

He had, as we have already seen, contracted an intimacy with several priests whose views

and feelings were in accordance with his own: Don Joseph Porpora, Jean Mazzini, Michel de Alteriis, and Janvier Sarnelli, son of the baron of Ciorani, and others. In order to tighten the bonds of charity more and more, one of them, Don de Alteriis, hired a country-house, removed from the tumult of the city, where they arranged an Oratory, in which was placed a beautiful statue of the Virgin. Once a month they retired thither to spend three or four days in penitential exercises. Their repasts were simple, and a little statue of the Infant Jesus was placed as if presiding at the table, to Whom each one made an offering of part of the food he was eating. Father Mazzini (afterwards a Redeptorist), who was present, has said that these repasts were more spiritual than temporal, so abundant were the ejaculatory prayers. Their recreation was singing hymns, before they again resumed their holy meditations.

They afterwards occupied a house still more retired and solitary, where they employed themselves with unceasing satisfaction in the care of their souls, and here Alphonso almost unconsciously conceived the plan of the Institution, which in after years he gave to the Church.

CHAPTER XII.

ALPHONSO had been one year a priest, when he received from Cardinal Pignatelli faculties for hearing confessions, a moment ardently desired

by thousands who wished to place themselves under his direction. No sooner was he seated in the confessional than he saw himself surrounded by persons of every rank and condition: he received all with unexampled charity; he was the first to take his place in the confessional, and the last to leave it.

It was his invariable opinion that the office of confessor was more profitable to souls in general, and less apt to produce vain glory in the priest, than any other priestly duty. For by confession, more than by any other means, sinners are immediately reconciled in God, and the grace of Jesus Christ applied to them superabundantly. He did not receive his penitents with a supercilious and repulsive air, as some do, sending them away with disdain, as if they were unworthy or incapable of receiving Divine mercy. Severe towards himself only, he treated the greatest sinners with inexpressible meekness, and without excusing the sin, was full of compassion for the sinner, when sincerely repenting he wished to make his peace with God. In his sermons also, he never separated the Justice of God from His Mercy, that he might lead souls to penitence, never forgetting that if he were the judge of the souls he directed, he was also their father.

He condemned the rigour, so contrary to the gospel, which animated some ecclesiastics, who acted in a spirit opposed to Christian charity. It was his opinion, that the more a soul was sunk in vice, the more compassionate the manner of the confessor ought to be, in order to drag it

from the fangs of Satan, and throw it into the arms of Jesus Christ. In his old age he said, that he never remembered having sent away a single sinner without having succeeded in reconciling him to God, much less of ever having treated any one with harshness and rigour. He received all sinners with kindness, instilling into them a great confidence in the blood of Christ shed for them, and pointing out to them the way of withdrawing from their sins. "If the sinner is repulsed," he used to say, "he will never resolve to abandon his sin." He was always most careful to prevent the sinner perceiving that he despaired of him, and he knew so well how to gain all hearts, that he drew them to Jesus Christ, almost in spite of themselves.

He was still more indulgent in the imposition of Sacramental penance. "Let us give to penitents," said he, "the penance they will perform willingly; but let us beware of loading them with obligations they would accept with repugnance, or abandon voluntarily. The penance ought to be such as will inspire horror for the sin, but not for the penance." Thus he frequently enjoined the penance of returning to confess, of frequenting the Sacraments, of hearing mass daily, of meditating on the Passion of Christ, or some eternal truth. For this purpose he composed a small collection of meditations, and gave them often to his penitents. He also imposed as penances of obligation to visit daily the Blessed Sacrament, or some image of the Virgin Mary,

to recite the Rosary in her honour, and he persuaded the heads of houses to recite it regularly with their family. As to fasting, discipline, and penances of this kind, he might counsel such occasionally, but never commanded them. "If the penitent be contrite," he said, "he will do these things of himself, otherwise, he will leave the penance, and relapse into sin, if it be made obligatory." This conduct, full of wisdom and gentleness, had the desired effect. He daily gained a multitude of criminals who had long lived in disorder and sin. He often went to preach in the market-places and at the Lavinaro, where the dregs of the people are to be found. He delighted in seeing himself surrounded by the lowest, the lazzaroni and such like, and they on their part felt for him the strongest affection; he enlightened them, instructed them, and disposed them to receive grace through the Sacraments. The one spoke of him to the other, and new penitents flocked to him from all quarters. Many of those who had been great sinners, under his direction conceived such a lively horror of sin, that they became instant in prayer, and burned with an ardent love for Jesus Christ.

Among the almost innumerable conversions he made, two deserve to be mentioned in particular. The first is that of Peter Barberese, a man who, though young in years, was old in crime. He was a school-master who taught reading and writing, and whose heart being full of evil thoughts, he instead of enlightening his

scholars corrupted their will. Fortunately for him he attended a sermon preached by Alphonso, which moved him to contrition; entering into himself, and full of repentance, he threw himself at his feet. Received with charity, he attached himself to the service of God, forsook sin, and embraced a life of penitence. Formerly he had taught his pupils to do evil; but now, regenerated by grace, all his endeavours were directed to fill them with the Spirit of God, and inspire them with the greatest horror of sin. He met his scholars at an early hour every morning, and conducted them to church to hear mass, after which he made them meditate on some eternal truth, taking occasion to suggest to them holy resolutions, and finished by reciting acts of faith, hope, and charity. Again in the evening he took the children to visit the Holy Sacrament and the Blessed Virgin, choosing the least frequented churches to avoid all display, being penetrated with repentance and humility for the scandal he had formerly given. He would also that his scholars should go weekly to confession, and prepared the elder ones for making their first communion. He was careful in instructing them to make acts of faith previously, and thanksgivings afterwards, and began a practice still in use in Naples, of the more advanced instructing and attending to the others on such occasions.

The other remarkable conversion was that of Lucas Nardone; this man had led an irregular life as a soldier, having often deserted, and at length

was about to be condemned to die, when some one obtained his pardon. He was however chased from the army with infamy, and lived covered with shame and loaded with sin. It happened one day that he heard Alphonso preach, and touched by grace he sought an audience, hardly daring to hope his crimes could be forgiven. He was received with open arms, encouraged, consoled, and led to the right way, and soon this man, once condemned to death, despised and abandoned for his wickedness, became a furnace of Divine love, gaining many souls to Christ by dragging them from the toils of Satan.

Alphonso needed not to seek for studied phrases in order to dispose sinners to repentance; his simplest words had an unction in them which powerfully moved all hearts; a remarkable instance of this occurred in the case of a gentleman who went to him for confession, and detailed the greatest crimes with the utmost apparent indifference. When he had finished, Alphonso asked if he had nothing more to say. "Nothing but what I have already said," he coldly replied. "What!" answered the confessor, "and that is all; now do you not see that the only thing wanting to complete your career, is to put on the turban and become Turk; what more could you have done than the crimes you have just confessed? Tell me now, my child, what evil has Jesus Christ done to you?" These words pronounced with the force of ardent zeal went directly to his heart. "Have I then,"

said he to himself, "committed such sins that I cannot commit greater?" and penetrated with the deepest contrition he bewailed his past disorders, placed himself in the hands of Alphonso, and was directed by him during his whole life, which was ever afterwards most exemplary and devout.

The means he employed to lead his penitents to perfection, may be reduced to two, meditation or prayer, and mortification. He proposed meditation as the mirror in which each one must see his deformities, and mortification as a knife with which to prune and cut off all the excrescences of nature. He affirmed there could be no true prayer without mortification, and to practise mortification the spirit of prayer was indispensable. After the penitent had discovered by meditation the stains that sullied the soul, he prescribed prayer, saying, "He who prays will certainly be saved, and he who neglects prayer will as certainly be damned." "Those who are saved, are saved by prayer, and those who are damned, are lost because they would not pray."

But above all remedies, he prescribed frequent communion, and daily visits to the Blessed Sacrament. In his little work of "Visits to the Blessed Sacrament," he acknowledges that all the graces he received while living in the world, flowed from this source. "O what exquisite happiness," he exclaims, "to bend before the altar and converse familiarly with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, asking pardon

for the faults we have committed, exposing our necessities as a friend does to a friend, and asking His love with its abundant graces!" While he was in Naples, he always advised his penitents to pay their court to Jesus in the church where the Blessed Sacrament was exposed during the forty-hours' adoration. He might be seen there himself almost ravished in ecstasy before his adorable Redeemer, while around him knelt a circle of his penitents.

He exacted besides a filial confidence in the Divine Mother Mary. "As," said he, "all good comes to us from the celestial Father, through the mediation of Jesus Christ; so all good comes to us from Jesus Christ, through the medium of Mary." He would that all should daily recite the Rosary in her honour, visit some church where her image was placed, and have a picture of her at the head of their bed. He exacted of all his penitents to communicate at each of her feasts, and was careful to propose some devotional practice for each of her Novenas, that by good dispositions they might be prepared to receive her favours; he practised himself and recommended to others to fast every Saturday in her honour, and on the eves of all her feasts.

Although he preferred to devote himself to the service of the poor, and the lower class of people, he did not refuse to direct those of higher rank, considering the great influence they possessed over others, for evil or for good. Around his confessional might be seen persons

of all conditions, and though they knew he received all equally, the highest did not disdain to await his turn with the very lowest, submitting willingly to any inconvenience, rather than not have him for their director. In after times he was not less interested in directing holy women who had consecrated themselves to God. In Naples there was scarcely to be found any convent of nuns not under his direction, and many of these died in the odour of sanctity. In every field of the church he cultivated flowers to adorn the celestial Paradise, which produced fruit for the marriage-supper of the Lamb.

CHAPTER XIII.

It was not to be supposed that the powers of hell would look calmly on while Alphonso wielded the spear of his patron, the Archangel Michael with such wonderful effect. Crowds came from every quarter to obtain the benefit of his direction, and not having time to give many fervent souls the instructions he judged necessary, to advance them in the way of perfection, he thought of assembling them for instruction in some solitary place during the summer evenings, and he first chose a spot near the convent of the Bare-footed Carmelites, afterwards beyond the convent of St. Angelo, and at last fixed on a site before the Church of the Star, which belongs to the Minims, as being

least frequented. The assembly consisted not of the noble, but of the poor, who came from different quarters of the city, some a considerable distance. Lazzaroni, scavengers, masons, barbers, carpenters, and other artisans were there, and the lower their condition, the more friendly was their reception. Other priests took part in the good work, among whom were D. D. Porpora, de Alteriis, Mazzini, Sarnelli, &c. In this assembly, composed of persons low in the eyes of the world, but great in the sight of God, Alphonso daily preached the truths of religion, showing them the horrible nature of vice, and the sublime beauty of Christian virtue. The other priests, his companions, spoke alternately to the people, pointing out to them the different degrees of love to God, and love towards our neighbour, showing them the necessity of self-denial, if they would advance in perfection, and the misery produced by unrepressed passion. At other times they would talk of mortifying the flesh, and imitating Christ crucified, proposing to their example the life of some Saint, and thus exciting them to virtue.

There were some individuals residing in the neighbourhood to whom these meetings seemed not a little strange, and because they were new, they took it for granted they must be evil. In the hope of confirming their suspicions, they concealed themselves behind their windows to hear what was going on. Now some of these poor people were so anxious to do penance that they fasted rigorously, and one evening a poor arti-

san was pointed out to Alphonso, who eat nothing but raw vegetables and roots, though obliged to work hard to support his family. He began to reprove him for this excess, when D. Joseph Porpora took up the word and said, "God wills that we should eat in order to live," and added laughing, "if any one gives you four cutlets, you will do well to take advantage of it." The multitude were amused at this and began to laugh, each one passing the joke to his neighbour. The listeners, hearing the words, "*cutlets, eating,*" took advantage of it, put an evil interpretation on the words, and thought the people were an assemblage of libertines; and going still further, came to the conclusion that they must be a club of Moli-nists, and a band of heretics.

Coolly taking all their conjectures for facts, they reported the matter to Cardinal Pignatelli. As the accusation referred to a nocturnal assembly, and the circumstances seemed equivocal, his Eminence at first supposed they must be dissolute evil-disposed persons, and he was confirmed in this opinion in consequence of several small bands of Lutheran soldiers having formed themselves in different parts of the town, some of whom had already been seized. Information was conveyed to the Governor of Naples, who immediately ordered a captain of the guard to disguise himself and go to one of the meetings. They were then in the middle of the Novena of the Nativity of our Lady, and Alphonso in proposing some pious practices in honour of the

infant Mary, made use of certain expressions which seemed mysterious and suspicious to the captain, and as he could not catch the meaning of the words, he reported to the governor that he had heard a melange of things good and bad, which he could not exactly comprehend. In consequence the governor and the cardinal were persuaded it could be nothing good, and ordered both priests and laymen to be arrested. Next morning Alphonso happening to be at the palace of the Cardinal, heard of the affair and the proposed arrest, and not doubting it was his own meeting, he hastened to warn his penitents not to assemble at the usual place. It was impossible, however, to warn every one, and those who lived at a distance came as usual, among whom were the two formerly mentioned, Peter Barberese and Lucas Nardone. The poor people had scarcely arrived when they were surrounded by archers and sergeants, and carried off to the guard-house, from whence these two prisoners escorted each by an archer and a sergeant were conducted before the procurator of the court. The good penitents took the matter calmly: "Comrade," said Nardone to the other, "this piece of politeness is perhaps not much to your taste." "On the contrary," replied Barberese; "I am well satisfied; Jesus Christ was bound with ropes, and we are treated much more civilly, only a simple cord on the arm." The Procurator having ordered them to declare what they did at the place of the Star, they replied that

they were poor ignorant people, who came to receive instruction from D. Alphonso de Liguori and other priests on the subject of religion. When the Procurator heard the name of Liguori, he exclaimed, "God forgive you, you have alarmed the two courts, the ecclesiastical and civil!" They were then conducted to the house of the governor, where the mention of the name of Liguori was at once sufficient to establish their innocence. The magistrate took pleasure in questioning them about the pious practices which they were taught, when all of a sudden they heard the noise of bells announcing that the holy Viaticum was carrying through the street; in a moment the two turned their backs on the governor and ran to prostrate themselves at the balcony, crying out, "It is our Lord, it is our Lord!" The governor asked no more questions, but dismissed them with tears of tenderness and consolation.

Alphonso was rather uneasy at this adventure, and when he heard what had happened, went next day to the Cardinal, acknowledging himself as the author of the mischief, and alone deserving of punishment. His Eminence soon quieted him by expressing his satisfaction at the good he had done, but notwithstanding advised him to discontinue the assembly. "The times," said he, "are too critical; we must be careful that wolves do not cover themselves with sheep's clothing to do mischief under the shadow of your name."

The terror of a new sect which held secret

meetings was spread over all Naples, every one spoke of it, and Alphonso and his companions were constantly asked to offer their prayers to God for the conversion of these new heretics! One day Father Mazzini was saying mass at the convent of the Camaldales, when one of the fathers asked him if anything new had been discovered of that sect of heretics which had lately appeared. "What sect?" asked Mazzini. "The sect of the *Cutlets*," he replied; and the vicar added, "We have heard that certain priests meet with the people every evening, and hold a species of club in the place of the Star. They are supposed to be a sect of Molinists." Mazzini assured them they need not be uneasy, for there was no great evil to be apprehended from the new sectaries. Alphonso continued to do great good in Naples by his conferences, and many of those who attended them ever after led the lives of saints. Some entered into religion, while others remained in the world to embalm it by the odour of their virtue. Perhaps the two most remarkable were Anthony Pennini, who sold eggs through the town, and found means while pursuing his avocation to drag many souls from perdition. After his death he reappeared to several persons and converted them. The other, Leonard Cristiano, went through the streets with his ass and sold chesnuts; both of them performed miracles during their lives and after their death.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE triumph of the devil seemed complete when these meetings were put down; but here as elsewhere he found himself defeated. His machinations only produced greater glory to God by causing still more good to be done. Convinced by experience how useful these assemblages had been, Alphonso suggested to Peter Barberese and a few others of his more fervent penitents, that they should give instructions to the lazzaroni and other people of the same class, not in the market, but in suitable places removed from public observation.

Peter thus encouraged, began to instruct the little porters or errand boys, in the shop of a barber. He exhorted them frequently to visit the Blessed Sacrament, and to have a great devotion towards the Blessed Virgin; he also made practical meditations with them on the Passion of Christ. A priest who saw the good he was doing, advised him to meet his little flock in a neighbouring chapel; he accordingly did so, and every evening about sixty young people attended, without counting those of a more advanced age.

Lucas Nardone, and several others, pursued the same course, so that in different quarters of the town the penitents of Alphonso were busy in drawing souls from destruction and winning

them to Christ. He on his part was careful to visit and superintend these meetings, animating them to pursue the great work of their salvation, and leading them to the love of the cross.

One evening the Canon Romano was taking a walk in the neighbourhood where Peter Barberese taught the most numerous of all these assemblages, when a friend met him and said, "Come with me, I wish to give you an agreeable surprise;" he accordingly led him to where Peter was instructing his hearers. On seeing the canon, he rose, and offered him a seat, explaining to him the object of the meeting, and then at his request continued his instruction.

Delighted with what he saw, Romano could not resist detailing the whole to Cardinal Pignatelli, who was so pleased at the good that was done, that he suggested to the canon that he should instruct the people himself. Peter willingly resigned his place, and immediately commenced assembling in another house more lazzaroni and porters. The meetings began to multiply, and at length in almost every quarter of Naples the fervent penitents of Alphonso might be found instructing and catechising the ignorant. In after times, and even when he had founded his own Congregation, he never came to Naples without visiting these favourite meetings, exhorting them to persevere in the service of God, and in gaining conquests to Christ. Above all he was consoled by the thought, that the overthrow of one good under-

taking had been the very means of producing another much more extensive, and still more agreeable to God.

The work continued to increase, and before long these meetings, protected by the Cardinal himself, ceased to be held in shops and private houses, but were transferred to public oratories and churches. Every evening when the clock struck six, the well-disposed occupied themselves for an hour and a half with their devotions, and this practice is still continued. They recited the Rosary with acts of faith, hope, and charity, after which they listened to a half hour's instruction on Christian duties, and were then taught the manner of practising mental prayer. Every Saturday zealous priests, appointed for that purpose, heard their confessions. On the Sunday morning, after half an hour's meditation on the Passion of Christ, mass was said, with the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, followed by the Holy Communion, a priest pronouncing the affections and thanksgivings; then followed several masses, and all ended with Benediction.

During the day they went together to some church to visit the Blessed Sacrament, and some altar of the Blessed Virgin, and when each had performed his own particular devotions, they took a walk to a retired spot in the country, and if time permitted, met in some inclosure quietly to amuse themselves. When evening came, they sung hymns and returned again to the chapel for the usual evening devotions. Each of these

societies included from a hundred to a hundred and fifty persons. .

Afterwards they adopted the regulation of visiting the sick in the hospitals; on Sunday after Vespers they went to the Hospital of the Incurables, and on Thursday to that of the Annunciation; some made the beds, others swept the floors, or performed any office useful or necessary for the sick; but, above all, they attended to their spiritual wants, exhorting them to patience, and preparing them to receive the sacraments by giving instructions to those who were ignorant. When the confessors found any more ignorant than the others, they pointed them out to the associates that they might take a more special care of them. After the sick had been attended to, they exposed the Blessed Sacrament at the end of the galleries, while the zealous priests spoke on the sad consequences of sin, recalling to their minds those who had died during the previous week. They afterwards carried the Blessed Sacrament through all the sick wards, giving benediction to console the sufferers. When these charitable works were ended, they went, as we have said, to recreate themselves in the country.

It was to the pious efforts of Alphonso and his penitents alone, that Naples was indebted for the establishment of Chapels, so called from the first of these meetings having been held in the Chapel of the Bonnettieri. Latterly, in 1834, they amounted to a hundred, containing each about three hundred persons, and the good they

produced among the working classes was incalculable. The most zealous priests are attached to them, and the Archbishops of Naples find them invaluable. In these societies they acknowledge neither rank nor riches, the door is open to all, and nothing delights them more than to be joined by some poor outcast who wishes to reform his life. Alphonso occupied himself also in establishing schools for women; a well-educated lady was placed at the head of them to direct the others, and he himself visited them from time to time; but this good work did not last long.

Barberese lived to an advanced age, and so did Nardone, persevering to the end in their pious labours. The only time Alphonso was in Naples during his episcopate, Barberese was present at his sermons. He saw him at the Hospital of the Annunciation: "What are you doing here?" said Alphonso, laughing. "Come to hear the Holy Spirit," replied Barberese. This worthy disciple died on Saturday, the 19th of September, the eve of the Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin. The Jesuits buried him in the Church of the Little Carmel, among the members of the Confraternity of our Lady of Sorrows. After his death his body retained such an appearance of life, that for some time they hesitated to bury him. He left behind him a great reputation for sanctity, as also did his fellow labourer, Nardone, who was buried in the Church of St. Matthew.

CHAPTER XV.

It was against his will that Alphonso continued to live in the house of his father; he longed for a solitary cell, where, retired from the world, he could enjoy that calm and delicious peace to be found only in solitude. He experienced a foretaste of this peace in the monthly retreats he made with his companions in the country-house already mentioned, and God, who always favoured him in his holy undertakings, soon furnished him with the means. The celebrated Missionary, D. Matthew Ripa, had lately returned from China. A true model of apostolic men in this vast empire, he had become the support of religion there by the favour he enjoyed with the emperor. Being resolved to propagate, defend, and perpetuate the faith among the idolators of China, he had brought with him a Chinese doctor and four young men full of fervour, with the intention of founding at Naples a College for the Chinese. Ripa had resolved on this, from the persuasion that because of the continual intercourse they could easily induce young Chinese to come to Naples, where, after being educated for the priesthood, they might return to their own country, and in case of persecution succour the faithful with less cause for suspicion than foreigners could do. God blessed the enterprise, and on the 14th April, 1729,

they opened the House of the Chinese Mission, not without many difficulties and labours on the part of the pious founder, but with the consent and authority of Pope Benedict XIII., and the king Charles VI.

Alphonso considering the excellence of this institution, the rare merits of its founder, and the great fervour which reigned there, with the poverty and privations which they endured for love of God, formed the resolution of joining F. Ripa, and sharing as a pensioner of the house in the fervour which animated this new-born society. Father Ripa, who was well acquainted with him, knew how to value the acquisition of a subject so worthy and so zealous. He eagerly received him, and about the middle of June, 1729, he entered the college. A resolution so unforeseen vexed his father extremely, who deeply regretted the society of one whom he considered less as a son than as an angel sent him by God. Painful as the separation was, he had not the courage to oppose so laudable a design.

No sooner did Alphonso find himself in the college, delivered from the surveillance of his parents, than he gave himself up to the practice of mortification with more freedom and ardour than ever. He was clothed in sackcloth, and wore chains of iron; several times a-day he took the discipline until the blood flowed. The wretched food which he ate was not sufficient for his love of mortification, but he added to it bitter ingredients, such as myrrh, aloes, and

wormwood. He ate but little of the fruits of which the others partook, and fasted every Saturday on bread and water in honour of our Lady, and generally ate in a kneeling position, or lying on the floor. But all this would not yet satisfy him; in his chamber he would not allow himself a chair, but stood while he studied, holding his book in his hands, and keeping little stones in his shoes. Monsigneur Cappola, Bishop of Cassano, has said that his penances surpassed even those of St. Peter of Alcantara.

Besides all these voluntary penances, he never exempted himself from the privations imposed upon all the members of the community, and indeed the new-born Congregation wanted not opportunities to practise poverty. Although their rule limited them to the use of vegetables and a little boiled meat, they frequently had no meat at all, and often the scraps which appeared on their table were stale; in such circumstances they ordinarily had a salad of mushrooms. Sometimes they could only afford to buy bones, from which they strove to extract a miserable soup. During Lent they scarcely ever had fish, a pilchard with their vegetables was a feast to them, and when they did buy fish, it was always the cheapest that could be found. They sowed radishes in a little plot of ground attached to the house, and for months they lived on these roots varied occasionally with a few pears. As for their evening repast it usually consisted of the remnants of dinner boiled with a few coarse and hard biscuits; their bread in general was

of the coarsest kind. And so far from ever showing the slightest repugnance to all this, Alphonso on the contrary rejoiced in it, and encouraged the others to suffer with pleasure, to love to suffer that they might become more holy and agreeable to God.

In the midst of this he continued to draw new strength from prayer, and the examples of the Saints. By reading their Lives, he taught himself in their school, and animated himself to follow their examples. He burned with an increasing desire to love God, and to give proofs of his love. Besides the meditation of the Community, he daily spent an hour and a half at least before the Blessed Sacrament in the Church where the Quarante ore was held. His mass, with its accompanying prayers and thanksgivings, occupied a long time, but all this could not satisfy his devotion. He spent whole nights in watching, sometimes in his room, sometimes in the Church before the Blessed Sacrament. And the little rest he granted to nature was given grudgingly, and not without many contrivances to render it as little agreeable as possible; he often lay on the bare ground or on a hard table.

It might naturally be supposed that amidst these bodily austerities undertaken and endured from the pure love of God, his mind would be enjoying that interior Paradise, that foretaste of heaven, which nothing worldly can give, nor the absence of every worldly comfort diminish or take away; but it was not thus with our Saint, he desired to carry his cross, he wished

to drink of the chalice from which his Saviour had drunk, and therefore God permitted him to feel the nature of our Saviour's anguish when he exclaimed, "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?"

His heart enjoyed no consolation. He was deprived of all the favours which render every trial light and easy. His days dragged along in dryness and desolation; he believed he had lost all devotion for mass, his prayer was arid; he sought God, but he found Him not. He struggled like a man rowing against a strong current. "I go to Jesus," he said, "and He repulses me. I have recourse to the Blessed Virgin, and she will not listen to me." All he did at this time was done by the mere light of faith, which made him resolute to seek to please God in all things, without being impelled either by the hope of heaven or the fear of hell.

During the time he remained in the college of the Chinese he gave the greatest proofs of his zeal to gain souls. A heart which burns with the love of God, cannot fail to be kindled with the love of its neighbour. Crowds came to the church to confess to him and hear him preach; every Friday he discoursed on the glories of Mary, and recited with the people the chaplet of her sorrows. He celebrated several novenas in the course of the year, during which he preached in honour of the Blessed Virgin, or the holy family, the titular patrons of the college. Every year he gave retreats to the great benefit of those who took part in them, and each

day during the holy exercises the church was crowded as on feast-days. Devoted to his penitents, he scarcely took time to eat; and often before his meal was over, numbers were waiting to go to confession, even from the most remote quarters of the city. In the evenings after the exercises of the Quarante ore, he used to enter the church accompanied with a train of penitents, whose confessions he heard until late. Father Ripa, in his Memoirs of this Congregation, writes thus of Alphonso: "We have for pensioner the noble D. Alphonso de Liguori, a priest eminent not for his birth only, but for his excellent conduct and general qualifications as a missionary. He has lived in this house as pensioner almost from its first establishment, and although not aggregated to the mission, he has nevertheless the desire, and holds himself ready to go to China to preach the Gospel, as he has more than once declared to his director. Assured of his zeal and his talents, I have given him the entire care of the Church, and in all that regards the pulpit and the confessional, he has acquitted himself to the great advantage of souls."

Although he was bowed down with labours, he redoubled his ardour when he saw the good resulting to poor souls. It would be impossible to enumerate the number whom he reclaimed of obstinate sinners, old in crime, kindling within their obdurate hearts a tender love towards their Saviour. It has been said that he possessed a peculiar gift in the confessional for in-

spiring his penitents with compunction, and that scarcely had they knelt at his feet when they felt their hearts touched with sorrow for their sins. From this we can understand how he was able to say at a late period of his life, that he had never sent away one penitent unabsolved. He converted a celebrated courtesan who was afterwards eminent for her sanctity, and many who had lived ordinarily good lives, became under his direction models of perfection. He also induced a number who were occupied in mere worldly pursuits, to renounce the world and consecrate themselves to God. The first sermon he preached when giving a retreat inspired fifteen young persons with the resolution of giving themselves to the service of God. He understood so well the beauty and dignity of virginity, that those who heard him speak were in spite of themselves forced to love and admire this virtue, and many instances are on record of the gay, the beautiful, and the talented renouncing the fading, the unsatisfying pleasures of the world, to devote themselves under his direction to amassing the imperishable riches of Heaven.

We will mention one instance only of a very remarkable conversion of this kind. A young lady, called Mary, was a source of great anxiety to her pious mother, as her heart and mind were filled by the world to the exclusion of everything serious. She besought Alphonso to pray for the conversion of her daughter; he did so, and the young girl seemed to be reformed,

but before long she became more giddy and thoughtless than ever. Again the poor mother had recourse to Alphonso, who at her earnest entreaty spoke seriously to the girl, representing strongly the danger of her position. It was in the church he spoke to her, and she, touched to the quick, retired to a corner and began bitterly to bewail her sins. Alphonso seeing this, before he quitted the confessional called her back: "Mary," said he, "will you sincerely give yourself to God?" "Yes," she instantly replied. "But without reserve, and with your whole heart?" he continued. "Without the slightest reserve, with my whole heart," said the poor girl with much energy. "Then," said he, "go instantly, cut off your hair, and make yourself a Carmelite." She obeyed, took the religious habit, persevered, and became a Saint. To produce this result, God sent her many severe and bitter trials; for several years she was sensibly tormented by devils. After her death she was invoked by many, and worked several miracles.

At this period of his life his labours were so incessant and multifarious, that we can scarcely conceive the possibility of one individual accomplishing the half he performed. Preaching in various churches in Naples, giving retreats, hearing confessions, and going on mission to the neighbouring towns; yet he found time for all, without encroaching either on his studies or devotions.

In the year 1729 a frightful epidemic rava-

ged the city of Naples ; he profited by this occasion to sacrifice himself more and more ; and among the brothers of the Congregation of Apostolic Missions he was ever the first in assisting the sick. The poor were as usual the objects of his most ardent charity. He opened a mission in the large Church of the Holy Spirit, and took advantage of the time to withdraw souls from the power of Satan. In consequence of his great fatigues, he was seized the following year with a pulmonary complaint, which brought him to the gates of death, but again his Blessed Mother performed a miracle in his favour.

On one occasion about this period, he was sitting with the other Fathers during recreation, when a tremendous thunder-storm came on, and a bolt fell in the midst of them. Father Ripa was wounded in the throat, while Alphonso and others fell down senseless ; they soon recovered, however, to thank God for their escape, and devote themselves with renewed zeal to His service. They were saved by an evident interposition of Providence.

CHAPTER XVI.

IN the spring of the year 1731, the Puglia and the neighbouring provinces suffered exceedingly from an earthquake, which happened on the eve of the 19th of March, a few days before Easter. The bishops exerted themselves to obtain mission-

aries, that the opportunity might not be lost for calling the people to repentance, and the Brothers of the Propaganda were invited. On this occasion Alphonso as usual produced a miraculous effect, and many were reclaimed and converted.

The nuns of St. Clara hearing every one speak of the young missionary, entreated their superior to have him invited, were it only to preach one sermon : he came, and some of them said that in listening to him it seemed as if a seraph were speaking, and not a man, his words went so directly to the heart.

The town of Foggia had suffered from the earthquake more than any other in the Puglia, being almost reduced to a mass of ruins ; but the God who smote them would also comfort them in the midst of their affliction, by giving them a miraculous proof of His love. They venerated in this town a very old and miraculous picture of the Virgin, the colours of which being almost obliterated by age, it was glazed and covered with a curtain. The place where it was first kept being nearly destroyed, it was removed to the Church of the Capuchins, where the people, terrified by repeated shocks of an earthquake, came in crowds to place themselves under the protection of the Mother of Mercy. On the morning of the 22nd of March, while the multitude were kneeling before this picture, the Blessed Virgin showed herself to them under the appearance of a young woman, and this miraculous manifestation was repeated for several days, and seen by

crowds who came to look on the picture and venerate it. This apparition made a great noise throughout the kingdom, and when their mission was finished Alphonso and his companions went to visit the miraculous picture. The inhabitants remembering he was the nephew of their late Bishop, Mgr. Cavallieri, received him in the most honourable manner; all the gentlemen of the place paid their respects to him, and the Bishop, Mgr. Faccola, with other distinguished ecclesiastics, insisted he should give a Novena in honour of the Blessed Virgin; at first he refused, having no permission from his superiors to prolong his stay, but at length he yielded to the circumstances of the time and their urgent entreaties. To celebrate the Novena they chose the Church of St. John, and the picture was conveyed there from the Church of the Capuchins. The concourse of people was such that the greater part could not enter the church, they therefore erected a pulpit at the door, at the side of which was exposed the miraculous picture. The extraordinary effects were beyond description; great as was the number of priests, they were not sufficient to hear the confessions of crowds, who, touched to the quick by the discourses of Alphonso, turned from their wickedness and ever after walked in the way of the Lord. Almost the entire population of the town were converted, and the bishop never ceased returning thanks to God for the wonders that were then accomplished.

About six miles from Foggia was a celebrated sanctuary, situated in a wood, and dedicated to the Virgin Mary under the title of the Virgin Crowned. They solemnized the feast every year on the last Saturday of April and during the Octave which followed, and crowds from all the neighbouring provinces flocked thither. This great assemblage of men and women from different quarters caused many disorders, above all on the two last days of the feast, when they carried their amusements to a scandalous excess. Alphonso determined to oppose this, and knowing the people intended going there on the Sunday which ended the Novena, before giving the benediction he said, "I will bless all, with the exception of those who are going to the feast of the Virgin Crowned. This feast has caused sins without number to be committed, and far from being honourable to God, it is most insulting to Jesus Christ and His Virgin Mother." He finished by recommending them to perform this devotion at another time, and in a spirit of penitence.

There happened to him during this Novena a very remarkable event. His delight was to remain near the miraculous image, from which he could hardly drag himself away. One day when the people had withdrawn, and the image was replaced in the church, he got up on the altar to examine it more nearly; but scarcely had he placed himself in front of it, when he fell into an ecstasy, which lasted nearly an hour. The Blessed Virgin would fully satisfy his de-

votion, crowning his happiness by showing to him her face radiant with celestial beauty. When the vision disappeared, he descended from the altar inebriated with joy, entoning the "Ave Maris Stella," in which he was joined by about thirty persons who had been witness to the occurrence. He afterwards attested having seen the Virgin Mother under the appearance of a young girl of thirteen or fourteen years of age, wearing a white veil which undulated from side to side. The next morning he described his vision to a painter, detailing the appearance as accurately as possible, and the picture drawn at the time is still preserved at Ciorani.

On quitting Foggia, desiring to render his homage to the Archangel Michael, he passed by Mount Gargano. At Manfredonia the Archbishop, M. de Mario, came to meet him with his chapter, accompanied by the most distinguished inhabitants of the town. They besought him to preach to the people, but he excused himself, as he had no permission from his superiors, and was by no means sure of escaping censure for having remained at Foggia. Next morning he visited the Altar of the Archangel, and celebrated mass with such extraordinary devotion that all eyes were fixed upon him; when they found out who he was, and his intention in visiting Gargano, the chapter came to wait on him, and to request he would preach to the people, but again he declined.

On returning to Naples in the middle of the month of May, he found his fears not vain.

The Canon D. Julius Torni, whether he really blamed him for making a Novena at Foggia, or whether he would only prove his humility, reprimanded him strongly in the presence of all the congregation. He did not attempt to excuse himself, he did not speak; but on the contrary rejoiced to see himself mortified before such a respectable assembly.

CHAPTER XVII.

EXHAUSTED and worn out by his labours in the provinces, his friends began to have serious apprehensions for his health, and accordingly it was determined he should retire to the country for a time until he recovered strength. The place fixed upon was a hermitage in the neighbourhood of Amalfi, situated on a hill near the sea. He was accompanied by Joseph Jorio, John Mazzini, Panza, and two others; and after a rough voyage they arrived safe. They immediately went to pay their respects to the archbishop, M. Scorza, and meeting the Vicar General, he strongly urged them to change their plan, and go to a convenient hermitage near Scala, where they could at the same time be useful to the poor goatherds of the neighbourhood, who were destitute of spiritual aid. "Only go," said he, "and I will give you all the power of my jurisdiction." The proposal was willingly

agreed to, and they soon established themselves at St. Mary of the Mount, the name of the hermitage. They had obtained permission to keep the Blessed Sacrament in the hermitage, and while Alphonso was recovering strength of body, he gained new strength to his soul in the presence of his beloved Saviour.

As soon as the arrival of the missionaries was known, the shepherds and goatherds, with the other inhabitants of the country, came to seek them, and the visits of these poor people were a subject of indescribable consolation. They began to catechise them and hear their confessions, and this sojourn in the country became an uninterrupted mission, which produced abundant fruits. It was now Alphonso became acquainted with the extreme destitution of the people scattered over the country, who often lived without the knowledge necessary for salvation; being without the Sacraments of the word of life, many had to be instructed in the first rudiments of faith before they could make their confession. The inhabitants of the town of Scala hearing what was doing in their neighbourhood by the celebrated missionary Alphonso Liguori, were very anxious to hear him preach. The bishop, equally anxious to hear more of him, sent a pressing request that he would agree to their desires. He accepted the invitation, and preached one sermon, which produced all the effect of a regular mission. It was on the Sunday following the Octave of the Blessed Sacrament; he press-

ed upon them such strong motives for loving Jesus in His Sacrament, and for detesting sin, that the whole Congregation were dissolved in tears, and their sobs and groans resounded through the neighbourhood. The superior of the Convent of St. Saviour besought him to preach in their church, which he did with his usual success, and the bishop was so delighted that he engaged him for a Novena, to be celebrated in the Cathedral for the Feast of the Holy Redeemer in the month of September.

He did not however forget the good shepherds of St. Mary of the Mount; and he besought God, even with tears, to choose some one to labour with efficacy among these abandoned people. He knew not that he himself was chosen by God to be the instrument of gathering these precious souls into the fold of Christ, but before long the purposes of God were revealed to him. He continued to labour among them until September, when he returned to Scala, according to agreement, accompanied by John Mazzini. He preached the Novena in the Cathedral with his usual success, and to the nuns of St. Saviour he gave a retreat. This was the moment in which God would make known His will. There was in the convent a nun of great sanctity, possessed of supernatural gifts. She knew nothing of what was passing in his mind, but on the 13th of October she saw in a vision a new Congregation of priests who were employed in the care of thousands living in villages and scattered hamlets destitute of spiritual aid; she

saw Alphonso at the head of this Congregation, and heard a voice which said, "This is the soul I have chosen to be the instrument of My glory in this great work." A few days after, this nun, while kneeling before Alphonso in the confessional, told him of the vision she had had, and the designs God had upon him. Struck with the remarkable conformity between her vision and his own thoughts, he at first believed it to be a Divine inspiration, but afterwards fearing it was but a vain illusion, he reproved the nun, and treated her as a visionary. She humbled herself before him, but persisted, and the more he repulsed her, the more she assured him that God had chosen him to be the instrument of His mercy towards the inhabitants of the country.

On his return to the house, Father Mazzini seeing his trouble and agitation, asked the cause. He hesitated to tell him, when Father M. said, "I know you have had a dispute with one of the nuns, for I overheard you speaking loud." Yielding to his friend's desire, he told him what the nun had said; and far from treating it lightly, Mazzini did all in his power to persuade him of its truth. The sanctity of the nun was undoubted. "Besides," argued his friend, "an institution of the kind is much wanted in this kingdom, and who knows what designs God may have upon you." Grace was operating in the heart of Alphonso, but always doubting his own fitness, he could not resolve upon taking any active measures. "I approve much of such an insti-

tution," said he, "and I foresee the glorious fruits of it, but what can I do by myself? where are my companions?" "Here am I for one," answered Mazzini, "and I am sure other priests will be found willing to consecrate themselves to a work which must contribute so much to the glory of God." While his mind was balancing in this uncertainty, M. Falcoja, Bishop of Castellamare, arrived at Scala; he was a prelate of eminent sanctity, and skilled in the science of spirituality, and the Bishop of Scala was not inferior to him; the presence of these two saints, raised Mazzini's hopes, and he urged Alphonso to consult with them. He was the more willing to do this, because M. Falcoja was known in the Chinese College at Naples. He accordingly told them, and after several days spent in narrowly examining the subject, they both agreed that the inspiration came from God, and that the vision of the nun strengthened their confidence, she being a person peculiarly favoured by God, whose sincerity and truth were undoubted.* M. Falcoja in particular, saw in this event a special mark of Providence, for ever since his elevation to the episcopal dignity, he had particularly de-

* This nun, Sister Mary Celeste Castarosa, suffered many persecutions because of the favours God bestowed upon her. Banished from her convent at Scala, she reformed a convent at Noura, and afterwards founded the Convent of St. Saviour at Foggia, for the education of the daughters of the nobility, which convent became the edification of the town. She died the 14th September, 1745; her body is still entire and unconsumed. The nuns open the coffin and clothe the body anew every time any of the sisterhood die.

sired the establishment of some such institution, seeing with pain the extreme destitution of the country people in regard to spiritual help. He felt the greatest consolation in the movement which grace operated in the heart of Alphonso, urging him with all his power to hasten the execution of his project.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ALTHOUGH peace and tranquillity usually accompany the operations of grace, yet in this instance Alphonso found himself surrounded by obstacles and tribulations. The interior lights which he received, and the advice of experienced and holy individuals, gave him great encouragement; while on the other hand, he looked on himself as devoid of strength and talent to undertake such an enterprise. At one moment, fearing to resist the grace that operated within him, he determined to do what God seemed to require of him; but he soon relapsed again in the fear, that he was presumptuous and rash. In this state of agitation he returned to Naples, and immediately opened his whole heart to his own spiritual director, Father Pagano. This sage director, after a careful consideration of some days, hesitated not to declare his opinion, that such an undertaking could not fail to promote the glory of God and the salvation of souls; but doubting his own judgment he advised Alphonso to consult with more enlightened per-

sons. He accordingly spoke with Father Vincent Cutico, Superior of the Mission of St. Vincent of Paul, and Father Manulius, a Jesuit, both of whom were much venerated in Naples. Their opinion coincided with Pagano's; they were all persuaded that it was the will of God, and urged him to respond to the call of Heaven. Still unconvinced he consulted others, eminent for their sanctity and wisdom, and finding all of the same mind, he could no longer doubt, but taking courage he gave himself unreservedly to God, sacrificing his love for his native city, and offering to spend his life in villages and remote hamlets among the poor shepherds and goat-herds.

We might suppose that now his mind would be at rest, and all would go well; but it was far otherwise. A work which was intended by God to promote the salvation of souls, not in Italy only, but in all other kingdoms of Europe, in Asia, and in America, could not fail to stir up all the powers of hell, to accomplish, if possible, its overthrow. As soon as his determination was known, all Naples seemed to be in arms against him. Some said he was mad, and that his brain must be affected; others treated him as a fanatic and a visionary; some affirmed that the high opinion he had of himself made him attempt extraordinary things, and that he had been spoiled by too much praise. It was in the College of the Chinese he found his greatest adversaries; his companions there loaded him with blame and ridicule. Father Ripa was

then at Rome, but on his return he also was vexed beyond measure, having calculated on his assistance in the establishment of his own Congregation; he did all in his power to convince him that his plans were impossible, and useless even if they succeeded. Seeing, however, that his endeavours to dissuade him were vain, he chose to believe with the others that his head was affected, and that he was the victim of some delusion, and reproached him both privately and publicly with what he called his extravagance. Others went still further, apparently instigated by the devil, who would employ every means to bring the measure into disgrace, and demolish a work destined in future ages to drag millions from his tyranny.

The Fathers of the Propaganda also ranged themselves against him; ashamed to see one of their brethren fall into what they considered such a weakness, one whom all had thought so wise and such a credit to their society. Having heard of the vision seen by the nun, they imagined it was the sole basis of his enterprise, and were shocked that he would allow himself to be led away by the reveries of a young nun. But what afflicted Alphonso most of all, was, that these opinions were taken up by his uncle Matthew Gizzio, Rector of the Seminary, and by the Superior of the Propaganda, Julius Tornì. He grieved at being obliged to resist them; the rector was his uncle, to whom he had always looked up; and the Superior had always loved him with a father's love, and had taught him

dogmatic and moral theology. They assailed him on every side, while he only replied that he would do nothing disapproved of by his director. This would not satisfy the two Canons, who were the more vexed at his resistance, because they loved him tenderly. Seeing their representations ineffectual, they began to reprimand him bitterly. "It is not God who directs you," said his uncle, "but you blindly follow the reveries of a nun, and do not see that you are the victim of an illusion." "I do not regulate my conduct by visions," he meekly replied; "I regulate it by the Gospel." On another occasion his uncle jeeringly asked him if he ever expected to realise his schemes. "He who trusts in God," said he, "can do all, and should hope all." At last he went so far, that in the presence of some other canons he treated him as a fool whose brain was turned by self-conceit. One day as he entered the sacristy of the Cathedral, several persons of consequence began to abuse him before others in authority who happened to be present; "Keep to your word now," said they, "and make haste to show the Church those new institutions and foundations which you have promised her." Alphonso said nothing, but bowing his head, humbled himself interiorly.

After some time his uncle insisted that he should take advice from Father Louis Fiorillo, a learned and pious Dominican, by whom he himself was guided. At first he declined, answering that he did not act according to

his own mind, but was guided in all things by his director, Father Pagano; upon which D. Gizzio said no more; but afterwards on repeating to Father Pagano what had passed, he expressed himself of the same opinion, and urged him to follow his uncle's advice, saying that he would consider Father Fiorillo's decision as the voice of God. Alphonso had never seen Fiorillo, and knew him only by reputation, but soon after met him one day accidentally at his uncle's; the moment Fiorillo saw him, in a fit of inspiration he exclaimed, "God is not yet satisfied with you; He wishes you to be altogether His, and expects great things from you." At these words of Fiorillo he seemed to breathe more freely, and felt his heart penetrated with new life. Full of confidence he took him aside, and told him of his desire to consult him, and a place of meeting was arranged.

He now began to perform the most severe penances, praying continually that the Father of Lights would enlighten His servant Fiorillo, on whose decision the affair seemed to depend. He recommended himself to the prayers of many holy individuals, but above all to the nun at the monastery of Scala. All the convent joined with her; they prayed, they fasted, they gave themselves the discipline for half an hour each day; all united in beseeching God to enlighten the directors of Alphonso. A singular thing now occurred: several of the nuns, yielding to the opinion of certain ill-disposed priests, believed that God would not establish this Congregation.

One day while they were disputing about it with the nun who had the revelation, she cried out in an ecstatic transport, "God wills this work, and you will see it accomplished!" "Yes," replied an incredulous nun, "I will believe it when Sister Mary Magdalene is cured." This sister whom she mentioned, had been deranged for several years, but from that moment she perfectly recovered her senses!

CHAPTER XIX.

WHEN Alphonso had made known to Father Fiorillo the light he had received from God at St. Mary of the Mount, and the light which he daily continued to receive, the man of God replied, "In a similar conjuncture St. Lewis Bertrand asked six months from St. Theresa to reflect before giving an answer; I would ask the same from you." "Not six months only," said Alphonso, "take a whole year." Some days after he met him again, when the venerable father embraced him with joy, saying, "Go, take courage, this work is divine; throw yourself into the arms of God, as a stone which falls from the mountain into the valley. You will encounter contradictions doubtless, but place your confidence in God, He will help you." At this time, however, Father Fiorillo had many good works on hand, and fearing to scandalize the

clergy, who might overturn them, he begged Alphonso to conceal his approbation, and not visit him again. Satisfied now that he was acting according to the will of God, he feared no further contradictions, and began in earnest to look out for companions, the Fathers Manulius and Cutica authorising him to do so. He wrote to Fiorillo, asking him to point out fitting individuals, who replied, "Do not suppose I forget you in a matter so immediately connected with the glory of God. I have your interest more at heart than ever; but be tranquil, God will provide assistance for a work so dear to Him. I have no labourers to offer you at this moment, but should I meet with any I shall not fail to send them to you; I wish that I were young, I would then gladly follow you, were it only to carry your baggage. Do not fear, though your number be small, for they will be strengthened to do the work of many. I bless you in the name of Jesus and Mary, and embrace you affectionately in the charity of our Lord."

The noise of this enterprise resounded through Naples, and nothing was talked of but the new Congregation and its presumptuous founder. The Missionaries of the Propaganda, thinking that it cast a reflection upon them, were among the first to prepossess every one against Alphonso. They blamed him everywhere, and could not bear to hear him spoken of as one of them. The Canons Torni and Gizzio were extremely annoyed by the slur which it seemed to cast upon the Propaganda. They hoped that Fiorillo

would never approve of the project, and that at last Pagano himself would oppose it. Meeting Alphonso one day in the Church of the Cesaria, and finding him unaltered in his views, they attacked him more violently than ever. "Do you not see," said Gizzio, "that you are a visionary; all Naples is against you, neither Pagano nor Fiorillo are with you; and yet, against the opinion of the most enlightened persons, you obstinately persist in your own notions, allowing yourself to be guided by the visions of a nun; fool that you are, do you not see you are acting like an idiot?" Alphonso meekly replied, "Say what you will, my uncle; I assure you I am not acting in consequence of such visions, I am not following my own opinions, but am ruled by the word of God, and guided by those on whom I ought to rely." In circumstances such as these, his embarrassment was great; he was bound not to betray Fiorillo who was then absent from Naples; and on the other hand, the astonishment and scandal augmented every day. Pagano advised him not to keep the secret longer, because of the scandal given by appearing to act in opposition to all authority. F. Matthew Ripa, on the contrary, advised him to say nothing, but the Bishop of Cassano agreed with Pagano, while Manulius and Cutica were equally divided in opinion.

Not knowing how to act, he determined to consult M. Amato, Bishop of Ischia, and embarked one day in a little vessel to cross over to the island. To the amazement of the sailors they

performed the voyage in an hour and a half. He was fortunate in finding the Bishop of Casano there also; both advised him to be guided by F. Pagano, and openly declare that Fiorillo approved of all he did. Again he made the voyage in an incredibly short space of time, and only waited to refresh himself before he visited the two Canons. Hardly had he entered the house when they attacked him as usual. "Are you not ashamed of yourself, scandalizing all Naples by your obstinacy, and acting in opposition to the opinion of F. Fiorillo? how can your conscience permit such a thing?" Then Alphonso calmly and firmly replied, "You are deceived in supposing I act contrary to the advice of F. Fiorillo; my conduct is the result of the counsels he has given me." He had provided himself with a copy of the letter Fiorillo had written to him on the subject, and as he ceased speaking he placed it in his uncle's hands. Great was the confusion of both Gizzio and Tornì. "But this is not sufficient," said Tornì; "I would see the original." Alphonso gave it to him. "Now," said he, holding it in his hand, "I want no other testimony; this is sufficient for the honour of my Congregation."

After this he expected to have peace, as he could no longer be blamed for acting contrary to the opinion of wise directors; but the enemy of mankind would not yield without a further struggle. The brothers of the Propaganda refused to be reconciled with him, and threatened to turn him out of their Congregation. But

Cardinal Pignatelli, although he had been prejudiced against him, no sooner discovered the truth, than he warned the Canon Tornì to beware how he took any steps against Alphonso Liguori.

Father Matthew Ripa, although now persuaded that he acted in accordance with the advice of Fiorillo, ceased not to accuse him of visionary schemes; and in hopes of turning him from them, he proposed to hold a Council of Theologians in the Chinese College, to whose decision Alphonso should submit. He believed himself justified in opposing plans which would remove him from Naples, where he was certain to be most useful, and, above all, useful to the Chinese College. But Ripa had other reasons; for some of his most distinguished subjects were inclined to follow Alphonso. Gennaro Sarnelli, son of the Baron of Ciorani, and Vincent Mandarinì, from Calabria, were among these. At length he set no bounds to his opposition, speaking of the scheme as a suggestion of the devil, rather than an inspiration from God. He quarrelled with Pagano and Fiorillo, and wrote a very bitter letter to Mgr. Falcoja, whose reply is too admirable to be omitted here:

“Your esteemed letter has just been received, and whatever bitterness may be contained in it, still it is dear to me as coming from you. I reply to it immediately, because I would not that your annoyance should continue one moment longer if I can help it. You know that it does not belong to a spiritual father to give his peni-

tent any vocation which may happen to please himself; this gift belongs only to that Divine Providence who has made niches in Paradise for the statues He fashions upon earth, and on earth He establishes different studios, and is daily opening new, where these reasonable statues are to be moulded to perfection according to His most holy will, that they may be prepared for their position in everlasting glory. Now in order that they may not be all crowded together, God Himself has destined one to be sculptured in one studio, another in another. It is not the province of a spiritual father to do anything else but to approve or disapprove. When a soul is faithful to God and His holy words, 'He who heareth you heareth Me,' we may believe that he cannot wander. You may argue that a spiritual father can be deceived; but I would reply that God, who is always faithful, will not fail to communicate His will to those whom He has appointed to enlighten others; for if it were not so, what assurance could we have in deciding on what was God's will? Now inasmuch as Alphonso has followed this rule, he cannot go astray. I see from your letter that you judge and condemn me as one who would overturn your Congregation, and ruin a valuable work which owes all to your labours; but fear not; is the arm of the Lord shortened? is it not able to sustain your Congregation and many others at the same time? Let God perform His own work, for a work which comes from Him may aid, but cannot destroy another equally

Divine. But this enterprise, you say, will dissipate itself; if you say true, then you lose nothing; but according to my view of the case, this enterprise comes from God, and it cannot perish if he who is charged with it continues faithful; those therefore who oppose it, set themselves in opposition to the will of God.

“But you say this new work will take away some of your most valuable subjects. I wish, my dear father, you would put a little more confidence in God and less in man. The Congregation of Pious Workers had scarcely been established when four of their most excellent members left them, and founded four different Congregations. Notwithstanding the venerable fathers, Charles Carafa, and Anthony de Colellis, were not annoyed by fearing that their Congregation would be ruined; the contrary happened; they increased more and more by the arrival of other men whom the Father of the family sent to replace those who had left. Be persuaded that the work of Alphonso is no suggestion of the devil, but on the contrary, that the devil opposes it as the will of God, as he has done on a thousand other occasions when he foresaw that an institution would have the effect of destroying his empire in the world.”

It seems incredible, but yet it is true, this letter produced no effect on F. Ripa, who continued to blame Alphonso for his inconstancy; and even in his Memoirs of his Congregation complains bitterly of him and all who had any hand in approving or forwarding his projects.

CHAPTER XX.

WHEN the Fathers Fiorillo and Pagano saw that the tempest, instead of abating rather increased, they began to fear for the success of their own immediate affairs, if they continued to bear the blame of giving counsel to Alphonso. They therefore strongly urged him to put himself entirely under the direction of Mgr. Falcoja, a man of undoubted wisdom and sanctity, and held in great consideration by all Naples. Alphonso was unwilling to withdraw himself from his present directors, having so long experienced the benefit of F. Pagano's counsels; but the Feast of the Assumption approaching he resolved to apply for aid to his Blessed Mother. He made the Novena of the Feast in the Church so dear to him, the Church of the Redemption of Captives, where her statue was exposed during these nine days. The Divine Mother listened to her favoured child, and enlightened him regarding the course he ought to pursue. He placed himself in the hands of the holy prelate, promising to do nothing without his advice, and never was a child more obedient to a parent.

The Canon Tornì, although persuaded of the wisdom of those who directed Alphonso, and the increasing approbation which his project received from the wise and the good, could not, however, bear the idea of his services being lost to

Naples. Having no hope of directly succeeding in opposing him, he began an indirect opposition in his quality of Superior of the Congregation of the Propaganda. He gave him the charge of several important matters, trusting that when he saw the good he was doing in Naples, he would give up the idea of going elsewhere. The beginning of October he commanded him in the name of the Cardinal to give a retreat to the clergy in the Church of St. Restitute; he hoped that this opportunity of showing his talents would flatter his vanity, and make him anxious to regain the popularity he formerly enjoyed; but he miscalculated: Alphonso was insensible to such attractions. He obeyed his superior, notwithstanding his repugnance to appear before those who had treated him so unjustly, and God poured out His benedictions on his labours more abundantly than ever. The greater number of the clergy were touched to the heart, in spite of their prejudices against him. The Cardinal himself attended, and was so moved with compunction that he exclaimed, "We may easily see he is a vessel of election, for the Holy Spirit speaks by his mouth." Many of the clergy who had been cold and indifferent, became from that time faithful and zealous pastors. No sooner was this retreat ended, than he was sent successively to three other churches to give a mission, when as before crowds from all quarters flocked to confession and to hear him preach. The Canon hoped that after such an abundant har-

vest he would no longer persist in his plans ; he was mistaken however ; Alphonso was longing for the moment when the arrangements would be completed for him to commence his new Congregation in the town of Scala, in concert with the Bishop, Mgr. Santoro.

Mgr. Falcoja, seeing that the storm still continued to rage, would put his constancy to further proof, and delayed to give him his parting benediction. The work was great, and he continued to solicit the prayers of holy persons, that the designs of his penitent might be blessed ; he counselled him to do nothing precipitate ; but those days of delay seemed ages to Alphonso, who on one occasion wrote to him thus : " My father, for charity's sake be quick, quick, quick ; I am dying with anxiety to set off ; call me away from this, and release me from the obedience under which I am remaining at Naples. The devil is doing all he can to hinder our commencing immediately, but let us hasten to the work, where he will be able to do nothing, and we shall succeed as we ought. I am on the eve of the last days of the holy exercises, and to-day I must speak to my good Mother Mary. Pray always for me, but always, always ; and then quick, quick, quick for the glory of Jesus and Mary."

Many were the contradictions and annoyances he experienced during the last days he remained, particularly from F. Ripa and his uncle Gizzio ; because they loved him, they thought they had a right forcibly to drag him

from an enterprise they considered extravagant. They must not be condemned however; they acted according to their conscience, and God in His impenetrable Providence sometimes permits His servants to fall into similar mistakes; it may be to keep them humble, and as a means of advancing the sanctity of both parties. In after times, those who had opposed him now, lauded his enterprise when they saw the blessings of Heaven accompanying his work.

CHAPTER XXI.

IN spite of the outcry made against him by many influential individuals, there were still a number of zealous priests who declared their willingness to accompany him on his arduous mission. But when the moment arrived for putting their promises in execution, many, like the men spoken of in the Gospel, drew back, alleging apparently reasonable excuses. One was prevented by the necessity of watching over the interests of his family; another was attached to some congregation which he could not well leave; in short, many found an excuse, so that the number of those who put their hand to the plough without looking back were small indeed.

One of his first companions was D. Vincent Mandarinini, a noble Calabrian, who had studied at Naples and was an excellent theologian. He was like Alphonso, a pensioner in the Chinese

College. The abbé D. Silvester Tosquez, a gentleman of the town of Troja, and a great friend of Mandarini, joined them; he was an excellent man, and well versed in jurisprudence and theology. Don Janvier Sarnelli, son of the Baron of Ciorani, and one of the Chinese College, followed Alphonso. He had great talents, both natural and acquired, besides being a man of eminent virtue. His other companions were men equally estimable and enlightened. Don Peter Romano of Scala, Doctor Sportelli from Aquaviva, Don Jerome Manfredi, Don John Baptist Donato, Don Joseph Banza, and two others whose names are unknown. Mazzini would have joined him at first, had not his director insisted on his delaying in order to prove his vocation.

These subjects were for Alphonso as so many foundation stones, upon which he erected in the Church that edifice which had so much occupied his mind. All were animated with the most lively zeal for the glory of God, and full of devotion to the cause in which they had engaged. Sportelli and Tosquez, although still seculars, rendered the greatest services, and, if possible, aspired even more than the others to a superhuman sanctity.

To found this great work Alphonso sought neither to lean on the favour of men nor on the riches of the world, but put all his confidence in God and in the protection of the holy Virgin Mary, a protection of which he was already assured by the most striking proofs. A gentleman named Vitus Curzius, whose vocation was evi-

dently miraculous, was the first who joined him in quality of lay-brother. He had been secretary to the Baron of Vasto, and was very intimate with Sportelli. His disposition, however, was proud and quarrelsome, and in dispute he was too apt to appeal to his sword and pistol. Providence, however, had preserved him from homicide. Sportelli had not communicated to him his design of quitting the world, when one day, happening to meet in the street, Curzius told him a dream he had had the previous night. "I thought," said he, "that I stood at the foot of a high and steep mountain, which many priests were trying to ascend. I wished to imitate them, but the first step I took I fell backwards. Not willing to give up the attempt, I tried to mount several times, but to my great annoyance I always slid back, until one of the priests, taking compassion on me, gave me his hand and helped me to ascend."

In the course of the day as they were walking together near the Chinese College, they met Alphonso, when Curzius, who had never before seen him, turned in astonishment to Sportelli, exclaiming, "There is the priest who gave me his hand last night." Exceedingly surprised, he saw the mystery of the dream, and telling Curzius that this was Alphonso Liguori, who was about to found a new Congregation of missionary priests, and his own intention to join him, the young man instantly recognised the Divine Will, and unhesitatingly declared his desire to be of the number, not as a priest, but as a lay-brother.

BOOK II.

CHAPTER I.

THE year 1732 was destined by God to give birth to the Congregation of Redemptorists. Pope Clement XII. occupied the chair of Peter, and the Emperor Charles VI. sat on the throne of Naples. After receiving the benediction of the Fathers Pagano and Fiorillo, Alphonso, without acquainting either friends or relations, hired a miserable donkey, and departed from Naples on the 8th of November, directing his steps towards the town of Scala. M. Santoro, who impatiently expected him, received him as an angel sent from heaven, and blessed God that he had lived to see such a happy day. The nobility, the clergy, the people, all rejoiced in his arrival with his missionaries, and spoke of nothing but the good they were certain to do. The day on which he left Naples he completed two sacrifices; the definitive renunciation of all the splendours of the world, and the entire disruption of the ties of flesh and blood. This last completed the numerous sacrifices he had already made. Since the

month of August he had quitted the Chinese College, and returned to his father's, for the better arranging of his affairs. Don Joseph, who loved him less as a son than as a spiritual father, was miserable at the thought of losing him, and one day he entered his room when he had lain down to take a little repose, and throwing himself on the bed beside him, pressed him in his arms and exclaimed, "My son, why will you abandon me? My son, I do not deserve that you should cause me so much misery." Caught by surprise, Alphonso suffered most intensely, and this scene lasted during three hours, his father holding him in a close embrace, repeating always, "My son, do not abandon me." He afterwards spoke of this trial as the most terrible he ever had to endure.

On arriving at Scala he was joined by only eight of his companions; Mazzini, Sarnelli, and Tosquez were obliged from certain circumstances to delay. He had a letter from Tosquez, who wrote thus: "How happy you are, who can now suffer during this inclement season the cold and hunger suffered by Jesus Christ! I am unworthy to share your lot; the Lord will not yet satisfy the burning desire I have to join you; He wishes to purify the ardour of my desires, and I wish only to perform His Holy will."

The dwelling prepared by the Bishop for his new missionaries, accorded in every respect with their wishes; it was an hospice belonging to a convent almost destitute of furniture, and

small and inconvenient; besides a small oratory there were only a parlour, and three little rooms, containing palliases and scanty coverings, with a few earthen dishes for the table and the kitchen. The day after their arrival they assembled in the Cathedral, and after a long meditation chanted the Mass of the Holy Spirit, thanking God for the establishment of a Congregation so ardently desired. At that time they gave it the name of "*The Holy Saviour*," placing it under the protection of the Chief of all Missionaries. As the work was undertaken only to promote the glory of God and the salvation of souls, Alphonso would build up the edifice according to this design. He proposed to form a company of priests animated with great zeal, who would willingly embrace a species of apostolic life, conformable to the life of Jesus Christ; that is to say, he would have them humble and poor, making an entire abnegation of themselves, and of all the things of the earth.

They applied themselves seriously to prayer and penitence; their hearts overflowing with love to God, they embraced every opportunity of mortifying themselves; they wore sack cloth and small chains with sharp points. But it was at the hours of repast, those hours when the world seeks after sensual enjoyments, that these holy men signalized their love of mortification. Some kissed the ground; others knelt and remained for a length of time with their arms extended in form of a cross; another made the round of the refectory, kissing the feet of

each of his brethren. They ate kneeling, or lying on the floor, while others, to make the moments of eating still more uncomfortable, hung a heavy stone round their neck. Their wretched food was seasoned with bitter herbs; many would not taste meat, or if they ate it they abstained from fruit. Their food was of such a quality that the poor hesitated to accept what was left. Vitus Curzius was cook, and as he knew nothing of cookery, he spoiled every thing he attempted to make; he would serve the vegetables raw, the pottage burned or without salt, and he would bake the bread without remembering to put in leaven. Such was the life these missionaries led at Scala; a realization of the mystic ladder spoken of by St. John Climacus.

As for Alphonso, he occupied himself with God only, "instant in prayer," reading the Lives of the Saints, or labouring to save souls. His application was continual; his mass was long, sometimes lasting for hours; and besides the general prayers of the community he spent hours in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, realizing the feelings of the Psalmist when he exclaimed, "As the hart panteth for the water springs, so my soul panteth after Thee, O God." He pushed his austerities to such an excess, that the utmost the others could do, was to imitate him. He sometimes seasoned his miserable pottage with such herbs, that those who were near him could hardly endure the smell; and not content with wearing sackcloth, chains, and crosses armed with sharp points, he gave

himself the discipline twice a-day. The care he bestowed on his own perfection and that of his companions, did not hinder him from attending to the people of Scala. He introduced the custom of giving a meditation in the Cathedral every morning, and making visits to the Blessed Sacrament and the Virgin Mary every evening. Every Thursday he gave a sermon and exposition of the Holy Sacrament, and every Saturday he preached on the glories of the Blessed Virgin. On Sundays and other feast days he instructed the people on their individual duties, and catechised them. He established two confraternities, one for gentlemen and another for artisans ; and two similar to these for young people of different sexes ; and every Sunday each of these confraternities received a particular instruction. In a word, Scala was in a short time thoroughly reformed, to the great satisfaction of M. Santoro. Seeing himself so well seconded by the zeal of his companions, Alphonso made missions to the different towns and villages round about, so that the renown of the new Congregation began to spread everywhere, and bishops were constantly beseeching their assistance for their flocks, while many offered them establishments in their dioceses ; but the want of subjects prevented him acceding to these requests.

CHAPTERS II. AND III.

WHEN an error is once embraced by the multitude, it takes such deep root that years are often necessary to eradicate it. The Fathers of the Propaganda, instead of becoming reconciled to the step taken by Alphonso, showed themselves always more and more embittered against him, notwithstanding all the endeavours of their superior, Tornì, to disabuse them. The more moderate admitted his sanctity, but affirmed he was the victim of illusion. All imagined that his leaving them to pursue his own plans was giving a blow to their honour, which they would not easily recover, and that their only way to remedy it was to load him with contempt and ridicule. Their conduct deeply wounded him, and he was grieved to see pious and zealous servants of God partaking in the prejudices of the world, and rather exciting than preventing them. Persuaded that honour and purity, with rectitude of judgment, are the true riches of a minister of God, he saw with grief and alarm his ancient brethren striving with all their might to despoil him of them. He complained to the Canon Tornì, who loved him as a father, and sent him the following reply: "I could not refrain from weeping when I read your letter, in which you speak of the contradictions which crush you. I cease not to pray for you, and I trust the Lord will give that strength to your soul which

is so necessary to enable you to bear courageously the tribulations which His Providence permits in order to prove you, and that He will enlighten you to see clearly the designs of His holy will." His letter was full of the most friendly assurances, and Alphonso failed not to consult him on all his plans and regulations for his new Congregation. But the life of the just is a continual combat. The peace he had found in the friendly behaviour of Torni, was soon attacked by the renewed violence of the Fathers of the Propaganda. They clamoured against Torni, and insisted that he should expel Alphonso, and deprive him of his chaplainship. He thought himself obliged to yield, and on the 20th of February, to the great joy of all, they affixed to the door this announcement: "According to the order of our Superior, on Monday, the 23rd February, 1733, there will be a general investigation on these questions, 'Whether the brother D. Alphonso de Liguori should be expelled from the Congregation? and whether he ought to be deprived of his chaplainship?' It was with much regret Torni found himself obliged to yield; but to prevent the vexatious proceeding going further, he secretly informed the Cardinal of what was about to be done, and expressed his opinion of its injustice." "One may see," he said, "that it is a madness which, not content with blasting his reputation, would take from him the means of subsistence." The Cardinal was exceedingly vexed, but he would not hinder the convocation. "Let them deli-

berate," he said, "but fear nothing; I will provide for the result, and settle everything in the most expedient way."

The Congregation assembled on the appointed day, animated with incredible rancour. All wished to have Alphonso expelled from their society, and deprived of his benefice. In order to prevent any interference in his favour, they proceeded secretly with the scrutiny, and his expulsion was unanimously decided upon. But they could not register this decree, because the Cardinal had forbid any steps to be taken against Alphonso without informing him.

When the meeting broke up, the Superior, Canon, and some of the principal members, went to the Cardinal to tell him what had been done: his Eminence was much displeased. "Why," said he, "do you proceed to such extremities? either God will bless the enterprise of Alphonso, and it will prove a glorious thing for you, or He will overthrow it; and then all that could be said would be, that it was a good work, though it had proved unsuccessful. In any case, I do not see how you can find dishonour in it." Then assuming a dignified tone, he concluded with these words: "I am Superior of this Congregation, and I desire that Alphonso de Liguori be reinstated, and that he continue to enjoy his chaplainship; and I forbid any steps being taken against him unknown to me." This firm conduct arrested the flame, but did not extinguish it. The deputies retired, silenced and disconcerted, but still determined never to recognise him as a member of their Congregation.

CHAPTER IV.

THE storm was subsiding at Naples, in consequence of the firm conduct of the Cardinal, and Alphonso was living at Scala in profound peace, when God would try His servant still more severely, by permitting discord to arise in the bosom of the new-born Congregation. They began to dispute about the rules by which they ought to be guided, and opinions were so opposed that union was broken, and the society threatened with dissolution.

Alphonso wished that the new Congregation should be occupied only in labouring to promote the sanctification of clergy and laity, giving them spiritual exercises in convents, and procuring also the salvation of destitute souls in the country and small hamlets by means of missions. His views were based on the experience he had had, that the word of God had not penetrated into these remote places. Mandarini proposed, that, besides the missions, they should occupy themselves in teaching; but Alphonso opposed this, because the Jesuits and other religious orders supplied this want. He added, that the spirit of the Institute finding itself divided between two objects so different as teaching and giving missions, both would be fulfilled in an imperfect manner, since there would be too few labourers to undertake both branches; and further,

as missions would occupy them the greater part of the year, it would be impossible that returning to the house with a mind distracted by other occupations, they could apply themselves to regular teaching. The others had each their individual opinion, and D. Tosquez, going still further, insisted that as the end of the Institute was to imitate Jesus Christ, it was necessary to be dressed in a dark red cassock and a mantle of celestial blue, as these were the colours our Saviour was supposed to have worn.

Some disliked the recitation of the Office in common; others objected to sleep on straw, besides other austerities to which they would not submit. They disliked practising poverty in all its rigour, and renounced the perfection which community life exacted, yet it was to community life that Alphonso principally held. Tosquez gave in to a contrary excess, and would embrace the reform of the most austere mendicant order, insisting that each should sell everything he possessed, and lay the price of it at the feet of his superior.

Alphonso could not help laughing at these proposals of Tosquez, assuring him that it would be too absurd for simple priests to appear in masquerade by adopting a blue and red costume, and that he feared the Ananiases would be so numerous that it would be impossible to bury all those who should come forward with a lie in their mouths. He approved of establishing a choir, because it was a good means of reciting the Office well; but he would not have

a formal one with a chant, only simple recitation. He insisted on the vow of poverty, because without it the spirit of Christ would be wanting, and it would be impossible to observe the common life, which is the mother of poverty. "If," said he, "the words *mine* and *thine* are found among brethren, great inconveniences will result; they will go on the mission, not for God, not to gain souls to Christ, but for emolument and for themselves."

All these opposing sentiments could not fail to disturb his serenity; he spoke, he supplicated in vain; they shut their ears to all he said. Fearing a total shipwreck, he had recourse to prayer, while at the same time he neglected no human means. He consulted Mgr. Falcoja, Father Pagano, and the Canon Tornì, all of whom looked upon it as a stratagem of the devil. They decidedly opposed Mandarinì's plan of teaching, notwithstanding which, all the others joined him in sustaining this point.

These great diversities of opinions cooled their charity, and this was particularly the case with Mandarinì. Finding himself alone, Alphonso wrote thus to Mgr. Falcoja: "My father, it is most painful for me to associate with Mandarinì; I have thought much of it lately, and it is the love of Jesus Christ alone that could render it supportable; thank God, who gives me grace to sustain my courage amid these storms. See what I have deserved, ever since to obey God I have left all and suffered the reproaches of friends and relations; yet as you counsel me, I put my con-

fidence in God, for all the world has abandoned me. My father, do not you abandon me, for without you what could I do; command, and I shall obey. I can say no more, only have pity upon me."

These discussions lasted long. Mandarinini persisted in his scheme for teaching, and thought Alphonso ought to yield because the others were of his opinion. He remained firm however, and at length all left him but Sportelli, and founded a house at Tramonti, where they opened schools for youth. But the powers of hell, who believed they had gained a victory, were deceived; for on the one hand the work of Alphonso suffered no injury, and on the other, this apparently unfortunate separation gave birth to the venerable Congregation of the most Holy Sacrament, of which Mandarinini and his companions were the authors, a Congregation which has produced many men distinguished as instructors of youth, and as spiritual directors.

CHAPTER V.

THE withdrawal of Mandarinini and his companions is supposed to have taken place about the March of the year 1733, just four months after they had met at Scala. This separation was not made without deep regret, even on the part of those who were its cause, for their intentions were good, and they only differed with

Alphonso on the means of putting them in execution ; and these regrets augmented when distance and calm had effaced the agitation of opposition. Mandarinini arrived at Naples, convinced of the insufficiency of his friend's schemes, and determined to have nothing more to do with them ; he occupied himself with schemes of his own : but seeing the zeal of Alphonso, and the abundant harvest it produced, Mandarinini, anxious if possible to persuade him to follow, wrote to him in April, "If your Reverence would only come to us, we all most earnestly desire and pray for a reunion ; it was not our intention to separate, but to live united in the peace of Jesus Christ, but if (as I will not believe) you persist in remaining separate from us, it will be for us the greatest misfortune ; but I hope our Lord and His good Mother will not permit it to happen."

Although Alphonso saw himself abandoned and almost alone, he would not follow Mandarinini ; despising human assistance, he fixed his confidence on God only, and the result proved the wisdom of acting thus. But though he had endured the blow caused by these divisions with all the strength of a soul which rests on God, he did not the less feel a bitter sorrow. God sustained him on the one hand, but on the other the devil assailed him with suggestions full of despair. It was but a few short weeks since he had been surrounded by learned and pious men, united with him in a glorious enterprise which commanded the admiration of the multi-

tude, and now not one remained but Sportelli and Vitus Curzius the lay-brother. These gloomy thoughts filled him with sadness. The rocks of Scala, once so dear to his heart, now looked frowning and gloomy. He imagined he heard the taunts and the jeers uttered in the saloons of Naples, when the failure of his enterprise became known, and he shuddered at the discredit that would overwhelm him. Thoughts such as these crushed his spirit. He stood balancing between a confidence in God, which never deserted him, and a diffidence in himself, which bowed him to the earth. In the midst of his affliction he thought of M. Falcoja. He sought him at Castellamare, certain of finding consolation and strength, and trusting in his assistance to weather the storm; but God would not give him this comfort: he found the Bishop disgusted with the whole affair. He had upheld Alphonso in his enterprise, and defended him against all his opponents; but at length, like the Canon Torni, he became tired and worn out with the continual dissensions, and wounded at the disgrace which must fall upon himself from the failure of the scheme. He received him therefore with marked coldness; and before he had time to explain the object of his visit, he addressed him in these words: "Vultis et vos abire. God has no need of you and your companions; if it be His will that this work should go on, He will raise up other labourers to fill your place." For a moment Alphonso stood stupified by this reception, so different from

what he had expected ; but immediately regaining courage he said, "My Lord, I am well convinced that the Almighty has no need of me or of my labours ; notwithstanding I believe it to be His will that I should proceed in this work, and singly and alone as I am, I shall yet succeed." He continued, "I have not left Naples, I have not renounced the world, to gain the glory of founding a new order ; but to do the will of God and promote His glory." This reply touched M. Falcoja deeply, and suddenly changing his manner he said, "Put your confidence in God, and He will certainly bless your good intentions." On the whole he returned to Scala much comforted by this interview ; but the devil would not leave him in peace. D. Sportelli was often necessarily absent, and when he found himself alone on this desert mountain, disgust, anxiety, and depression assailed him more strongly than ever. He knew whence these temptations came, and one day when they were at their height he threw himself on his knees, and solemnly vowed to consecrate himself irrevocably to the salvation of destitute souls, even if he should remain altogether alone. God evidently blessed this heroic action ; for from that moment his fears and anxieties vanished, and he felt himself filled with courage, hope, and consolation. Even in his old age, he could not remember without a shudder the terrible struggle he had then sustained ; and he said to F. Dominic Corsano, his director, that this and his separation from his father were the two most dreadful trials he had ever undergone.

It was not without reason he had dreaded the effect this rupture would produce in Naples. No sooner did it become known that the new founder was abandoned by his companions, and that the far-famed society was dissolved, than every one laughed at and ridiculed the whole proceeding, condemning the fanaticism of the pretended head of the Congregation, who had blindly lent himself to the dreamy fancies of a woman. They went the length of affirming, that the Pope himself had interfered, and forbidden the establishment of such a Congregation. And who would believe it! even the pulpits resounded with anathemas; the preachers pretending to show by these events, to what an extent even the most favoured individuals can go astray when they allow themselves to be caught in the snares of the devil, and to forget the precepts of humility. They cited by name Alphonso de Liguori, who, by a blind confidence in himself, was entangled in illusions most dangerous to his salvation. At this crisis even his friends were silenced by their own share of the contempt and mockery which they received. No one dared to defend him; no one was to be found in all Naples who would say one word in defence of him or his advisers. Father Fiorillo alone saw that all this was the work of the devil, and continued to be convinced that God would uphold His own work. The Cardinal Pignatelli was not the last to be informed of the overthrow of the enterprise; he pitied Alphonso, but he did not condemn him. "There was nothing repre-

hensible in it," he said; "but who can know the judgments of God?" and touched by the embarrassment in which he found himself, he desired the Canon Tornì to recall him to Naples.

Every one can imagine the reception Alphonso had to expect in this city, and how much it must have cost him to return at such a moment. On all sides he saw himself contemned and turned into ridicule; his simple presence there was a triumph for his enemies, and he felt he was an object of aversion even to his relations and friends. The Canon Matthew Gizzio refused to see him or hear his name mentioned. Father Ripa would have nothing to do with him, and it was the same with many others who had once held him in the highest veneration.

He went to the Cardinal accompanied by the Canon Tornì. This wise prelate was afflicted to hear of the number of lies that had been circulated against him. The Canon, who wished to retain Alphonso at Naples, remarked, that if this work had been pleasing to God He would not have withdrawn the means of carrying it into execution; and that surely he could be more useful at Naples than elsewhere. These words were a new temptation to him, but he would not yield to it, and far from being cast down he replied with entire confidence, "We have reason to be convinced that the devil is the author of what has happened at Scala; but it must not be said that I have allowed myself to be conquered because the demon has come across my path. If my first companions have

deserted me, that is no reason why other zealous priests should not be found; but be that as it may, I do not hesitate even alone to sacrifice myself for the good of destitute souls scattered through the villages and hamlets of this kingdom." The Cardinal could not help admiring the heroism of this speech, and turning towards the Canon, he said, "It will not do to abandon Scala just yet; let us have recourse to God in order to know His holy will." Then encouraging Alphonso he continued, "Trust in God, put no confidence in man, for it is God who will help you." He approved his constancy, and advised him against a reunion with those who had already separated themselves from him.

Consoled by the sentiments of the Cardinal, he returned to Scala full of hope and confidence; while the opinions expressed by his Eminence disconcerted those who railed against him, and reduced them to silence.

CHAPTER VI.

WHEN the tempest had abated, and peace had returned to the soul of Alphonso, he enjoyed in the solitude of Scala an anticipated Paradise. Their number consisted of three, D. Sportelli, who was still a lay-man, Vitus Curtius, the lay-brother, and himself. Curtius was necessarily often left alone, notwithstanding he regularly rung the bell for the

Office at the hours fixed upon, to the great edification of the little town. Always assiduous in the church, he was there at the earliest hour of the morning, regretting he could not pass the night there. Although alone, he performed all his duties as if there had been a multitude of religious.

In this solitude Alphonso reposed in the bosom of his God, and he soon had the consolation of seeing his convent frequented by new subjects, who aspired to enter the Congregation. Rejoicing to find his hopes realised, the fervent community resembled a little Paradise. Writing to a friend in July, 1733, he says, "Our novices think neither of country, nor friends, nor even of sufferings; all their desire is to love God and perfectly conform themselves to His will."

About this time they quitted the hospice of the nuns for a house called Anastasius, but equally poor with the first. One who saw it describes it as follows: "There was one small parlour, in which Alphonso had made an oratory and erected a crucifix so beautifully carved that it drew tears from the eyes. The bishop had arranged for the church a square apartment underground, which looked more like a burial vault than a chapel. Poverty reigned everywhere, in the house and in the church; they had not even a tabernacle for the Blessed Sacrament, and Alphonso placed it in a box ornamented with ribbons and silk drapery. The altar was also poor, but they embellished it as well as they could with roses and bouquets of artificial flowers.

Alphonso and his companions passed the greater part of the night there, taking a little repose on the bare earth before the Blessed Sacrament."

After Mandarinini and his companions quitted Scala, the spirit of penitence and prayer reigned there as before, and if possible increased when new disciples arrived. All breathed self-denial and mortification, Alphonso as usual signaling himself among the others; he was the soul of the house, each one feeling himself impelled to imitate him. At the side of the house of Anastasius was a half-ruined grotto, where every day he submitted his body to the most rigorous penances. There is a tradition preserved among the inhabitants, that while he was chastising his body the Blessed Virgin appeared to him, and bestowed upon him many special favours. In after years, when he had attained to an extreme old age, he still sighed after this beloved grotto, and could never detach himself from the hallowed remembrance. Whenever he returned to visit Scala he sought his cherished grotto, exclaiming, "O my grotto, my beloved grotto, why can I not possess thee now as in times long past!" In short, this grotto was for him the mystic cellar, out of which he came inebriated with Love Divine, and burning with desire to promote the glory of God.

Four months had scarcely elapsed since the departure of Mandarinini, when Alphonso with his new companions found himself in a position to give missions in the neighbouring dioceses until the Christmas of that year. In the meantime

he had been joined by the priest Sarnelli of Ciorani, with whom he was united by the most intimate ties of friendship; and in January following, he yielded to his pressing solicitations, and accompanied him to the territory of Ciorani. The inhabitants of this country never lost the remembrance of this first visit, in which they were edified as much by the holy example of these two friends, as by the instructions they gave. They spent but a few days there, being called by the Bishop of Cajazzo to make a mission in his diocese. The general reformation of manners which followed, excited the most ardent longing for their establishing a house in that diocese, but they were not yet sufficiently numerous. At Formicola, in the principality of Columbano, was a house with a church adjoining, extremely well suited for the Congregation; and among those who were most anxious to see them established there, was a young nobleman, Xavier Rossi, belonging to a patrician family at Capua. He exerted himself to the utmost, sent for an architect to arrange the necessary alterations and repairs, and soon the building was begun at his own expense. Xavier had received priest's orders, and Alphonso, delighted with the purity of soul he found in him, said one day, "Don Xavier, it is first of all yourself whom God wishes to have, and afterwards this foundation." It was a prophecy fulfilled somewhat later; for at this moment, though filled with admiration for the life led by Alphonso and his companions, he had not the courage to imitate them. But after a

while, a sudden movement of grace led him to Alphonso one morning as he was about to say mass; Xavier served, and as he afterwards said, when he saw at the altar not a man, but a Seraph, he felt impelled in spite of himself to follow him. Alphonso saw his emotion, and earnestly prayed the sacred heart of Jesus to captivate his young protector; his prayers were so effectual that the moment the mass was finished, Xavier threw himself at his feet, desiring to be admitted into his Congregation. He would prove his sincerity by delay, but he gave so many proofs of strong determination, that he soon admitted him to his novitiate. He afterwards became a corner-stone in the new-born Congregation, and died a Saint after having rendered the greatest services.

This foundation exactly suited the views of Alphonso, being situated on the confines of four dioceses, surrounded by a great number of villages, and a thickly-peopled country. At the beginning of March the building was so far advanced that they could inhabit it. Four apartments level with the ground, resting against the church, which had formerly been occupied by hermits, were given to the Missionaries, and four chaplainships were assigned to them with a revenue from each, of one carlino a-day, that is, fourpence halfpenny of our money. The Church was public property, and the Fathers merely had the use of it for their ministry. This was certainly but little with which to found an establishment of Missionaries; but Alphonso looked

for souls, not for money, and contented himself with a small and poor house distinguished from others only by a belfry, after the example of St. Theresa, whose life he loved to imitate.

No sooner was the house established than he undertook different good works to promote the salvation of the people in the neighbourhood. He gave frequent missions. Every Thursday the Blessed Sacrament was solemnly exposed, and a sermon preached. On Saturday there was a sermon in honour of the Blessed Virgin. And Sunday scarcely sufficed for all that was to be done. In the morning a confraternity of men met in the Church; during the day there was a sermon followed by "the Way of the Cross." The children were assembled for instruction, and alms were distributed to the poor. Every day of the week they met with the people for mental prayer in the morning, and in the evening for a visit to the Blessed Sacrament.

While the building continued to go on the people eagerly assisted in the work, and even some of the neighbouring nobles might be seen mingling with the others in carrying materials. Alphonso was the first to show the example, labouring like a simple workman; and when the gentlemen insisted on his stopping, he replied, "This is nothing, I wish to have my share of merit with the others." It happened one day that a poor woman was carrying a large stone, when another equally large fell from the building upon her head; every one thought the blow was mortal, but Alphonso, who saw

the accident from a distance, entered the church, and addressed himself to the Blessed Virgin: his prayer was heard, the woman rose up unhurt. None were more zealous than the young novice Rossi; not only did he give all he could call his own, but he also went about the country begging alms for the work. He laboured incessantly, without regard to the excessive heat or the streams that interrupted his passage.

Alphonso remained until the month of August, and here he had the happiness of receiving John Mazzini, who had so long been wishing to join him. Such was his opinion of this father's sanctity and wisdom, that he immediately made him rector of the new house. But his joy on this occasion had its usual mixture of sorrow; for he lost at this time a young clerk of great merit, whose friends violently forced him away. Michael Alteriis had lately joined the Congregation, and his father, irritated because of the noise this event made in the world, came to the house with a body of police to carry him off. Alphonso helped him to escape during the night; but his friends and relations were so enraged that the Cardinal advised his being sent back to his family. "This victory will cost them dear," said Alphonso; and hardly had the young man returned to his father, when the eldest son died. "I have carried one off from God," he exclaimed in his despair, "and God has carried one off from me." Michael afterwards became an indefatigable labourer in the Lord's vineyard, and

died in the odour of sanctity, as stated in his Memoirs, published soon after his death.

The life which Alphonso led with his brethren in this new house, "The Villa of Slaves," was equally admirable with the life he had led at Scala. An eye-witness reports that every day he ate on his knees, with a heavy stone hung round his neck; his food usually consisted of simple pottage, seasoned with bitter herbs; besides taking the discipline in common, he took it privately every day, and the walls of his room were covered with blood; the hair-cloth he wore was so heavy he could hardly walk; his sleep was short, a stone served him for a pillow, and his straw mattress was so thin, he might be said to sleep on the boards. His humility was extraordinary: before and after meals he kissed the feet of all; he never used a razor, but cut his beard with a pair of scissors; his cassock was so worn and mended that the original form could hardly be recognised; he never went on horseback, but always on foot or on a mule, which he said was good enough for him. A profound silence was generally observed in the house; towards evening they all met together to converse on eternal truths, and the hour of recreation after their frugal supper was still an uninterrupted conference on spiritual subjects. Such was the species of life led by Alphonso and his companions, and besides the three meditations which they made every day in common, he was continually in prayer, and spoke only when absolutely necessary.

This new house attracted a great many priests and young men into the Congregation; everywhere they spoke of the sanctity of Alphonso, exciting each other to join him; but as one of the fathers remarked, if subjects presented themselves in crowds, they withdrew in crowds also, for few could sustain a life so painful from the extreme poverty they practised. His former companions, Tosquez and Mandarini, pursued a different route. A brother of Tosquez having died at Vienna, he went there to superintend the arrangement of his affairs. On his way he visited the Pope, Clement XII., to obtain a dispensation to be promoted to the priesthood. On his arrival at Vienna, he showed so much talent for the administration of political affairs, that the Pope hearing of it, made him, on his return, inspector of all the ports on the Adriatic situated in the Roman States. Every week he had a private audience which gave him admission to the Council of Cardinals charged with civil affairs. It was thus that from a missionary and founder of a new order in the Church, he became a financier and minister of state. He repented of the absurd projects he had suggested to Alphonso, and often spoke of him in the highest terms to his Holiness, who took in consequence a great interest in his success, and promised to second his laudable designs with all his power. Sometime after Mandarini came to Rome, and equally regretting the divisions that had happened, he went with Tosquez to the Pope to render justice to Alphonso. They told

his Holiness of the zeal which animated him, his great labours, the destitution of the people to whom he had devoted himself, the number of houses he had founded with his small means; and the Pope, delighted with all he heard, again promised to do everything he could for him. Upon this Mandarinini wrote to Alphonso, urging him to come to Rome immediately, because of the favourable dispositions expressed towards him by the Pope. But he saw no advantage to be obtained from this at the present juncture, and he sent a polite but indecisive reply.

CHAPTER VII.

WHEN the new foundation of the Villa de' Schiavi (of the Slaves) was sufficiently consolidated, Alphonso returned to the house at Scala. The good that had been done during his absence by Doctor, now Father Sportelli, gave him great consolation, which was increased by finding many candidates for the novitiate awaiting him with impatience. In the course of the autumn he gave several missions in the neighbourhood and elsewhere. In January, 1735, he returned to the territory of Cajazzo, visiting the house of the Villa de' Schiavi; where he remained some time. At the request of Mgr. Santoro he consented rather unwillingly to preach the Lent in the Cathedral of Scala, when he also gave retreats in the parish of St. Catharine, and to the nuns of

St. Cataldo. He then returned again to the Villa.

There had been doubtless some hidden reason which induced F. Sarnelli to lead Alphonso into the territory of Ciorani, and this now began to manifest itself. He ardently desired to see a house of the Congregation established in that barony, especially as the neighbourhood was thickly peopled. God blessed his good intentions; for no sooner did the Curate, Angelo Guadiello, learn the good that was done in the neighbouring parishes, than both he and his flock desired ardently to have them. No one entered more into the spirit of this plan than the brother of F. Sarnelli, Don Andrew. He persuaded his father, the Baron, of the immense advantages that would result, and easily obtained his consent. He then set himself to procure the means of carrying it into execution, and by the month of April he had secured for their maintenance a rent of one hundred ducats, which was afterwards increased to three hundred, and at last to five hundred.

When the Archbishop of Salerno was informed of what was going on at Ciorani, his joy was boundless, and an agreement was immediately made with him. After all was settled Alphonso, with the fathers Mazzini and Rossi, returned to Ciorani in the month of May, 1735. Their reception was flattering. Four miserable donkeys formed their equipage, but an immense concourse of people awaited them at the entrance into the barony. The curate with his clerks were there,

and hundreds of men carrying muskets, which they fired off at intervals amidst shouts and exclamations of, "Here comes the holy missionary!" accompanied by clergy and people he proceeded to the parochial church, while the bells rung peals of rejoicing. At the sight of such a multitude he mounted the pulpit, and taking for the subject of his discourse the motive of his coming—the salvation of their souls—he preached with such powerful effect that every heart was penetrated with compunction.

The Baron invited him to his house, but that day he would take no repose; the sick who were unable to leave their houses sighed for a visit from the servant of God, and overflowing with charity he would not delay gratifying their desire. It was late in the evening before he returned to the Baron's chateau. Next day he received the felicitations of the curates of the neighbouring parishes, and many gentlemen of the country. On the evening of this day he opened the mission. The people ran thither in such crowds that the church, though spacious, could not contain them. At the sight of Alphonso, so poor, so humble, so full of the spirit of God, no one could resist him; every heart was touched, even the most hardened, and the conversions were innumerable. On all sides voices were raised to bless and thank God for sending these missionaries among them.

The habitation which the Baron had given them, besides a sort of cellar which served for a

kitchen, consisted only of two rooms, larger however than those of Scala. After a while they found themselves so crowded that the Baron gave them two other apartments, but in passing from the one to the other they were obliged to cross an open court, which was a great inconvenience, particularly in winter; besides, these places had only planks for the exterior wall, through the chinks of which the cold wind entered. In addition to this annoyance they were situated above a public-house and a prison, a neighbourhood not exactly fitted for men devoted to prayer and retirement.

On the left side of one of these rooms, Alphonso, with the permission of the Archbishop, erected a small Oratory, reserving the three others for sleeping apartments. The furniture of the whole was miserable enough, and so far from having superfluities, absolute necessaries were wanting. He rejoiced in these discomforts, and the others shared in his joy, happy in participating in the sorrows and sufferings of Jesus Christ. Their Oratory was for them a little heaven. It was there during the night, oftener than during the day, Alphonso poured out his soul into the bosom of his God.

He established at Ciorani the same pious practices which were in use at Scala and Villa dei Schiavi. The exercises were made in the parochial Church, but the concourse of people being as great as on feast days, the missionaries had scarcely time to eat or sleep. They heard confessions from morning till evening, but as the people

came very early in the morning and disturbed the poor old curate, who could get no sleep from the noise, Alphonso was at the expense of repairing the old Church of St. Sophia, annexed to the signorial palace, and met the people there. As all the inhabitants of the neighbouring villages could not come to Ciorani, he sent missionaries on feast days, to the great comfort of the sick and the infirm.

It was not long before the barony of Sarnelli was completely reformed. Ciorani no longer was what it had been, for the inhabitants began to resemble the first Christians, who edified the Church in its infancy. Quarrels and hatreds were banished; the language and behaviour of the young men became pure; the young women no longer sung loose and profane songs, but pious canticles which Alphonso composed himself. When the inhabitants met, they saluted each other, saying, "Praise be to Jesus and Mary." The little children were taught by their mothers, and lisped this salutation when they met the priests. No more imprecations were heard in the village; the public-house was deserted, and all improper games were forbidden. The seeds of salvation sown in this territory were so abundant that the fruits of them are still to be seen.

While such glorious works were progressing the devil could not look quietly on; accordingly he set to work by exciting the jealousy of the neighbouring curates, who saw their churches deserted, especially the lukewarm among them, who felt themselves reproached by the fervour

of the Missionaries. They were joined by certain mendicant friars, who were jealous of the alms they received. In short, the multitude of their enemies beset the Archbishop, who began to doubt whether he ought not to suppress the house. But in the end they became quiet, and the Archbishop definitely authorised the foundation on the 12th of December, 1735, to the great satisfaction of the diocese.

Tosquez and Mandarinini now began to recognise the pernicious effects of their division, and although they had got the approbation of the Sovereign Pontiff for their establishments, they were not very successful, and continually wrote to Alphonso on the subject of a reunion; he did not see the propriety of such a measure, but gave no decided answer until he had weighed the matter maturely, but at length he wrote a definite answer. "It is true," he said, "that it promises much, but I doubt whether these promises would ever be realized. First impressions are not easily effaced, and what we retract to-day, we recommence to-morrow, and when the spirit is cooled the fairest promises are forgotten." Above all, he remembered the advice of the Cardinal Pignatelli against this reunion, and the affair was for ever broken off.

CHAPTER VIII.

FROM the time the Congregation of Alphonso was established at Ciorani, the neighbouring

parishes felt the effects of his zeal in the number of missions he gave. He visited also populous towns, although his numbers were so small, but their indefatigable zeal supplied the deficiency. One mission was sufficient to produce a thorough reformation of morals; restitutions were made, enmities abolished, and the people said the sight of him alone was sufficient to excite compunction.

The Archbishop of Salerno, struck by the good which was done, and the very small expense necessary to lodge such missionaries, since they were content with a morsel of bread and a corner in the sacristy, gave Alphonso license to go where he would, commanding the curates, at the same time, to show them every respect and attention. The greater number were eager to have them, and Alphonso had difficulty in accepting the numerous invitations; but there were others who received them with a very ill grace, and even repulsed them. On one occasion he had fixed the day for giving a mission in a parish; on his arrival the curate met him, and without asking him to dismount from his ass, refused to permit him; but beginning to fear the anger of the Archbishop, he tried to palliate his conduct, by mentioning a future period when the mission might be held. Alphonso showed no discontent, but calmly answered, "Your Reverence believes the mission can be held at that time; but I assure you you will not be in a condition to receive me then." The curate did not understand these words, but before the time

appointed, although in the prime of life, he had paid the debt of nature.

We have already seen the miserable accommodation they had at Ciorani. Scarcely were they settled, however, when the people saw with regret the inconveniences of their habitation, and all wished to commence building a new one, at whatever cost to themselves. The Baron gave up to them a building in another part of his property, which he had destined for a different purpose, and added some ground for a garden. No sooner was this done than men and women came from all quarters to assist. Some carried stones and wood, other constructed a furnace to make bricks, and the sons of the Baron, with the curate and the priests, laboured as hard as the people. The building advanced as if by enchantment, and every one admired how the people, ignorant in such works, nevertheless laboured as skilfully as if they had been masters; they appreciated the anxiety of Alphonso for their immortal souls, and would return zeal for zeal. Even on feast days they worked hard with the permission of the Archbishop, and on these occasions they were joined by regular workmen from all quarters.

One may say that the practice of holy exercises was brought to perfection at Ciorani; for in spite of the annoyances of the locality in which they dwelt, many persons, both priests and lay-men, came to place themselves under the direction of Alphonso. The renown of his virtues spread everywhere. Many persons of

quality belonging to St. Severino and the neighbourhood, seeing the effect produced upon others, ardently desired to have a species of mission for themselves; he agreed to their wishes, and as the Baron Angelo was then in Naples, he obtained permission to give the mission in the great hall of the castle, and also that those gentlemen who were too far distant from home should remain all night. Many ecclesiastics assisted at this mission, and the fruits were seen in their redoubled ardour for the souls of men; while the gentlemen returned home to edify all by the reformation of their lives and manners.

The young priest, Andrew Villani, was among the number, a descendant of the Dukes of Sacco della Polla. Convinced by meditating on eternal truths that the world is deceitful and full of snares, he took the resolution of quitting it and consecrating himself to God in this new Congregation. Alphonso rejoiced in the acquisition of such a subject; but to remove him from his family, he sent him to the Villa to make his novitiate. He afterwards became a model of sanctity and a foundation-stone in the new-born Congregation.

Alphonso took every care to make the people love holy exercises, and all rejoiced in the good they produced. Many ecclesiastics came during the year, but chiefly in Lent, to make retreats, and magistrates, nobles, and princes came also, besides many prelates with their clerks. Alphonso attached the greatest importance to the holy exercises of a retreat for all conditions of men,

and the fruits which always accompany them prove his wisdom. To the day of his death he never ceased to urge their importance and necessity.

The house at Ciorani was prospering miraculously, when the devil again assailed it. Profiting by the injudicious zeal of F. Sarnelli, who, in his anxiety for the support of the Congregation, suggested to the Archbishop, that as so many curates profited by the labours of the missionaries, each should contribute a trifle towards their support. Nothing more was necessary to excite a hue and cry. The curates keenly opposed the measure, and not only did they look upon Alphonso with an evil eye, but they set themselves by all means to have the Congregation chased out of the territory. The curate of Ciorani was asked to lend his aid, but the good old man replied, "What! these holy priests who labour incessantly in my parish; would you have me deprive my people of such great help!" Unsuccessful in this quarter, their enemies reported to the Archbishop of Salerno, that under pretence of zeal and devotedness they only sought to enrich themselves at the expense of the legitimate pastors, and that they ought to be immediately expelled from the diocese. The Archbishop smiled at this, and said, "I know Alphonso de Liguori; he and I resemble each other in reference to fortune; I know he has quitted the world not from necessity, but from choice, and that if he has any anxiety it is not about temporal interests, but to gain souls and secure his

own salvation." On this occasion the inhabitants of Ciorani showed their affection for Alphonso and his companions. As soon as they heard of the complaints made against them, they sent a deputation to the Archbishop to vouch for the zeal and disinterestedness of the good missionaries. The prelate was much annoyed by the outcry of the curates, and declared that he took the missionaries under his own immediate protection, as the work to which they had devoted themselves was most advantageous to the souls confided to his care. This storm having abated, the curates who were most opposed to Alphonso were the first to profit by his labours; he made missions in the different parishes, and the fruits of his zeal were abundant as ever. That the good done might be lasting, he never failed to inculcate and establish different pious practices, such as frequenting the Sacraments, visits to the Blessed Sacrament and to our Blessed Lady.

In the course of the retreats which he gave about this time, a striking event occurred to prove how God watched over him and protected him. Speaking of the enormity of sin in priests, because of the greater light they received than others, he concluded by quoting the words of St. John Chrysostom, "In sacerdotio peccasti, periisti." At these words a bold ecclesiastic replied, to the great scandal of all who heard him, "Nego consequentiam." This miserable man soon experienced the consequence: next morning, when he approached the altar to say mass, as he began the Psalm, "Judica me, Deus," he dropped down dead.

CHAPTER IX.

AFTER having given numerous missions in the course of the year 1737, Alphonso, at the pressing entreaty of the Superior of the Propaganda, went to Naples for the mission to be opened in the Church of the Holy Spirit, on the 26th of October. They were so anxious to have him, that in the fear of his refusing because of the contradictions and vexations he had endured at their hands, they addressed themselves to Mgr. Falcoja, his director. It has been said, that a volume might be filled with the conversions he made on this occasion. This mission cost him much trouble, but he did not grudge it, and when it was finished, instead of taking some repose, he proceeded immediately to visit Amalfi. The recollection of the good he performed still remains. He found at Masini a poor woman whose son had been most cruelly assassinated. The most influential persons had besought her to pardon the murderer, but she constantly refused. She went to hear Alphonso preach, and was so touched by the sermon, that the same evening she brought to the church a written declaration that she pardoned the criminal, and publicly laid it at the foot of the crucifix. Throughout the neighbourhood he gave missions, which reclaimed multitudes of sinners, and impelled the virtuous to strive after a higher degree of sanctity.

At this time he was called by Mgr. de Liguori, his uncle, to St. Lucy, in the diocese of Cava. The inhabitants were very immoral in their lives, and in great want of spiritual assistance. But "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Abuses were extirpated; nothing was spoken of but pardoning injuries, making restitutions, and repairing scandals: and so well did he convince them of the merit of chastity, that he filled the young with love for this virtue, and upwards of fifty young ladies protested they would no longer think of marriage, but would consecrate themselves to God. They carried their resolve into execution, and united themselves into a Congregation under the direction of a zealous priest: they were soon joined by many others attracted by their noble example.

The Bishop of Cajazzo was rejoicing in the blessings dispersed through his diocese by means of Alphonso and his missionaries from their establishment at the Villa. The buildings were nearly finished, and they had already begun to give retreats. The house was filled with priests and young candidates for the ministry, whom Alphonso directed in the way of the Lord. His companions were visiting the country around, extirpating sin and planting virtue. A Congregation of artisans had been established, which already numbered more than two hundred brothers, whose zeal and fervour made them missionaries throughout the neighbourhood. The frequentation of the Sacraments became general, and many individuals were arriving at a high

degree of prayer. The Bishop's joy was at its height, when all at once a storm arose which overthrew his hopes, withering those blossoms which promised such abundant fruits for eternity.

There were in the country certain individuals who could not endure to have their vices censured, among others a man who led a life openly immoral; and not enduring to have his conduct animadverted upon, and doubtless instigated by the devil, he conspired the ruin of the missionaries. All the wealth of this house, as we have already seen, consisted of four miserable chaplainships, which brought each one carlino a-day; under pretext of defending the interests of the priests of the country, this man began to exclaim aloud against the missionaries for coming thither to eat the bread belonging to the inhabitants, and getting money by extra masses, a source of profit to which the legitimate pastors had the right. Pecuniary interest being thus brought into play, the clergy with their relations and friends were excited, the clamour became general, and the most gross and injurious expressions were employed against them. The calumnies augmented, and at length their morals were attacked. They were described as so many hypocrites, whose preaching and lives were at variance. The Father Liguori himself was pointed out as one who made a traffic of his pretended sanctity. But the iniquity did not stop here: they went so far as to say that the missionaries intrigued with a woman whom they pointed out, and received her into the convent by night;

and this wretched creature lent herself to the calumny, defaming Alphonso even more than the others, and showing presents which she pretended to have received from them. These calumnies made little impression upon him; he knew persecution always accompanied works undertaken for God; he contented himself with prescribing to the community still more circumspection in their conduct, and more frequent recurrence to penitence and prayer. The wicked man and his accomplices, after having filled all hearts with gloomy doubts, at last succeeded in prejudicing the Baron himself. When Alphonso saw the storm increasing he feared an explosion, and went to the Baron to claim his protection; but it was too late, his mind was already poisoned; and as soon as he saw him approach he permitted these words to escape: "What have we here, one of those filthy hermits?" and immediately dismissed him with still greater contempt.

This scene was soon reported, and filled the enemies of Alphonso with joy, making them redouble their efforts to expel him and his companions. They now no longer confined themselves to outrageous words; they took bolder steps, and solicited the tribunals of Naples to interfere in different ways, but could gain nothing there, Alphonso and his companions being too well known. They at last had recourse to violence. One of the lay-brothers going in the morning to the church to sound the Angelus, was met by one of the wardens, accompanied

by several people; they forced the keys from his hands, locked the church, and sent him back to the house loaded with reproaches. But fearing the people might take part with the missionaries and force open the door, they placed persons with loaded muskets on the belfry, to prevent approach. Their rage increasing they besieged the house, and without exception interdicted all communication with those within. This situation becoming every day less endurable, their friends at Naples advised them to abandon the Villa. This determination being taken, the Bishop wept with regret, the poor people were not less disconsolate, and the surrounding villages were in mourning. On the night of the 10th of June, 1737, the missionaries shook the dust from their shoes, and left the Villa to return to Cajazzo and say farewell to the Bishop, a parting accompanied by many tears.

God did not permit this wickedness to pass unpunished. The wretched woman who had accused Alphonso and his companions, had her tongue eaten by worms, and was reduced to such a condition that she could not receive the Sacraments: she was seized with the most dreadful remorse of conscience for her horrible calumnies, and publicly avowed all she had said was but an infamous invention. Nicolas Masucci, who had joined in the conspiracy, died soon after in despair uttering the most frightful cries. John Baptiste Riccardi, one of the principal persecutors, terminated his life in the most terrible convulsions, and howling like a maniac. Peter Isolda,

who had sought out the false witnesses and written down their testimony, had his hand withered, and his only son died soon after ; he then became an idiot and expired in great misery. Another healthy young man, Peter Paotillo, fell down dead immediately after the departure of Alphonso ; and a certain Anthony Masello, who, for a sack of grain which our chief persecutor, Carmen Festa, had promised him, attested all the calumnies, died in impenitence. Not one of those who had a hand in the persecution of the missionaries escaped the Divine Justice. One only seemed for the moment to have escaped, as if God in His mercy would leave him more time to repent because he was the most guilty. Carmen Festa, that wicked man whose scandalous life and corrupt soul had produced all these evils, remained deaf to a warning sent him by Heaven. Scarcely had the missionaries quitted the Villa, when a tremendous storm arose ; the lightning flashed, and a thunderbolt fell at the feet of this man as he sat in his room ; it stunned him, and for some little time he remained without sense or motion. When he came to himself he would not recognise the warning ; before long he fell into disgrace with his prince, was ill used and persecuted, and within a year after the departure of Alphonso he was found one morning lying dead under his bed and bathed in blood.

CHAPTER X.

A VAST field now presented itself for the labours of Alphonso ; he gave missions throughout the country ; everywhere reaping the most abundant harvest. It was in the Barony of St. George's, at the little village of Ajillo, that God poured out the most extraordinary graces. Scandals disappeared, taverns were deserted, and churches filled. Here he established as usual many' devotional practices, and there was not a house where they did not say the Rosary. The ecclesiastics felt the benefit of this mission, to which many among them owed their conversion.

It was at this place the Blessed Virgin was pleased to give a public testimony of her love for Alphonso. What had happened at Scala in the secret of the grotto, was repeated in presence of an assembled multitude. One evening while he was preaching on the glories of Mary, and exciting the people to honour her, he was ravished in ecstasy and raised some palms from the pulpit ; at the same time, rays of glory proceeded from a statue of the Virgin and rested on the head of her chosen servant. It may be imagined in what esteem the people held his sanctity, after a grace so distinguished, and how deeply his words must have penetrated their hearts.

So many Bishops having already profited by

his labours, it was but just Mgr. Falcoja should have his share. He accordingly visited Castellamare, a town which was in great want of spiritual succour, its maritime commerce bringing strangers from all parts, which necessarily corrupted morals. He took with him nine companions, and remained long, because of the great necessity of the people. Multitudes were converted, among whom were many unfortunate women. Smuggling was discouraged, and the magical practices in use among the sailors were abolished. The whole town breathed an air of devotion, the churches were crowded, and the Sacraments frequented.

The new house of Ciorani was not long in being built, thanks to the care of F. Rossi, and the inhabitants who had it so much at heart. Every one thought the rapidity with which it had been erected quite miraculous; but the F. Sportelli remarked, that the greatest miracle was to see it standing and not falling to the ground, considering how it had been got up.

As soon as it was finished, and the small church erected, they abandoned that of St. Sophia, but in this as in everything else belonging to them, poverty predominated. Devotion and piety, however, were its ornaments. It was dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, and in it Alphonso placed that beloved statue of her which had been his companion in those retreats he made at Naples in the house of D. de Alteriis. He also, with the permission of the Archbishop, arranged a chapel, spacious but poor, in which to give

retreats to the candidates for ordination, and the numerous ecclesiastics and laymen who usually assisted on such occasions. The convenience offered by the new house drew strangers there at all times, especially in general missions, so that Alphonso and his companions had often to sleep on the floor, in an apartment where the oven stood.

The number of penitents who flocked to Ciorani was so great, that on the death of the Bishop, the Archdeacon D. Francis de Vicariis who succeeded him in March, 1738, named Alphonso Grand Penitentiary of the Arch-diocese. The great concourse of visitors proved that the choice made was due to the sanctity of the individual. Rejoicing at their establishment in this house, Alphonso exerted himself to make the rules be strictly observed, for the inconveniences of the former habitations had made this impossible. The deserts of Nubia and Thebes, perhaps never counted among their cenobites contemplatives such as were to be seen in the house of Ciorani. A superfluous word was never heard, and no one left his chamber without necessity; all breathed humility and perfect obedience. The will of Alphonso was the rule of the others; without pretension, without repugnance, and without envy, each was content with his office. The Holy Sacrament was continually exposed in the church, and every one was anxious to be permitted to pay his court to the King of kings, not only during the day, but during the night, and for as long a time as possible. Penitence

and mortification were the two virtues to which they attached themselves most. If there were brothers who did not excel, the example of their Superior and model drew them after him in spite of themselves.

If on his part Alphonso was doing all in his power to establish the Congregation, the devil was as busy in attempting to destroy it. Until then they had had no house at Scala, but were considered as strangers. Alphonso, in concert with the bishop, thought of erecting one, but scarcely had they put their hand to the work when a general commotion ensued. Several priests at Scala having learned what happened at the Villa, began in their turn to murmur and put forward the motive of the masses. When envy had entered into their hearts, jealousy, excited by interest, made them regard the missionaries with feelings of bitterness. Alphonso, warned by what had happened at the Villa, wished to shun new misfortunes, and without loss of time removed from Scala. This was a blow deeply felt by Mgr. Santoro. The good lamented, but the envious triumphed, when on the eve of St. Bartholomew, the 23rd of August, 1738, they left the town. This victory was a grand feast for the powers of darkness. On the night when they departed from Scala, there was heard throughout the town the noise made by evil spirits shouting and dancing. They celebrated a great victory, for the departure of the missionaries arrested the good that was doing; for to the scandals that had

once been so common, had succeeded a horror of sin ; even the porters had been reformed, often approaching the holy table, and frequently might be met in groups carrying their burdens and reciting the rosary, or singing the hymns Alphonso had taught them. Such were the effects produced by the residence of these missionaries. Two years after the Congregation of Pious Workers went to preach a mission there, when one of them, D. Andrew Amodio, declared, that they had not found among the people one voluntary venial sin, and all sorts of pious practices they had found already established. The inhabitants of Scala were not long in feeling the Divine wrath, in punishment of the wickedness of those who had forced the missionaries to retire, and the weakness of the greater number who had not opposed it. They had left on the 23rd of August, and on the 28th a violent storm destroyed the harvest, which in that country consists of chesnuts, on which the poor chiefly live. But Alphonso did not forget Scala ; he sent some of his companions to give the Novena of the Crucifix, that the nuns might not be deprived of their religious exercises.

CHAPTER XI.

THE fields in which Alphonso laboured during the following autumn and winter were not less fertile in the fruits of salvation. He preached

penance in many districts, and at Castiglione the concourse of people was so great, that they passed the night in the church in order to hear him preach in the morning. The same thing occurred at Coperchia, near Salerno. The year 1739 was opened by a mission in the village of Prepezzano. The name of Alphonso had become so celebrated in the diocese of Salerno, and such wonders of grace were operated by him, that persons frequently came a distance of seventeen miles to confess to him. After having celebrated the feast of Easter at Ciorani, he again began his labours in the country. At Gifoni the people came in such crowds that he preached to several thousand persons. Invited afterwards by the curates of the territory of Calvanico, he went to console the people and give a retreat to the priests, when some among them were so animated with fervour, that they followed in his suite to assist at the missions, a practice which is now not unfrequent.

To give a little relaxation to a body overpowered with fatigue, and refresh himself by retreat, he returned with his companions during the summer to the house at Ciorani, to renew his strength and issue forth with redoubled vigour to attack the strongholds of Satan. He began his next mission at Coperchia, a rich and populous village near Salerno. Here he set himself to oppose the evils which result from commerce; he pointed out the rules which ought to regulate contracts; he corrected many abuses, and abolished customs contrary to equity; he established here as else-

where the devotion of the Way of the Cross, meditation in common every morning in the church, the frequentation of the Sacraments, devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and a visit every evening to the Blessed Sacrament.

In the beginning of 1740, accompanied by eleven missionaries, he overran the country, shedding the benedictions of Heaven on many villages where great disorder had previously reigned. Having terminated the spring missions he returned again to Ciorani, to regulate the affairs of the Congregation, and reanimate them by his example in the observation of the rules.

The country of St. Severino suffered during the summer of this year from a great drought, which threatened to ruin the harvest and destroy the fruit-trees. To obtain the Divine Mercy in this emergency, the inhabitants of Acquarola invited Alphonso to give a mission towards the end of the month of July; their fervour was great during these exercises, and one day Alphonso foretold that at a time specified abundance of rain would fall. The day came without any appearance of rain, when all at once a very small cloud was seen above Salerno. When Alphonso saw it, he extended his arms as if to invite its approach, and then prostrating himself on the earth he besought the Divine Mercy in behalf of the people. No sooner had he fallen on his knees when the air was obscured by clouds, thunder was heard, the lightning flashed, and during five hours the rain fell in torrents. The

joy was universal, and all the neighbourhood united in returning thanks to God.

In the autumn he again gave missions in many villages with his usual success. In the beginning of 1741 he gave a mission for the second time at Solofra, and converted some thousands who on a former occasion had resisted grace. Among these numerous conversions were bandits and murderers. Many priests who had been cold and indifferent gave themselves fervently to God, a circumstance which always rejoiced Alphonso, who used to say, "The conversion of a priest gives more glory to God than that of a hundred seculars. No layman, however holy, can perform the good done by a priest."

He had the consolation of finding the nuns of two monasteries he had formerly visited in the same fervour in which he had left them. He failed not to confirm them more and more in loving to observe their rule in all its strictness, in detachment from persons without, in the love of prayer, in recollection, and above all in frequenting the Sacraments, and devotion to our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, and the Blessed Virgin.

The town of Nocera was too near Ciorani to remain ignorant of the miracles of grace operated by Alphonso. A zealous priest who resided there used to frequent Ciorani, and in consequence resolved if possible to have a house established at Nocera. He was instigated to this by knowing that the Dean of Nocera had resolved to endow a house of missionaries, and had

already applied to the Fathers of St. Vincent of Paul. He spoke to the Dean and the principal inhabitants of the virtues of Alphonso and his companions, and arranged that they should give a mission there. It had the greatest success; numerous conversions were made among all classes, ecclesiastics as well as seculars, and every one designated Alphonso "the Apostle."

He certainly enjoyed many supernatural gifts: he knew how to touch all hearts; he had the spirit of prophecy and the gift of healing, often curing fevers and other diseases by making the sign of the cross. He lodged in the house of the priest who had been the cause of his coming, whose mother was subject to convulsions from an excessive pain she had in her arm. She wrapped herself in a shirt belonging to Alphonso, full of faith in his sanctity, and was immediately cured. All this made the people more than ever anxious to have them. Plans were formed, but the designs of Providence were not accomplished until a later period.

After this mission they went to the territory of St. Egidio, where the people were reformed, and the clergy excited to greater zeal. One of them, a priest of great talent, entered the Congregation. It was on the 18th of April in this year that God called to himself the first member of the Congregation. He was a lay-brother, Joachim Gaudiello; he died in transports of joy, exclaiming, "It is I who carry the standard!" All the virtues seemed to have taken up their

abode in this excellent subject. They had neglected to take his portrait, and eleven days after his death, in the hope that his body was still uncorrupted, they opened the coffin, and found their expectations justified: his body was flexible and entire, as if still alive.

CHAPTER XII.

PROVIDENCE had destined a new field for Alphonso to cultivate in the spring of 1741. His Eminence, Cardinal Spinelli, having become Archbishop of Naples, by the death of the Cardinal Pignatelli, and knowing the good done by Alphonso in other parts of the kingdom, would have him to supply the great necessities of his own diocese. He at first excused himself by saying that the diocese of Naples was much better supplied with priests, than the countries in which he laboured, but although this could not be denied, the Cardinal persisted in claiming his services, so that at last he was obliged to yield; for the country of his birth had certainly a powerful claim upon him.

That his other missions might suffer as little as possible, he only took from his own Congregation the fathers Sarnelli and Villani, but with the approbation of the Cardinal he chose the elite of all the Congregations in Naples to assist him, and above all, the best missionaries of the Propaganda. The Cardinal wished it should

be so, in order that the others might learn from him to conduct missions with more success. He placed at his disposal a country house in the Barra, to which the missionaries might retire to recruit after their fatigues. Alphonso had two sacrifices to make on this occasion ; he had to withdraw from many villages and hamlets remote from Naples, which stood in need of all his cares, and also to see himself placed at the head of many distinguished missionaries, above all, those of the Propaganda, of which he was but a simple member, and from which he so lately had been on the point of being expelled.

The Superior of the Propaganda was exceedingly annoyed at Alphonso being placed at the head ; he affirmed that his Congregation enjoyed a pre-eminence over all the Congregations in the kingdom, and that to him belonged the right of deciding on who should be the chief ; but the true motive of this opposition, was the unwillingness of the members of the Propaganda to submit themselves to a man whom they had wished to expel. When they complained to the Cardinal, he replied, "I am your Archbishop, I am also Superior of the Missions, as well as all other Congregations in the diocese, and since the missions depend on me, I am the person to appoint the chief."

It was in the month of May these missions commenced at Fragola, where he opened three at once in the three parochial churches. He established the practice of prayer in the church

morning and evening; visits to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and to the Blessed Virgin; the protestation for a good death once a month, with exposition of the Holy Sacrament; and in order to render the priests more skilful in the confessional, he instituted conferences to be held every eight days, in which were agitated and discussed different cases of conscience. He established the Way of the Cross in each parish, and exhorted the faithful to the practice of this devotion, particularly on Fridays, in memory of the sufferings of our Lord.

When the exercises in these three parishes were finished, he went with his companions to Casal Nuovo: the mission there lasted till the middle of June. When the heats of the summer became too great he dismissed the Neapolitan missionaries, and remained with his own at St. Agnello, where they continued to preach and hear the confessions of crowds who came from all quarters. On feast days he went himself with his brethren into the neighbouring hamlets, exhorting the people to penance. On these missions they followed the same rules which had been established for the interior of the Congregation. The only food permitted consisted in soup and vegetables. Alphonso held the maxim that the people would rather be gained by example than by words. He would have only the cheapest fish, and no fowls, game, or pastry; and when they wished to supply his table with rare dishes, he sent them away,

although his guests were often Canons from Naples and other persons of distinction.

At Christmas they expected some relaxation in these rules, but they were mistaken. Certain persons attached to the service of the Cardinal, who had dined there on Christmas day, said to him on their return, "Your Eminence is perhaps not aware that Alphonso gave us a treat on Christmas; he made them serve several additional forcemeat balls on that occasion, at the risk of ruining his household economy." Alphonso in his missions was willing to have what was necessary, but he had a horror of superfluity. He allowed the other missionaries to travel in a carriage, because they were not accustomed to do otherwise; but he and his brethren would only make use of an ass.

For a long time the priest Paul Cafaro, then Curate of St. Peter at Cava, had wished to join the Congregation. Alphonso met him at Barra; when urged by the good he saw done he hesitated no longer, and became one of its principal columns. Mgr. Liguori, his uncle, was as much annoyed by this as Alphonso was glad, and would no longer have the missionaries in his diocese. Cafaro was received as novice in October, 1741, but nevertheless he was employed in different works in the parish, and even taken on the mission. In the beginning of November, the missionaries again met, and commenced their pious labours. Although in the service of Mgr. Spinelli, Alphonso could not refuse going to Nocera dei Pagani during the Holy Week of

1742, to give the exercises in honour of the Holy Sacrament in the great church of Corpus Christi. The effects were most consoling, and Contaldi began to stir himself in carrying his plan into execution of having the order established there. But it was still delayed.

CHAPTER XIII.

WHILE Alphonso was devoting himself with so much zeal to the diocese of Naples, he did not forget that of Salerno. Father Sportella went with others to the different parishes, giving missions, which were attended with wonderful success. The Cardinal Archbishop, considering the abundant blessings Alphonso and his missionaries produced, proposed to establish them in the Barra situated in the centre of his diocese. But this was far from according with the views of Alphonso, as he explained to his Eminence: "When my missionaries," said he, "will be settled at Barra, and have ladies and gentlemen for their penitents, will they be very willing to leave this place for the hamlets and the mountains? and who knows but, fascinated by their noble penitents, they may fix themselves at Naples for the greater part of the year." He continued, "Your Eminence is in no want of able workmen at Naples to employ in the care of your diocese, but other bishops have not this advantage; it is not from Naples we can draw missionaries for

villages and remote hamlets." The Cardinal was persuaded, and no longer insisted on this foundation.

During the Octave of Easter he again began the missions in the country, and during the month of May, 1742, besides spiritual exercises, he gave more than twenty missions. An eye-witness speaking of the effects of his labours says, "Were I to report all the facts in particular, they would fill volumes. In the diocese of Naples the Father don Alphonso banished scandals and abuses without number. No more indecencies were committed in the churches; women no longer dressed in a manner to give scandal, and occasion the weak to sin. Young girls who were before ignorant even of the name of modesty, henceforth conducted themselves with becoming reserve; taverns were no longer frequented, certain dances and pastimes formerly in use were abolished; pious canticles replaced the licentious songs so common during the harvest and vintage." Such were the happy results of the missions given by Alphonso. Every one admired the wisdom by which he made vice be detested. His zeal resembled a fire, which increases and propagates itself in spite of all obstacles, and his desire to save souls was so great, that he never put off till to-morrow the good he could perform to-day.

If Alphonso operated wonders on the morals of the people, it was due to his extraordinary labours and fatigues; his body and his mind were continually in action; no one could understand

how he managed to do what would have overpowered any one else; people said he lived by miracle. He always reserved for himself the evening sermon, unless he was greatly fatigued, and he often preached twice, sometimes three times in one day; but he preached even more by his example. He ate little; we have already seen the nature of his meals, and he never changed. The time he gave to sleep was short indeed. In his long journeys, and during the exercises of a mission, whatever his fatigue might be, he never lessened his bodily austerities, never gave himself the least solace, although he permitted his companions to take some care of themselves. He always travelled on an ass, and those who did not know him, seeing a man of poor exterior, often mistook him for the domestic. One day when he preached at the opening of a mission, the peasants, struck by the beautiful words they heard, said to each other, "Well, if the cook can preach in that manner, what will it be when the others begin!"

But all that has been said can give but a faint idea of what Alphonso did on mission. He always reserved for himself the worst bed and most incommodious chamber. Every thing came well to him, provided he were mortified and humiliated. At Casal Nuovo he gave up to his companions the only three rooms that could be had, and kept for himself a miserable ruin long uninhabited; the spot is still pointed out as having once accommodated the Father Liguori.

When the heats of summer had increased, and

the harvest time was near at hand, Alphonso thought it best to confirm the good already done by the missions before beginning new. He therefore sent his missionaries in small numbers, and for a few days only, to those places where missions had already been given. These renewals of missions produced much fruit. They reanimated the fervour of the confraternities they had established, confirmed the people in their pious practices, raised those who had fallen, and encouraged those who persevered. During this summer he laboured incessantly to promote devotion to the Mother of God, giving retreats for nine days preceding any of her feasts. He was the originator of the Novenas now so common in Naples, and which continue to produce such benefit to the souls of all who engage in them. After terminating his labours in the Barra, he returned in the beginning of July for a short time to Ciorani.

CHAPTER XIV.

HITHERTO Alphonso and his Congregation had lived together without binding themselves by vows: but as nature modifies and brings her fruits to perfection by slow degrees, so he insensibly disposed his companions for a life more perfect and more holy. Although they had lived until then in the true spirit of poverty and blind obedience, so that the distinctions of *meum* and

tuum were unknown, yet they had never taken any engagement to prevent them changing their mode of life. All was free and spontaneous; but considering that in a society the spirit of religion decays rather than increases, Alphonso determined to retain and ~~fix~~ the spirit of piety by vows, and form his Congregation into an apostolic community. He urged upon his companions the merit they would acquire before God when they had by solemn vows sacrificed their own will, and despoiled themselves of worldly wealth. "The renouncement of our own will," he said, "procures more glory to God than all the good works we could do from our own choice. A delicious fruit gives pleasure to him to whom we present it; but if, with the fruit we give the tree that produces it, the offering acquires an infinitely greater value. Without vows, we can give God the fruit; but with vows, we give both the tree and the fruit." He deplored the inconsistency of some who from excessive attachment to their relations or imaginary love of liberty, withdrew from the Congregation and re-entered the world. "The vow," he said, "will be as a buckler in the hand of the religious against the devil and his own inconstancy; it will confirm him in his vocation to the service of God; it will be to him as an anchor to preserve his vessel beaten and tossed by the winds."

The fathers Sportelli, Mazzini, Sarnelli, Rossi, Villani, and Cafaro, were regarded as the foundations on which the Congregation was built, not only because they were the first who had

joined the Congregation, but also because of their singular merit. They needed no importunities to induce them to make the generous sacrifice; on the contrary, they never ceased to urge Alphonso to put it in execution. All of them were inclined, but the decision was hastened in consequence of the withdrawal of Father Charles Majorino.

He was a zealous priest, and a man of great virtue, but he was drawn aside by an excess of tenderness towards his relations. One day during prayer he had not the courage to resist the temptation, and to the regret of all he quitted his post without ever acquainting Alphonso, and returned to his home. He soon recognized his error, but had not the courage to repair it.

The measure being resolved upon, Alphonso thought only of the engagements by which his Congregation should be bound. It was determined that each in preserving his wealth, should renounce the temporary use of it in favour of his relations; and in cases where they did not require it, the revenue should be placed at the disposal of the Superiors. By this means if he did not strike so deeply at the root as Tosquez wished to do at Scala, he yet retrenched the branches of that cupidity whose shadow chokes the heart and deprives it of the salutary inspirations of God. This engagement prevented the effects of ambition also, that pernicious passion instigating each one to make himself great, however little he may be. He determined that they should bind themselves to accept no ecclesias-

tical dignity, no title, employment, or benefice out of the Congregation; and that they should refuse everything of the kind unless commanded by the Pope, or the Superior of the Congregation. He thus hindered ambitious spirits from entering. He wished that all the members should have but one heart and one soul, rejecting all private interest, however small it might be, and that the ancient concord of the first Christians should again be seen among them. He prescribed a life in common, without distinction of merit or rank, in order to unite them closely in God, and bind them together by the disinterested ties of charity.

After having by these rules banished interest and cupidity, he desired above all to unite hearts by the vow of obedience to the will of one Superior. He believed this virtue of obedience to be the guarantee for the existence of a religious house. "When obedience and subordination are wanting," he used to say, "a true religious cannot live; and what would have been made a Paradise by concord, becomes a hell by diversity of feeling and sentiment." He therefore ordained that there should be no will but that of the Superior, and that in his Congregation reply and excuse should be unknown. He exacted from all the formal and unhesitating consent to be ready to help the abandoned in the most remote villages and hamlets, and a sincere disposition to proceed without delay to whatever place the Superior ordained.

Having also in view the conversion of the

heathen, he wished that the members of his Congregation, when they attained the age of thirty, should take a vow to depart on missions to the heathen whenever the Sovereign Pontiff or their Superior commanded them. He established, by unanimous consent, that every one, on the termination of his novitiate, should take the vow of living and dying in the Congregation; but in case of a sufficient cause to act otherwise, dispensation could be obtained only from the Sovereign Pontiff or the Superior, whilst the Congregation would be always free to send away any one whose conduct was not edifying. "The apostolic life which we embrace," he said, "consists properly in a solemn adieu to our country and our friends; for where flesh and blood dominate there can be neither love for God nor zeal for souls. We ought to give ourselves to God, but with a will resolute never to forsake Him. We cannot say that man is fit for the kingdom of God, who, having put his hand to the plough, turns back, allowing thoughts of the past to return into his heart, and according to his caprice turning his back on God and the Congregation."

Always distrusting his own light, he recurred frequently to God, and consulted with many pious persons, above all, Mgr. Falcoja. All approved of the plan submitted to their consideration; and at length it was resolved to proceed to the profession on the day of St. Mary Magdalene, the Father Sportelli having a great devotion to that Saint. Before approaching the altar

they desired to offer themselves as a holocaust; for three days previous they were in retreat and constant prayer, observing the most rigorous silence. At the end of that time they reappeared, breathing only divine love and contempt for themselves and the world. On the 22nd of July, 1742, the day dedicated to this holy penitent, they met in the chapel of the house of Ciorani. Alphonso gave them a fervent exhortation; then invoking the aid of the Holy Spirit, he implored the assistance of the Saint whom he had chosen for the patron of the Congregation; they then all pronounced the vows of poverty, chastity, obedience, and perseverance. As the Institute was not yet confirmed by the Pope, and Alphonso had no legitimate character of Superior, they agreed to make their vow of perseverance to Mgr. Falcoja, in his quality of Bishop, as he took such a deep interest in the Congregation. Sarnelli alone was absent on this occasion, being in Naples on urgent business with the Cardinal Spinelli. The joy was unanimous, and Alphonso, after having returned thanks to God and animated his brethren to be faithful, departed with Father Villani for the Barra.

CHAPTER XV.

ALTHOUGH Alphonso saw the great good which resulted from his missions in the diocese of Naples, and the extreme satisfaction of the Cardinal,

it was yet with regret that he laboured there. He thought continually of the want to which so many other places were abandoned, reflecting that the good could be as easily done by the numerous zealous and pious missionaries the Cardinal had at his own disposal. He prayed, he disciplined his body, in order to know the will of God. Unhappy as he was on this subject, he would not displease the Archbishop, yet it was impossible to remain much longer in his present position. He applied to the Canon James Fontana, a man of much merit, who had great influence with the Cardinal, and explained to him his anxieties on the subject, requesting he would speak with his Eminence, and if possible obtain his consent to withdraw from these missions. Fontana acquiesced in all his views, and promised to do all he could. While Alphonso redoubled his prayers and penances, that God might restore him to his beloved house of Ciorani, he wrote to them there to join with him in prayer, and to recommend him continually to God in the holy sacrifice of the mass, that he might be delivered from Naples.

The attempt of the Canon did not at first succeed; the Cardinal was much annoyed, and declared that if Alphonso left him he would discontinue the missions altogether. This vexed him exceedingly; he could neither endure that the missions should be stopped, nor that the Cardinal should be displeased with the Congregation. Fontana persisted however, and in the end persuaded the Cardinal that the missions

could be carried on successfully without Alphonso, the priest, Matthew Tista, being admirably fitted to conduct them. But it was only on condition that the Father Sarnelli should be left to superintend them, that he at last consented to part with Alphonso. This arrangement being made, Father Sarnelli remained at Naples until 1748.

Alphonso took leave of the Archbishop on the 3rd of July. Mounted on a sorry mule, he traversed the streets of Naples with Father Villani, and alighted at the gate of the archiepiscopal palace; some were edified by his humility, while others mocked at him and laughed. He placed himself in an obscure corner of the anteroom, which was filled with gentlemen and dignified ecclesiastics. In a few minutes the Cardinal came out, and without noticing any of the others went straight to Alphonso, took him by the hand and led him into his chamber. He spoke of the missions, the good they had produced, and thanked him for the zeal he had shown in the cause. He begged his advice regarding all that could be useful to the people, and testified the greatest regret at losing him. Alphonso on his part thanked him for the favours he had received, and begged his continued protection for the Congregation. He then proceeded to Barra, where he had promised to make the Novena of the Assumption, and afterwards accompanied by Father Villani returned to Ciorani.

The projects of the Dean of Nocera now began to take effect. Clergy and laity were equally desirous to have the Congregation established

there, and the Bishop, Mgr. Dominicus, sighed for the day of their arrival. When all was arranged, Alphonso went accompanied by F. Sportelli. The Dean Contaldi gave the house and furniture, promising at his death a further legacy of three thousand ducats. He expressed his intention of living in the house with them; while they on their part promised to care for him as if he were one of themselves. All was finally arranged to the great satisfaction of the inhabitants, in October, 1742. F. Sportelli was made rector, and the Fathers Mazzini and Jourdan were appointed to be with him. Every one wished Alphonso would have remained there, but he would not yet leave Ciorani.

Having disembarrassed himself of Naples, he set about giving missions in the destitute parts of the country. In one of the numberless villages where he gave a mission, he obtained with great difficulty a lodging in a monastery, where the Archbishop had ordered him to be received. The Superior received him with a very bad grace, and took leave of him still more rudely. As soon as the mission was terminated, he turned him out of the monastery, notwithstanding his being attacked by fever in consequence of fatigue: he left the place without uttering a word of complaint. By order of the Archbishop he went to St. Thecla, although he was scarcely convalescent. Here also he was rudely received by the curate, who pretended he could not lodge him, and that he had sent a message to tell him so. He tried in vain to calm the bad humour

of the curate, and at length a notary who was present, indignant at his scandalous behaviour, gave Alphonso and his companions accommodation in his own house. This mission was attended with great results.

Again at Conea he was treated in a similar manner; the curate would not have a mission there, although the Archbishop of Amalfi had commanded it, and on his arrival he was refused admission to the house. Without being disconcerted, he quietly took refuge in a corner of the church. A gentleman who witnessed the proceeding received them into his own house, and this mission also had wonderful success. Peace was restored to families, restitutions were made, and when they departed, the people followed them, weeping and crying, "Alas! why will you leave us so soon?"

While Alphonso, always more and more disgusted with the world, did penance at Ciorani, and laboured for the salvation of men, the world did its best to attract him again. His father, D. Joseph, could not endure the thought that his brilliant talents should be employed in the country among poor peasants and shepherds; and as he had once longed to see him among the first at the Neapolitan bar, he now longed to see him occupy a dignified position in the church. To obtain this he employed every artifice, but Alphonso on his part was invulnerable to all attacks. "Speak no more to me," he wrote to his father, "on the subject of the episcopate; even if you succeed in obtaining a bishopric for me,

I will instantly refuse it. We have a rule in our Congregation to refuse all such dignities." D. Joseph desired to see his son raised to dignities in this world, while he only wished to see his father obtain great glory in heaven. He wrote to him about this time as follows: "I beseech you, my dear father, to keep yourself more closely united to God. Confess often, and have your accounts ready, for our Lord will come at an hour when we least expect. Think of your advanced age; for who knows how soon you may be called from this world! That day will come, whether we watch or not: I recommend you to hear mass every day, for I fear much for your eternal salvation. I hope the Virgin Mary will assist you, but without your co-operation she will do nothing."

CHAPTER XVI.

WHILE affairs were prospering at Nocera, Mgr. Dominicus obtained the sanction of the government for the establishment of the house, and in July, 1743, he issued the letters of authorization. As there was not yet at Pagani a house and church suitable for the new missionaries, the bishop granted them the church of St. Dominic. Crowds came from the surrounding villages to benefit by their instructions, and they soon became the objects of veneration to the whole neigh-

bourhood. When the first stone of the new establishment was laid, the chapter of the Cathedral and the four Curates of the Dean attended, the Dean himself giving the benediction; a multitude of people came from all parts, who made the air resound with thanksgivings to God, and to the Dean Cantaldi, for having established this house among them. The construction was hardly commenced when materials flowed in from all quarters as if by miracle. Men and women strove to rival each other in contributing towards its erection; they laboured with their own hands, ladies of quality, gentlemen, all united to hasten the progress of the work. Married as well as unmarried despoiled themselves of their jewels and ornaments to contribute towards the establishment. The seven communes voted one hundred ducats. The bishop confided to the fathers the spiritual direction of his seminary. The brothers of the Confraternity of the Rosary, chiefly composed of gentlemen, would have one of them for their director, and to preach to them every Sunday.

This foundation in the diocese of Nocera was so much applauded that Alphonso had scarcely breathing-time. When they found at Angri the good he was doing everywhere, they insisted on having a mission, the place containing about five thousand souls. He went there the month of November, and was received as an apostle, each striving to procure some object that he had worn or touched. He lodged in the house of Laurence

Rossi, whose daughter obtained from a lay brother a pair of stockings tinged with his blood. She preserved them very devoutly; but a religious in the neighbourhood happening to hear of it, reproved her for doing so, Alphonso being still alive: she gave them away one day to a poor man whose legs were swollen with dropsy. Some days after he returned to the house entirely cured, and when she expressed her astonishment he replied, "From the time you gave me the stockings the swelling has disappeared."

Alphonso gathered in this mission the most wonderful fruits. They calculated there were in this place a hundred and twenty-eight women of the town; but when the mission was finished there was no longer one, all had been reformed. More than three hundred young girls bid adieu to the world, and embraced a religious life. A priest whose life had been scandalous, became a sincere penitent; and a young gentleman left all to enter the Congregation. He had not yet been in the centre of the town of Nocera, but as soon as they heard the wonders he had accomplished at Angri, he was solicited to preach in the Church of St. Matthew. This was a most fatiguing mission, the parish containing about six thousand souls. Two gentlemen of the place entered the Congregation upon this occasion. To inspire the people with devotion towards the Blessed Virgin, he exhorted the faithful of the parish of St. Matthew to erect a statue to our Lady of Dolours in the church. Immediately the women brought to the church every-

thing they had most precious in gold and silver ; the offerings were so numerous that a considerable sum remained which was given to the poor. Alphonso was so devoted to Mary, that this most glorious Virgin testified her love for him by operating the most extraordinary conversions at his intercession. The evening he arrived an unfortunate young man arose during the night to engage in a sinful transaction. He had a repugnance, however, to commit a sin with the scapular about his neck : he took it off to place it in a hole in the wall, but when he extended his hand, he felt himself drawn back, and fled from the spot in terror. The following night the Blessed Virgin, willing to recompense the slight homage paid to her scapular, appeared to him in a dream : " Miserable being," she said, " thou hadst respect for my scapular, and thou hadst no horror for offending my Son ! To-morrow the Father Alphonso will come here to give a mission ; go, confess to him and amend thy life." The young man had never heard of Alphonso, and knew nothing of the mission ; but next morning he went to find a species of fortune-teller, to have his dream interpreted, but before he could open his mouth this person addressed him with, " Do you not know that Father Alphonso has arrived to-day to give a mission ? " When the young man heard the words " Alphonso," and " mission," he was thunderstruck ; he ran in haste to the dwelling of Alphonso, found him and recounted to him the whole story. " So then," said Alphonso, his eyes

filling with tears, "our good mother has sent you to me." He reconciled him with God, and his life ever after was most edifying.

When Alphonso was in Naples with Father Sarnelli, their zeal led them to attempt a most difficult measure, which to the great joy of the Cardinal they succeeded in carrying into execution. The great number of bad women scattered over the town was a scandal to all the good: they managed after much labour and difficulty to banish all such characters to one particular quarter of the town, the suburb of St. Anthony.

CHAPTER XVII.

WHEN they opened the mission at Ciorani, they found the house much too small to receive the numbers of clergy and laity who came to make retreats. These exercises produced immense benefit; throughout the diocese of Salerno, those persons who came to place themselves under the direction of Alphonso, were distinguished by their probity and piety. Several priests, whose lives had been scandalous, were totally reformed, and became faithful labourers in the vineyard of the Lord. When the Archbishop came to visit the house, and saw the good that was done, he entreated Alphonso to extend the buildings. At the instigation of the Archbishop he proposed to commence, but Father Rossi, who

was ruler, differed from him in opinion, because of their want of funds. Alphonso spoke to him once and again ; but when he saw that he still hesitated, he said with firmness, "My father, we ought not to build as seculars do, who begin by amassing money, and then set to work ; we ought to follow an opposite rule ; we ought first to build, and afterwards expect from Providence what is necessary." Father Rossi obeyed, and animated by the confidence of Alphonso, he began with only one sequin in his pocket.

The expectations of his superior were not ill-founded : Father Rossi never had cause to regret his obedience, for independent of his own liberality, the Archbishop wrote a circular to incite all the diocese to contribute towards the work. Considerable sums were forwarded to them, and these were not confined to the diocese.

God did not limit the succours of His Providence : one day that Father Rossi found himself dispirited because of the expense, Heaven assisted him in a very singular manner. A young man presented himself to be received into the Congregation as a lay-brother ; and Father Rossi admitted him provisionally. In withdrawing to prepare himself for admission, he put into the hands of the father some pieces of money wrapped up in paper, asking him to say mass for him. The paper seemed to contain about ten shillings ; but what was Rossi's surprise on opening it after his departure, to find a hundred golden ducats ! He immediately sent after the young man, but he could not be heard of,

and never was seen again. He learned by this the excellence of obedience, and the recompense God bestows on those who, despising human wisdom, trust only in Him.

There happened yet another remarkable instance of Providence. Alphonso one day called together the young students, and ordered them to get up a petition to Jesus Christ in the most Holy Sacrament, for the success of the newly-begun building. When the petition was signed, he deposited it in the Holy Tabernacle, adding his own petition to that of the young clerks. But scarcely had he done so, when he was suddenly called to Naples, to vote for several gentlemen who wished to receive the order of Knighthood, at the Seat of the Porta Nuova. He made no inquiries, but instantly set out mounted on a wretched mule, and arrived at Porta Nuova. On attempting to enter, the guard mistook him for some vagabond who would intrude for the purpose of begging, and rudely repulsed him. His clothes were shabby, his beard unshorn, and his hair in disorder; he smiled at the mistake, and waited quietly until the chevalier in waiting perceived him and advanced to meet him, not with the usual forms of salutation, but respectfully kissing his hand. On this occasion he received a present so considerable, that it sufficed to finish the new buildings. He afterwards said laughing, that he would not have refused his vote even to the son of a coal-heaver.

About this time D. Joseph Liguori came to Ciorani to visit his son, probably desiring to see

one who conferred such honour on the family, or perhaps to persuade him if possible to accept some more brilliant position. Be that as it may, he had scarcely entered the mansion, when he was penetrated with a deep feeling of devotion; he admired the edifying life they led, the silence which reigned, and the odour of sanctity which transfused everything. It filled his mind with thoughts of a blessed eternity, and detached his heart from worldly things. He felt a holy envy at the happiness of his son's life, and no longer thought of a bishopric for him. He pressed him to his bosom, kissed him, and blessed the Lord for the benedictions showered upon his house. He prolonged his stay at Ciorani, and every day more taken with the humble and peaceful life of the fathers, the sanctity of his son, the wisdom he exhibited in the direction of his community, the zeal and success of his missions, he took the resolution of forsaking the world, renouncing his rank, and living under the direction of Alphonso, as a humble lay-brother. He was so resolved on making the sacrifice that he besought permission with tears in his eyes. But Alphonso, though inwardly delighted with the humility of his father, in whom he recognized the visible effects of grace, nevertheless dissuaded him from his purpose, assuring him that it was not the will of God he should leave the world, but remain in it to edify by his example. Vanquished by the resistance of his son, he returned to Naples an altered man. What could not the prayers of such a son effect?

Not content with being a pious and exemplary nobleman, he would become a Saint; he lived like a fervent Anchorite, praying in the church, meditating and reading the Lives of the Saints at home. He kept up a regular correspondence with his son, following his counsels in all that concerned his salvation. When he asked him to recommend to him those Saints' Lives from which he would receive most benefit, Alphonso pointed out the Lives of St. Louis Gonzaga, St. Philip Neri, St. Peter of Alcantara, and "Meditations on Eternal Truths" by Rossignoli, and "Eternal Maxims" by Cotaneo.

The sun still shone which had enlightened with its beams the birth of the house of Pagani; but about this time it became obscured by clouds, and serious alarms succeeded to the dawn of its morning hopes. The devil feared the increase of a work so contrary to his designs, and attacked it immediately through the envy that began to fill the hearts of some in the neighbourhood. The esteem of the bishop, the applause of the gentry, the concourse of people who frequented the church, gave umbrage to the curates, and excited their jealousy to such a degree that they repented having given a consent to the establishment of the missionaries among them; to the curates were added other secular priests, and regulars also, who saw themselves deserted by some of their penitents. This jealousy operated to such an extent, that it succeeded in alienating the minds of many, and diminishing the respect in which the public had held the

missionaries, which ended at last in irritation and contempt. The religious of other orders, seeing the favour these missionaries enjoyed with the people, feared they would in consequence be deprived of their daily alms. They believed, and they persuaded the secular priests, that all the legacies, masses, and donations would soon be given to them only. They pretended that their very existence was threatened, and it was not to be wondered at that these outcries gained many of the people themselves, who almost all had near or remote relations among the complainants. First the missionaries were thought to be less useful than had been imagined, and then they were regarded as a burden which weighed too heavily on the people; there was not the most miserable little shop or house in the place where the subject was not violently discussed. "What will become of all the poor young men who succeed us," cried a simple good sort of priest, "if these missionaries remain at Nocera? they will be the confessors of the nuns, the directors of confraternities, and their Congregation will become a gulf which will swallow up every mass and pious legacy." The war was scarcely declared when the attack commenced. Some priests with the gentry continued to favour Alphonso, but the fire was too strong to be put down by such feeble means. Twenty-five curates entered into a league with other priests, the Religious Mendicants of Nocera and Pagani joined them. They invited the fathers of Mount Olive, the Order of Citeaux, and

those of Montevergine to join the crusade, but they were horror-struck at the proposition. There remained but two of the curates of Pagani unopposed to the missionaries. When the plot was formed the first move was to endeavour to prejudice the king, but God made known His displeasure in a singular manner. They employed a celebrated advocate to write out a memorial of their grievances; he took up a pen, it would not write; he tried a second and a third all to no purpose; he at length succeeded in writing a page, but when about to turn over the leaf, instead of throwing sand upon it, he lifted the ink by mistake and blotted all he had written. Struck by these mysterious accidents, he exclaimed, "Employ whom you will, but as for me I will have nothing more to do with any business against these missionaries," so saying, he tore the paper in pieces. This fact, which may be compared to what happened to the Emperor Valens, when he wished to oppose St. Basil, made great impression on people of sense, but none on the enemies of the missionaries. They employed another advocate, and God permitted the affair to proceed. In this memorial they assured the king that the town was not, as had been falsely represented, deprived of spiritual succours; that besides the parish church, they had nine other churches served by secular priests and four regular monasteries, that there were a great number of excellent religious, and among the priests many good preachers, doctors, and theologians, who regu-

larly catechised, gave Novenas and Octaves. They affirmed there were few towns in the kingdom that enjoyed so many spiritual advantages as did Nocera.

After this they drew a portrait of the missionaries, in which Alphonso was not spared. They said it was a Congregation not yet approved by the Pope, composed of vagabonds and miserable priests, who not having wherewithal to live in their own country, sought to feed themselves elsewhere, taking the bread from the poor and from the Religious Mendicant Orders; that the priests in the town who had no prebend, supported themselves by masses of which these men would deprive them; that to give them the liberty of making acquisitions was to reduce the clergy and the religious to the necessity of quitting the town, or begging at the door of the new comers. They added, that far from being men of talent, all they could do, with the exception of preaching a few popular sermons, was to surround themselves with children and young girls, and teach them to sing sacred songs. Thus Alphonso and his companions, who were honoured at the beginning as so many apostles, found themselves reduced to miserable mendicants and ignorant priests, incapable of fulfilling the duties of their ministry. In order to gain their end with the king, the enemies of Alphonso would fain have persuaded the bishop to concur in their views, but their efforts were vain. Indignant at their wicked designs, he shut his ears to all their representations; and to show

how much he esteemed the missionaries, he in spite of the malcontents chose one of them for his own confessor, and when he visited his diocese, was accompanied by two of the fathers to preach to the people and fill the other offices.

In spite of this check the courage of the curates was not abated: they continued to complain against the missionaries, because of their having the direction of seminaries and different confraternities, and to express their fear that they would soon monopolise the confidence of the faithful, so that the secular clergy would be despoiled of their influence. They had not terms bad enough for those curates who still continued to favour them, blindly asking the assistance of those who would before long supplant them; and at length they ended by demanding of the bishop that on all feast days there should be neither sermons in their church, nor any office whatever. The bishop, despising this ridiculous demand, far from interdicting the exercise of their ministry, recommended to Father Sportelli never to omit any service in the church, and above all, benediction after Vespers on Saturday, and a sermon in honour of the Blessed Virgin; and that on feast days they should endeavour to have some office at the hours the parish churches were closed.

The missionaries now saw themselves engaged in a most serious conflict. The friendship and protection of many excellent priests and wealthy gentlemen of the neighbourhood, did not prevent their enemies giving themselves up to all

sorts of excess against them. If any of the fathers appeared in the town, he was assailed with taunts and loaded with insults. One day, while preparing to say mass in the parochial church, one of them had the amice pulled out of his hands. The lay-brothers had their share in these outrages whenever any of them appeared in the street. The brother, Anthony de Lauro, being one day digging in the garden, a man passing on the other side of the hedge began to abuse him grossly; the brother continued to dig as if he heard nothing, and this so irritated the man that he jumped into the garden, ran up to him, and gave him a violent blow on the face. The holy brother showed no resentment, but knelt down and offered his other cheek; the man withdrew covered with confusion. During the silence of night they would come howling under the windows to break their rest, insulting them by singing indecent songs and using violent language. Alphonso was then at Ciorani, but as soon as he heard what was doing at Nocera, he came thither with all speed. But how different was his reception now to what it had formerly been! Then he was received with cries of joy; now with expressions of anger and contempt. A person came to the house and addressed him as a vagabond, accusing him of coming with his companions to seduce the inhabitants, to eat the bread of their children, and that being but miserable wretches banished from their own country, they had thrown themselves on this country to devour it. At these

odious words Alphonso humbled himself, and his humility redoubled the audacity of his adversary, who continued abusing him a long time.

The petition addressed to the king had no success; he knew too well the merit of Alphonso and his disciples, to allow himself to be deceived. But at this epoch the kingdom being threatened by Austria, his majesty had gone to the Abruzzi, and the enemies of the Congregation took advantage of the circumstance: they thought it would be easy to deceive the viceroy, Michael Regio. They addressed then a new petition to the viceroy, taking the opportunity of revenging themselves on the bishop, by accusing him of having passed the limits of his authority when he authorized the missionaries to establish themselves in his diocese, affirming that though he could give leave to found a single house, he could not permit them to have a perpetual foundation, with authority to open a public church. They said the Congregation at Pagani, whose rules he had approved, was not legitimately established, their rules never having been submitted to the Grand Almoner, and that the approbation of the Bishop had not received the ratification of the Royal Chamber. Besides, that the foundation could only become valid by a brief from the Sovereign Pontiff. In spite of all this, they were repulsed by the viceroy, whose ministers knew the probity of the missionaries and the favourable dispositions of the king.

Defeated once more, but not cast down, they began to seek help in Nocera itself. They went

to Cantaldi, he on whom Alphonso leant, and who had aided him in the establishment at Paganì. Vice assumed the appearance of virtue so successfully, that he allowed himself to be gained, and began to repent of what he had done for Alphonso. Looking on his Congregation as an assemblage of men who under the mask of piety hid a sordid avarice capable of gratifying itself by means the most base, Cantaldi, now disgusted with them, ceased to furnish the necessary supplies he had assigned to them, and though living under the same roof with the fathers, he never addressed to them a single word; thus showing them his desire that they should withdraw from his premises. Alphonso knowing from what had happened at the Villa, that they were threatened with a similar misfortune, inquired diligently to know the will of God; he went to Naples to consult with those enlightened and pious friends by whose advice he was guided in his difficulties. He went also to Castellamare to consult Mgr. Falcoja, and while they were talking, the bishop suddenly casting his eyes on a small statue of St. Michael, exclaimed, "It is the devil, it is the devil; hold firm and continue to fight; God and St. Michael will protect you!" He then advised him to dedicate the house and the church to the Archangel Michael.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE tempest, far from abating, continued to rage with redoubled violence at Pagani. In the midst of his great embarrassments Alphonso availed himself of the hand of man to defend the work of God, while he placed his chief confidence on the Rock of Ages. He prayed and mortified himself; he embraced the cross, he besought the prayers of many holy souls, particularly of religious houses, and he ceased not to go on with the missions wherever he was asked. His enemies continued their hostilities, and not content with attempting to ruin the house at Pagani, they desired to blot out the Congregation from the face of the earth. Their continual intrigues, their daily cavilings levelled against him and his companions, at length aroused the zeal of several gentlemen of Pagani, Nocera, and other places in the neighbourhood, who boldly declared themselves in their favour; in short, there was hardly one respectable family who did not take their part. The district of Nocera is divided into seven municipal communities, who besides the Syndic belonging to each, elect yearly three general Syndics. They were ordered to convoke an assembly of the inhabitants of the district, to consider some affairs that would be proposed for their deliber-

ation. The great affair of the moment being stated at a meeting of five or six hundred persons, all the communities decided in favour of the missionaries, with the exception of those of Pagani, who were divided in opinion; not one of the malcontents had the courage to declare against the resolution there decided, that the missionaries should be defended and upheld, with the exception of one man, who was immediately attacked by Don Gaetan Francisco, a zealous adherent of theirs, and was glad to escape by leaping a wall. They all engaged to unite in defending Alphonso, and took upon themselves the expenses that might be incurred in the affair. When this manifestation of good feeling was reported to him, he burst into tears at finding the good he had done among them appreciated by the most important class. But his enemies became more and more embittered when they saw themselves opposed by the most respectable part of the inhabitants. In the beginning of June, 1744, they attacked him both at Naples and at Rome. Although the foundation rested on the authority of the sovereign, they pretended that the existence of the house was contrary to law, and besides that they were but a reunion of vagabonds, useless to the state and hurtful to religion. At Rome they described them as men of wicked lives, founded without the consent of the Holy See, contrary to canonical laws, and the decrees of Sovereign Pontiffs. When Alphonso saw that with the branches they would destroy the root, he recalled the ancient

spirit which had animated him at the bar, and with the civil laws in his hand he collected the means of defence, established the reasons which proved the rights of their cause, and showed in what circumstances a convent could be called lawful or illegal. At Rome he knew equally well how to reduce his enemies to silence; he confounded them by bulls of Sovereign Pontiffs, and by the authority of canon law. He showed how no institution had been definitively approved until after a period of probation, and having been during its infancy sustained by the protection of bishops. As to the calumnies against the lives of the members of his Congregation, he would not notice them; for they were sufficiently contradicted by public notoriety. The memorials he produced pleased the sovereign at Naples, and obtained favour with the Pope and the Cardinals.

After having been defeated in this attempt, which they had considered infallible, the malcontents had recourse to the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. They alleged that the house of Pagani was prejudicial to the welfare of the church in general, as well as to particular churches; and entered into the same details as formerly regarding the religious advantages of the place. They did not forget to renew their slanders against the character of the missionaries; adding that they carried on a shameful traffic in crucifixes, chaplets, &c. buying them cheap to sell them again at an enormous price, besides imposing on the people to carry stones

and other materials for the new building. The regular priests who opposed them complained of their having been admitted into the town without their consent, conformable to canon law, &c. and that having no regular revenue, they were forced to beg, to the prejudice of the religious established before them. The seculars united with them in beseeching the Sacred Congregation to order the bishop to suspend the building of the house and church, and to forbid the missionaries to beg. They also requested that the missionaries might be cited to appear before his Holiness as having incurred the censures brought against them by the canon law and the bulls of Popes.

The gentlemen of Pagani, Nocera, Corbora, and St. Egidio, no sooner learnt this new attack, than they armed themselves to defend Alphonso. Thirty-six of them undertook, the 16th of July, 1744, to charge themselves with the conduct of this affair at Rome, and to procure an advocate and procurator. At the same time several curates, the chapter of the cathedral, the clergy of Nocera, and twenty-three clerks of Pagani, declared themselves to the Pope in favour of Alphonso. They explained to his Holiness the good the missionaries had done in the diocese of Salerno and elsewhere; the numerous conversions of priests as well as laymen daily operated by the retreats given at Ciorani; the services rendered to curates; adding, that not content with the numberless exercises of devotion given in their church, they assisted the dying and instructed the young. They made

an eulogium on the exemplary life of Alphonso, his disinterestedness and zeal for the glory of God, beseeching the Pope to protect a work so useful for the Church.

The ways of Providence are admirable: the authors of this attack now saw themselves the victims of their own malice. Such bitter complaints, apparently leaning on such positive facts, contrasted with the eulogiums bestowed on Alphonso, and the number and quality of his defenders, placed the court of Rome under the necessity of instituting an inquest to find out the truth, in order to do justice. Benedict XIV. then occupied the Holy See, and hearing of an institution lately established in the Church, he wished to inquire into the merits of its founder. He accordingly instructed Cardinal Spinola to obtain exact information from the Bishop of Nocera. In consequence of this demand, Mgr. Dominicis replied the 3rd of August, giving a statement of the number of curates, secular and regular priests, and of the exercises of devotion practised in the diocese of Nocera. He affirmed that all the churches were sufficiently provided with revenues, each having enough for its wants. Then to give the lie to the complaints made by the malcontents, he declared that the churches and chapels of Pagani possessed in all about eighteen hundred masses founded in perpetuity, and that the priests, secular as well as regular, were not sufficient for all these masses, and had to distribute them every year to strangers, priests, and religious. He did not

forget to mention the acclamation with which the missionaries had been at first received, and the joy the curates themselves had manifested at laying the foundation-stone of the buildings; he told also of the zeal with which the Syndics and gentlemen had obtained the king's approbation for the establishment. He combated the calumnies regarding the sale of crucifixes and chaplets, the carrying of stones for the buildings, &c. He then proceeded to the most important point, that is to say, the end for which Alphonso proposed to found the Congregation, the providing missions for destitute and abandoned country villages and hamlets, and to labour in reforming young clerks by giving them retreats, and gentlemen also, by these and other pious practices. He added, that before giving his consent to the foundation, he had demanded a mission that he might see with his own eyes its effects, and from that moment he was so convinced of the wonderful good resulting, that he desired nothing so much as to see the new institute established in his diocese. He finished by an eulogium on the sanctity of Alphonso, and the high estimation in which he was held by the Cardinal Archbishop himself and many other bishops.

At the same time Mgr. Vigilanti, Bishop of Cajazzo, took his cause in hand by writing to his friend the Cardinal Firrau at Rome, who was Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops. He justified the conduct of Alphonso, and explained to the Cardinal the injustice of the

accusations laid to his charge. "His cause is that of God," he said, "and therefore it excites the hatred of the wicked, a hatred all the more violent that the work is great. My diocese has experienced for three years the happy fruits of the labour of these worthy and saintly servants of Jesus Christ, who have sanctified every village where they have been."

The bad success of this last attempt was not sufficient to make the malcontents renounce their enterprise. Not having been able to obtain the suppression of the house, they sought to interrupt the erection of the church. They got possession of the royal decree, and by bribing the underlings of office, they altered the words from "the king permits the erection of a house with a church," to "the king permits the erection of a house without a church;" and with this in their hands they hastened to the Marquis Fraggianni, commissary of the king, who was persuaded that Alphonso in building a church had gone beyond his limits.

On the 19th of July the commissary despatched an order to Nocera, to discontinue the building at Pagani. This time the wicked triumphed, and Alphonso was in great embarrassment, not knowing how to proceed. He sent F. Francis St. Severino to Naples, to the minister of state, the Marquis Brancone, to inform him of the obstacle, and request his assistance to remove it. The marquis was astonished when he heard of this, for he remembered that the king had expressly given leave to build a church; he wrote

a note immediately to one of the clerks of the bureau, and gave it to F. St. Severino to carry, commanding him to show the register. This fellow had been corrupted, and angry at the suspicion that was awakened, he boldly opened the register, saying to the father, "You are losing your time here; his majesty has given no authority to a Congregation such as yours to have a church like the Regulars." The father returned to the Marquis, who sent for this clerk and ordered him to produce the register. He brought it, protesting with great boldness that it was quite correct. The marquis divining the fraud that had been committed, said with a tone of severity, "I know the intention of the king;" and then with his own hand he wrote in the register, "a house with a church;" and not content with this, he ordered the fellow to go instantly to the Marquis Fraggianni, and tell him the true state of the case. It was necessary to submit, and on the 21st of July an order was transmitted to the Syndic of Pagani, to permit the progress of the building.

While God arranged the happy issue of this affair, He sent a severe affliction to Alphonso, in the loss of the excellent Father Janvier Marie Sarnelli. After succeeding to his wish in the reforms he had projected at Naples, he died on the 30th of June, 1744, regretted by all, although the Congregation were consoled by having such a powerful protector in heaven at a moment when they were suffering such persecution on earth.

CHAPTER XIX.

IN spite of all their successive defeats, the malcontents were not proof against a new temptation, which like their former fraud turned to their own confusion. Beaten at Naples, repulsed at Rome, they appealed to the tribunals without success. Cantaldi would not openly appear against them; but a process was commenced in the name of his sister, to force the missionaries to abandon the house. In consequence they were summoned to produce their means of defence. The sister of Cantaldi forced herself unexpectedly into the house accompanied by twenty other persons and two notaries, before whom she declared that the house was her property. When Alphonso heard of this he was extremely annoyed; he came immediately to Nocera to consult on what was to be done, when the bishop and other friends advised him not to yield. A celebrated advocate undertook the cause, and the pretended proprietorship of the sister was soon exposed to the confusion of those who had attempted to play off such a trick. Their resentment, far from being checked, exhibited itself in everything that could cause annoyance to the fathers. One day Alphonso complained in the mildest terms of the wrong done him in attempting to turn him out of the

house, when a person of rank, and belonging to the clergy, was insolent enough to say, "If you will act the thieves and rob people by force, why do you not go to the highway?" "Blessed be God," replied Alphonso, "I have left my home to be treated as a robber at Nocera!" A priest of the noble house of Olevano, who was present at this deplorable scene, lost all patience to see such a man treated with insult, and was with difficulty restrained from throwing the aggressor out of the window; he was only prevented by Alphonso, who was horror-struck at seeing two priests proceeding to such extremities. Certainly the malcontents were instigated by the devil, otherwise they must have been arrested by so many defeats. In the month of August they made another attempt at Rome, but warned by experience they no longer attacked Alphonso, but confined themselves to defaming his companions. This attack roused all the most respectable inhabitants of Nocera and Pagani in their favour. The three general Syndics took upon themselves the expense of defending the Congregation at Rome. On the other hand Benedict XIV. wishing to sift the matter to the bottom, again charged Cardinal Spinola to make new inquiries of Cardinal Spinelli at Naples, and also of the Archbishop of Salerno, Mgr. Rossi. All this was the work of Providence, in order that the Congregation might be known to the Sovereign Pontiff and the world at large; and in reality the brilliant testimony rendered by these two dignitaries of the church, hastened the ap-

probation given by the court of Rome in favour of the new Institute.

This determination to investigate the matter, taken by the Holy See, was far from agreeable to the malcontents, who knew too well the sanctity of life exhibited by those who lived under the direction of Alphonso. Almost despairing of success they as a last resource attempted to prejudice Cardinal Spinola. He was then at Torre del Greco; they therefore sent deputies accompanied by an advocate, who painted Alphonso and his companions in the blackest colours. The Cardinal was moved, the calumnies entered into his soul. The name, Congregation, which irritated the curates, gave him occasion to say, that he wished this institute were not a society depending on one head like the Congregation of St. Vincent of Paul, but rather an institute, of which each Congregation would be immediately under the bishop of the diocese in which they happened to be situated. These words, which dropped from the Cardinal without his attaching much importance to them, were a cause of triumph to the faction, who believed themselves now certain of victory. They returned to Pagani proclaiming everywhere that the Cardinal would not approve of their rule, and rejoicing in the hope of their being suppressed immediately. At the news of this supposed victory, the three Syndics went accompanied by many other gentlemen to wait upon his Eminence. He supposed they came on the same errand as the others, and received them

very coldly; but no sooner did he learn how very different was their intention, than, filled with consolation, he exclaimed, "Gentlemen, I am as much edified by what you tell me to-day, as I was scandalised yesterday by the language of the curates." He promised to interest himself as much as possible in favour of the Congregation.

In the meantime Mgr. Dominicis attempted to arrange the affair by arbitration; the proposal was agreed to by both parties; but when Cantaldi stated that he would take upon himself the debts contracted, provided the missionaries evacuated the premises and quitted Pagani, and if they would not, he would shut up the church of St. Dominic, and force them to live as simple individuals, the bishop in the greatest indignation broke up the meeting, and turning to the fathers said, "Prosecute your cause at Rome and at Naples, trust in Cardinal Spinelli. God will protect you."

Mgr. Dominicis had taken the greatest interest in the Congregation, and done all in his power to establish them, when he was removed by death on the 22nd of August of this year. This misfortune gave great hope to the disaffected; they believed the missionaries would no longer have any support in the diocese, but they were mistaken. Mgr. Volpi, who succeeded to the bishopric, was equally well disposed towards them as his predecessor had been.

The reports transmitted to Rome by Cardinal Spinelli and Mgr. Rossi, harmonised in every

particular, by which they vouched for the sanctity of the missionaries and the wonders operated by their means. It was thus that Providence arranged all things to work together for their good; for after four successive appeals, after eight months' intriguing at Rome, where neither money, chicanery, nor falsehood were spared, the only result was making known to the Pope the excellence of the Congregation they tried to calumniate, thus verifying the prophecy of Zacharias, "Thy salvation will come from thy enemies." But in the intermediate time Alphonso and his companions drank the bitter chalice of tribulation.

CHAPTER XX.

WHILE the house of Pagani was agitated by the tempest, God opened a new field to Alphonso, destined to receive seed not less productive than that which had hitherto been sown. Don Dominic Fiori, professor of music in the cathedral of Naples, having no heir, determined to found a house in his native place, Madugno. The project pleased the Archbishop of Bari, Mgr. Gaota, who knowing Alphonso anticipated the greatest benefits for his diocese. He united with Fiori in inviting him to give a mission at Madugno, in order to excite the inhabitants to wish for their establishment. Alphonso accepted the invitation, and it was decided that he should

go there in the month of November. When the prince of Castellaneta, Don Mathias Miroballo of Aragon, heard of this journey, he besought Alphonso to visit on his way his fief of Iliceto, to give the inhabitants the instruction and consolation of which they were so much in want.

This was no sooner known to Mgr. Lucci, Bishop of Bovino, than he dispatched a Canon of his cathedral, James Casati, to join in the invitation, which Alphonso accepting, he arrived there with his companions on the 12th of the month. This mission had the usual success. The Canon had a further object in inviting him. At the corner of a wood called Vallin-Vincoli, on a small elevation, stood an ancient church dedicated to the Virgin, under the title of Mary of Consolation. It had once belonged to the Augustinians, and in this church was a large painting of the Virgin Mary, for which the faithful of Iliceto and the neighbourhood had a great veneration. Canon Casati, who had a great devotion to the place, and above all to this picture, had resolved on establishing a community. The prince of Castellaneta having spoken much to him of Alphonso, he desired if possible to have him there, that the devotion to our Lady might be revived. Mgr. Lucci eagerly joined in this scheme, anticipating the fruits which his diocese would derive from it. Alphonso however hesitated to accept the proposal, because the distance between the church and any inhabited place was very considerable; but when, yielding to the entreaties of the Canon and the Chapter,

he visited the picture, he was so captivated that the Fathers Cafaro and St. Severino easily persuaded him to accept the offer, to the great joy of the people.

Once settled at Iliceto, he saw in the Pouille the vast domains of the crown, where thousands of men were employed in keeping flocks and herds, and cultivating the ground to produce food for them. He sighed at the sight: in these territories were several hundred persons, who rarely received any spiritual assistance, and even on feast days had seldom an opportunity of hearing mass. Touched by their destitution he sent his companions out in different directions to distribute to these poor people the bread of life; and he looked forward to the house of Iliceto becoming the place from whence these abandoned people would derive spiritual succour in time to come.

Animated with a zeal always active, he exposed to the king of Naples the deplorable state of this population; and the necessity of assisting them. The king replied through the Marquis Branconi, that he had learned with great satisfaction the benefit the people had already drawn from these missions, and that he hoped to see them continue their labours with increasing zeal. His Majesty gave his approbation for the new house at Iliceto on the 9th of January, 1745.

After having arranged the affairs of this house, he assembled his companions and departed for Madugno towards the end of the same month.

The mission was a difficult one, and cost much labour and fatigue. For many years no missionary had visited the place; piety was almost extinct, and sin dominated. But God blessed their labours; the whole town were touched by grace, and the most obstinate sinners came full of compunction to cast themselves at the feet of the missionaries and renounce their evil deeds. Good succeeded to evil, ancient confraternities were re-established, convents reformed, and many priests whose conduct had only been coldly regular, roused from their inaction by Alphonso, became ever after zealous and devoted to apostolic labours. As usual he succeeded in inspiring a great devotion towards the Blessed Virgin and the most Holy Sacrament.

This mission lasted forty days, so great were the wants of the inhabitants; all admired the zeal of the missionaries, and wished them to settle among them. In short the foundation was almost concluded, when Alphonso heard that the king of Naples had granted an establishment to the Fathers of St. Vincent of Paul in the town of Bari; and in order not to interfere with this mission he advised Fiori to make arrangements with these Fathers for Madugno. The religious of a monastery in this town attest that one morning while Alphonso celebrated mass in their church, he was raised several feet from the ground.

After their return from Madugno, Alphonso and his companions suffered much in their new establishment at Illiceto. Besides their voluntary

penances, they experienced on all sides suffering and affliction. The person who gave the house, reserved the revenues for himself during his life, and there remained nothing for the fathers. A priest who was there during that winter describes in a letter the state to which they were reduced. The bread, he says, was of rye, mixed with bran, black as a coal, and ill baked, and sometimes they had none at all, and were obliged to accept the charity of an old man who lived on the produce of his goats and the culture of a small field near his cottage. For pottage they had a species of broth or panada, or bruised beans, so old that they had the colour of bread. They never tasted meat, except when some sheep or cow died of exhaustion. They had no fruit but wild chesnuts or crab-apples. They rarely had wine, and then but in small quantity, and very bad. On feast days they had a large cake made of the same flour as the bread, but seasoned with a little cheese and salt, for sugar or pepper were luxuries they could not afford. They had no linen, and no money to buy it. They were almost shirtless, and could only change once in two or three weeks. There never was a religious house where greater poverty reigned: their clothes were ragged and patched, their pocket handkerchiefs a wisp of straw or rags. The house was an old convent, suppressed during the pontificate of Innocent XI., and was but a mass of ruins and filth. The wind blew more keenly within than without, the walls were full of cracks, the partitions brick without mortar.

The windows were of oiled paper instead of glass. The roof was bad, the cells were without ceiling, so that the snow covered the beds during winter: in short, the misery was so great, that one of the fathers lost courage, and returned to the world.

Alphonso himself wrote at this time to a friend, "If God does not help us speedily I shall be obliged to send away my companions, for we have nothing on which to live. Though we eat only beans and drink dirty water, yet we have nearly six hundred ducats of debt."

Among all these miseries, or rather in consequence of these miseries, Alphonso had the misfortune to lose his dear Vitus Curzius. During the month of July, being without food in the house, he was sent to beg a little corn. Although the good brother was unaccustomed to traverse the country during the burning heats, he nevertheless obeyed; but one evening being refused a lodging at a convent of nuns, he slept in the field, and during the night was seized with violent fever, and not being able to drag himself to his own convent, was taken into the house of a charitable priest. After forty-nine days' intense suffering, he went to receive the reward of his labours in the mansions of the blessed. His death occurred on Saturday, the 18th of September, 1745.

This death afflicted Alphonso deeply, though consoled by the reflection that he had died rich in merits and virtues. The chapter of the Cathedral and many priests joined the missionaries

in paying him the last honours. All the confraternities with numbers of the faithful also assisted, imploring his protection and invoking him as a Saint. Alphonso sung the mass amidst torrents of tears, which frequently interrupted him. Mgr. Amato, Bishop of Lacedogna, had a great devotion towards this holy brother, and would have his skull for a relic, preserving it during twenty years on his prie-dieu. After the death of this prelate it was brought back to the house of Iliceto, where it still remains. An abridgment of his Life has been written by Alphonso.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE fury of the inhabitants of Pagani was not abated, and new plots were invented to ruin the missionaries. It is thus that God permits His elect to be tried by heavy afflictions, in order to exalt them the more at last, allowing those enterprises which tend most to promote His glory to be crossed and combated, that afterwards the strength of His powerful arm may be more clearly displayed.

After their successes at Naples and Rome, every one thought their troubles were over, but they were deceived. Cantaldi continued to look coldly on them, and did not disguise his animosity, hoping to attain his object through the instrumentality of others, until finding himself disappointed in this, he threw off the mask

and openly attacked them. Scarcely had Alphonso returned from the Pouille, when he openly revoked the donation he had made in their favour, and in concert with his sister cited them to appear before the council of the king. Not knowing how to justify this step, he pretended that the missionaries had deceived him in usurping the title of Congregation, when they had neither been recognised by the king nor the Pope; he demanded in consequence that they should be forbidden to build, protesting he had made the donation not for a Religious Community, but for a College of Priests.

The affair seemed of such importance, that the council sent a royal auditor to verify the facts on the spot. The claims of Cantaldi were found insufficient, and on the 11th of January, 1745, the auditor, in the name of the council, confirmed the missionaries in possession of the property, the donation being found valid and irrevocable.

This disappointment did not abate the animosity of Cantaldi; at the instigation of his partisans he presented a claim to the king filled with malignity rather than reason, to which thirty priests put their signature. In this instance they refrained from attacking Alphonso, but levelled their batteries against his companions. The Syndic of Pagani and three other Syndics undertook their defence, and the indubitable integrity of Alphonso and his companions made his majesty withstand all the numerous attempts against them. The Marquis Branconi bid them

be of good courage and fear nothing, for the king was too much scandalised by the conduct of priests, who, established to be the mediators between God and the people, ought to have been most zealous in promoting such a work, rather than undermining it. When an army besieges a town, they first attack it boldly, in the hope of intimidating the inhabitants; but if these defend themselves with courage and boldness, they next proceed to undermine the walls. It was plain, however, that these men acted entirely at the instigation of the devil. They introduced two barrels of gunpowder under the foundation of the house, and had not one of their accomplices, stung by remorse of conscience, revealed the plot, the whole would have been destroyed. Father Mazzini from that moment was obliged to keep a strict watch nightly.

Alphonso was then at Iliceto, and far from being discouraged by this barbarous attempt, his confidence became greater from having escaped so many imminent dangers. Meantime the fathers at Pagani remained, as it were, shut up in prison in the house of Cantaldi. Living under the same roof with him they necessarily often met, but their salutations were almost never returned. Placed under a continual restraint they sighed for the moment of their deliverance; every minute seemed a year until the buildings were finished. F. Mazzini in writing to Alphonso, expressed himself thus: "I am dying with desire to quit the house of Cantaldi, where we are an object of contempt to all the secular priests. I

would be contented, my father, to live on the grass of the field, in order to save something to forward the buildings; but this is morally impossible, for we have no other revenue than what is derived from three masses, and the provision of grain is small indeed."

The new Bishop, Mgr. Volpi, was not less favourably disposed towards them than his predecessor, Mgr. Dominicis, had been; far from taking part in the animosity of their enemies, he protected them on every occasion. It was determined that they should assist at processions, and like other priests obey the chapter of the cathedral, but the Bishop freed them from these obligations, and also that of assisting at conferences on moral cases. He liked to see them directing the confraternities of gentlemen and tradespeople. He used to attend the sermons delivered to the former, and often called upon the fathers to fill different offices in his diocese.

Enjoying the protection of the Bishop and also of the king, Alphonso nevertheless would have yielded so far to obtain if possible a truce with his enemies; but the prelate with the elite of the inhabitants of Nocera would have him remain firm, as all were convinced that on the establishment of the Congregation at Pagani depended the education of the young, the instruction of the clergy, and the general reformation of the people. They protested their determination to defend his cause to the last, until justice should be triumphant, and although their

firmness rejoiced him, he yet regretted the continued disputes, which became more bitter than ever.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE daily vexations at Pagani took away all courage to remain longer than was absolutely necessary in the house of Cantaldi, where they were even threatened with death; accordingly the walls of the new building were hardly finished when they resolved to remove thither without heeding the risk they ran from damp and other inconveniences. On the 24th of September, 1745, they entered the new premises during the Octave of the Archangel Michael, protector of the Congregation.

When Alphonso at Iliceto heard of their installation, he rejoiced exceedingly, and wrote to urge them to a still stricter observance of the rule, which had been somewhat interrupted by all the previous proceedings. He assured them that God would bless them and make them become Saints, only inasmuch as they observed the rule in all its strictness.

The malcontents, provoked to see them established in their new house, again conspired against them, and obtained an order from the council forbidding them to proceed to do any thing new. Their intention was to interdict their entrance into the Church of St. Dominic,

where they exercised their ministry, and to prevent the completion of the little church in process of building. By this they would have obtained all they desired ; for finding themselves hindered from performing the functions of their ministry, they would have lost hope and definitively abandoned the foundation. Very little was wanting to the success of this last plot ; nothing being finished in the new church, the scaffolding even being still about the arches of the roof. The day came on which an answer to their request was expected, when they would immediately signify to the Fathers that they had gained their cause. Preparatory to this, they had seized the keys of the Church of St. Dominic. Informed of all this by the gentlemen of Nocera, Father Sportelli besought them to seize the king's officer and detain him for one night only. All was done as he had desired. During the night he sent for the workmen, and in spite of the protestations of the architect, he boldly took away the props, smoothed the earth, erected a portable altar, and arranged as well as he could a sort of confessional. They ornamented the altar and the walls with hangings and tapestry, placed garlands and artificial flowers about it ; and the previous evening having obtained permission to bless the Church, at day break he celebrated mass, preached, confessed, and gave communion to the people. During these proceedings the officer arrived with the despatch, and followed by a crowd, with an air of triumph he called for Father Sportelli and those of the

household, declaring to them by order of the king, that no one must have the temerity to attempt any thing new, at the risk of incurring the penalties mentioned in the decree. "We will do nothing new," replied Father Sportelli, "and we will conform to the order you bring; but I protest that this edifice is a church; the Holy Sacrifice has been celebrated there, we have preached there, and the Holy Sacraments have been administered to the people."

The reader may imagine the fury these words produced. The populace, outwitted in their attempt, cried out that the chapel was a stable and not a church; and while some pulled down the hangings and exposed the naked bricks, others threw up the earth to show it was not paved, casting it about and throwing the matting right and left. The air resounded with their cries and their abuse. It was a tumultuous day, but in the end hell had to yield the victory.

CHAPTER XXIII.

WHILE Alphonso was at Iliceto, another circumstance occurred to second his zeal for the salvation of the people. Benedict XIV., convinced of the great good produced by missions, conceived the project of reforming by means of them the whole kingdom of Naples. By a brief dated 8th of September, 1745, he delegated Car-

dinal Spinelli, Archbishop of Naples, to superintend this work, with full powers to send whom he would. Many bishops upon this solicited him to send into their dioceses Alphonso and his missionaries, to which the Cardinal agreed, well knowing the good they did.

When the time of the vintage was over, Alphonso, having received the necessary commissions from the Cardinal, and provided with other particular graces from the holy Father, began his missions in the diocese of Bovino: the fruits were abundant both among the clergy and the people.

He arrived at Foggia with a number of his missionaries on the 12th of December. This mercantile town, the capital of the Pouille and situated in its centre, contained above thirty thousand inhabitants, among whom were more strangers than citizens. He might be said to have taken it by assault, such were the rapid effects produced. To satisfy the whole population at once, he opened four different missions in the four principal churches. He preached to persons of all conditions; he gave retreats to secular and regular clerks, to functionaries, lawyers, and gentlemen. He preached to five convents, he visited the prisons, and left no quarter where his voice was not heard. Such was the moral influence he exerted, that no symptom of vice was to be found in the streets.

A terrible example of divine justice occurred at this time, and served as a powerful warning to sinners. One of the fathers went through

the public places to call the people to the church. Happening to pass before a tavern, he invited the drinkers to take part in the mission. A tipsy fellow holding up his glass called out, "My Father, would you like to see what is my mission?" and putting it to his lips, he instantly dropped down dead! This terrible death was the most eloquent and efficacious sermon the people of Foggia heard.

Another circumstance which happened gave them a high idea of the sanctity of Alphonso. One evening he was preaching before the image of the Blessed Virgin of the Seven Veils, which they had exposed on the altar. When he spoke of the glory of the Mother of God, the people believed they saw an angel rather than a man. A bright ray of light darted from the image across the church, and rested on the countenance of Alphonso, and at the same moment he fell into an ecstasy, and was elevated several feet into the air. At this spectacle the people uttered such loud cries of joy that they were heard at a great distance, and crowds ran tumultuously towards the church. More than four thousand persons witnessed this miracle.

This mission lasted forty days, producing most miraculous effects on all classes of society: where vice had reigned triumphant, virtue and piety succeeded, and even the cloisters felt the effects, by being instigated to a more punctual and strict observance of their rule. Priests who had led indifferent lives, became men of prayer;

scandals ceased everywhere, and two clergymen of the place were so touched by grace that they forsook everything and entered the Congregation.

In a rich and commercial town great numbers of charitable persons are to be found. Many purses were opened to Alphonso, who earnestly sought out the most necessitous. Young girls were succoured whose poverty placed them in danger; others were placed in orphan houses. Asylums were procured for repentant sinners, and the aged were assisted in their necessities. Christian charity reigned in all hearts, and the town was delivered from many sources of sin.

The 6th of January, 1746, he terminated the mission at Foggia and went to Troy. One day when on the point of mounting the pulpit, he was told of his father's death. He remained some time in prayer, and then recommended him to the prayers of the people. He had heard of the illness of his father, but was so much occupied in his apostolic labours that he sacrificed the feelings of nature to his God, and continued the missions. Don Joseph Liguori died in sanctity at an advanced age; his virtues were long held in remembrance. After leaving Troy he continued his missions. When at St. Agatha he was seized with fever; this did not prevent his preaching, and when he appeared in the pulpit, the sight of him alone produced compunction in the hearts of the people.

The mission of St. Agatha being ended, he was called to Liceto; the Canon Casati being

dangerously ill. Unable to ride because of his fever, he took a carriage, and arrived there the evening before the Canon expired. He left all he possessed to the Most Holy Virgin Mary of Consolation, and at his request was buried in the church at the feet of the Virgin. Alphonso, full of gratitude for this donation, celebrated his funeral with the utmost magnificence, all the clergy and the religious, with the different confraternities, assisting at the procession. One hundred ducats were distributed among the poor.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE town of Foggia had conceived the greatest veneration for Alphonso, and knowing his merits, ceased not to apply to him in every emergency. From the month of March, 1746, a great drought had desolated the Pouille, and the seeds sown were almost destroyed. The inhabitants besought him to come to give a Novena in honour of the Blessed Virgin, knowing how much he was beloved by her. Alphonso was still at Iliceto, ill of a fever, but when he heard how afflicted they were at Foggia, he immediately set out, and arrived at the house of Don Ricciardi, an advocate, who had first proposed his being sent for: he was received as an angel from heaven. The Novena had scarcely commenced when his fever suddenly left him; the

rain fell in abundance, the seed was saved and produced a rich harvest.

During his sojourn in this town, God prepared the foundation of another mission in the diocese of Conza. Mgr. Nicolai regretted to see himself at the head of a vast province in the greatest want of spiritual assistance. One day he was lamenting his position in presence of two pious priests, who suggested to him as the only remedy, to establish in his diocese a house of the missionaries of Father Liguori.

When the Archbishop understood the services the Congregation had rendered to so many dioceses, he eagerly embraced the proposal. After many deliberations it was resolved to establish the missionaries near the territory of Caposeli, in a church endowed and dedicated to the holy Virgin Mary. The Archbishop sent immediately the Archpriest Rossi to meet Alphonso at Foggia. He was by no means anxious to embrace the proposal, circumstances not seeming favourable, but at the request of F. Villani he consented to give a mission there, in order to see more clearly the will of God.

On the 22nd of May he went on this new mission, and the consolation his presence brought to the inhabitants could hardly be believed. As he opened the mission they regarded him as another St. Paul, and his fame spread everywhere. What he said seemed not words but arrows which pierced all hearts. On the 3rd of June he went with several gentlemen to visit the church which was offered him, and which bore the name of

Mater Domini. He was pleased with the situation, being in the midst of an archdiocese, surrounded by many other dioceses in great want of spiritual aid.

The Archbishop was then visiting the territory of Calabritto, a few miles off, and Alphonso thought he ought to visit him, and make his acquaintance. Accordingly he set off, mounted on a mule, and arrived at the house of the family del Plato, where he was staying. Hearing the Archbishop was at dinner he would not disturb him, but went into a small chapel in a wing of the palace to say his office. While there, the eldest son, Don Xavier, came to shut the door, and seeing a man covered with rags and an unshorn beard, he took him for a vagabond who was waiting to beg from the Archbishop, and fearing he would steal something told him to go out as he was about to shut the door. "Would you have the goodness to wait until I finish vespers," said Alphonso. "Go out instantly," said the young man; "it is only yesterday we had a napkin stolen, it would be too much to have another to-day." Alphonso was forced to go out, and finished his vespers in the street. After some time he presented himself at the palace, and the Archbishop hearing of his arrival came out and received him with every mark of esteem. The young del Plato looked confounded, and his confusion redoubled when he found Alphonso was a noble Neapolitan gentleman and Superior of a mission. He appeared not to notice the young man's confusion, but continued the conversation, and after

having arranged a meeting at Caposeli, returned in time for the evening sermon. The Archbishop was not a little annoyed when he heard what had happened.

God showered down many benedictions on this mission, the first fruits which the Congregation gathered in the diocese. The humility, the modesty, the contempt of himself, shown by Alphonso, touched all hearts as much as his sermons. At this time he suffered such violent toothaches as to cause convulsions. One evening he began his sermon in these words: "I care not how much I suffer, nor for any evil that can befall me; it is sufficient that I have strength to say to you what I feel in my heart." He then went on to speak to them of dangerous intimacies; he reproved mothers who allowed young persons to frequent their houses; he reprimanded young people for their careless conduct; often fatigue overpowered him, but he continued speaking during two hours, and at last had to be carried home from total inability to walk.

Generally in his sermons he seemed to be ravished out of himself, and one evening while he preached, God made him see in spirit what was passing at Iliceto. "We are occupied here with the mission," he said, "and at this moment the devil is tormenting my poor children at Iliceto." Next morning a lay-brother came to seek him, and spoke with him for three hours of the miseries they were enduring there.

The Archbishop came to Caposeli, and arrived during a sermon on the Blessed Virgin. He

was so much touched that he wept, and determined to assist daily at the sermons. The Archpriest Rossi arrived at this time with several other gentlemen, who resolved on contributing towards the establishment of the Congregation here. All seemed to go well, but it was necessary the devil should attempt to overturn it. A party among the clergy imagined the Archbishop wished to deprive them of their prerogatives, and on the 4th of June addressed to him a protestation against the new project. As soon as Alphonso heard this, he said to F. Robertis, "I like to see opposition, it is a mark that the devil apprehends defeat; but God will triumph."

The same day the Archbishop went to the hermitage, accompanied by the gentlemen friendly to the measure. The priest, D. Salvadore Corona, a very learned man who had great influence with both clergy and people, attended to oppose the foundation in the name of the Chapter. Having entered the church to visit the Blessed Virgin, and running over in his mind thoughts hostile to the Congregation, he approached the altar dedicated to the Divine Mother. In a moment he was struck with apoplexy, and his mouth was twisted on one side. He immediately recognised the just punishment, and turning towards the Virgin, said, "Mother of my God, I protest that I have no longer the intention of opposing this foundation." Scarcely had he uttered these words than he recovered, and his mouth resumed its natural position.

Corona went immediately to the assembly,

and far from resisting the proposal, he now seconded it with all his eloquence; but all of a sudden the Archbishop seemed to be seized with indecision, and spoke of delay. This uncertainty did not satisfy Alphonso; he declared he had come to give a mission, not to found a house, and when the mission was over he would depart. Upon this the Archpriest Rossi burst into tears, and throwing himself at the feet of the Archbishop, besought him to arrange the affair at once. Accordingly on the 4th of June, 1746, the establishment of the Congregation was decided upon.

When the news spread at Caposeli, that the missionaries were to be established in the diocese, every one testified the most unbounded joy. In the evening every house was illuminated, and guns were fired, and fireworks displayed. A noble family in the neighbourhood put their forests at their disposal to supply wood for the buildings. The inhabitants had another consolation in the fulfilment of the prophecy of St. John Joseph of the Cross, that at the end of twenty years a devout and zealous community of missionaries would be established among them. The twenty years had just expired.

CHAPTER XXV.

ANOTHER attempt was made by the dissatisfied at Pagani, to obtain the overthrow of the Con-

gregation. The Grand Council having repulsed them, Cantaldi tried to obtain satisfaction from the commissary of the king, and this magistrate being deceived, had ordered the sequestrations of certain rents that had been assigned to the missionaries, and that they should be given to others. To embroil matters still more, Cantaldi made a donation to a priest who was related to him of certain property he had already given to the missionaries, and by these manoeuvres ceased not to keep them in continual disquiet.

At the same time he found a person who feigned to be a mediator between them, in order to lead them into a scrape. He proposed to the fathers Sportelli and Mazzini, to abstain from preaching in their own chapel, to give satisfaction to the curates, assuring them that this would restore tranquillity. The fathers were willing, provided this would put a stop to the annoyances. "Wait a little," said the pretended mediator, "do as I advise, and peace will be restored after a time." Despairing to dislodge the missionaries, his aim was to render them less useful. When the Bishop was informed of the proposal, he saw through the plot, and at once forbade them to enter into any compromise. He would not listen to their enemies, but promised to defend them at Rome or Naples, or wherever they should be attacked.

To annoy the Congregation, the curates invited the missionaries of the Propaganda to come to Pagani, and when they came endeavoured to defame Alphonso and his Congregation, but all

to no purpose. Their slanders were disbelieved, and far from joining those who attacked the Congregation, they defended them with all their might.

Alphonso could not see without sorrow the vexations his companions had to endure, but this did not lessen his zeal; he continued to give missions in the country round about, which were always attended with the greatest success, vice disappearing, and virtue reigning in its stead.

Among the many places he had sanctified, the town of Foggia remained extremely devoted to Alphonso. But however much piety may reign in large towns, vice will always have its followers.

Towards the end of December, 1746, Foggia again invited him, and he eagerly yielded to the request; but on his arrival he discovered that a theatre with foreign comedians had been opened, and certain gentlemen had bound themselves to support it. This new occasion of sin grieved him exceedingly, and he did all in his power to engage them to send the comedians away, but without success; upon which, instead of commencing to preach as he had intended, he left the town, and when they would persuade him to stay, he replied, "We cannot at the same time serve God and the devil. Foggia will not listen to me, but God will lay His heavy hand upon her and chastise her for her libertinism." Scarcely had he departed when the town was shaken by a violent earthquake; they

sent after him, but he would not return at that time.

The building of the new house at Caposeli was now begun and carried on with great ardour. The gentlemen set to work and superintended the different quarters of the building, each placing himself at the head of a division, and in the evening arranging the work for the next day. Some cut wood, others carried stones, and at day-break some went through the villages exciting the people to get up and help. The ladies also lent a hand, and those who were hindered from coming in person sent deputies instead. On the 1st of May, 1748, the foundation-stone was blessed by Mgr. Amati, when persons of distinction and crowds of people came from all parts.

The Blessed Virgin wished to testify her approbation of this establishment, and to show in a special manner that the missionaries were her children. There lived in a neighbouring village a wretched being loaded with sin, who had for three years been confined to bed by a most painful illness; every night he saw the devil under the form of a goat place himself on his breast, and press his throat and his sides until he was almost choked. One morning when he awoke he saw the Blessed Virgin appear in his chamber radiant with glory, and accompanied by two angels. "My son," she said to him, "how hast thou still the boldness to live in sin? quick, change your life; to-morrow thou shalt see my children of the house of Mater Domini. Confess

thee, repent of thy sins, and Jesus will pardon thee." The vision disappeared, and the sinner felt reanimated, but without knowing what to think of what he had heard, for he knew nothing of the mission nor of the establishment at Caposeli. Next day he heard the bells ringing, and on asking what it was, they replied that the missionaries had arrived; full of joy he said he must see one of them instantly. Father Matthew Criscuolo went to him, when he related what had occurred, and made his confession amid torrents of tears. The father asked him if he had been in the habit of practising any devotion to the Blessed Virgin; he replied that he had made a vow to recite the Rosary daily, and that he had never omitted to practise this devotion. He died during the mission, giving evident signs of his true repentance.

Until now the Congregation had not had a regular novitiate, and Alphonso began to think seriously about arranging some plan. Hitherto they had received only clerks, who had in a manner been professed before they became novices, sub-deacons only being excepted; and these made their novitiate in following Alphonso from village to village. A year before they had decided on admitting young men of eighteen, because they were less filled with the spirit of the world, and consequently more ready to receive the impressions of grace. Alphonso then thought of establishing the novitiate in the house of Iliceto, and giving the direction of it to Father Cafaro; but the extreme poverty of this house

soon showed him that the earth was too hard to feed such tender plants: the young people were discouraged, looked back, and withdrew their hand from the plough: many among them had not courage to declare their weakness to Father Cafaro, but fled secretly, escaping by the windows, as the doors were shut. Afflicted by the inconveniences of this house, and the inconstancy of the novices, he removed the novitiate to Ciorani the 1st of February, 1748. God blessed the arrangement, and there were soon twenty novices under Father Villani, whose conduct caused great consolation to Alphonso. He established a regulation, that during the year of the noviceship they should never study, but apply themselves exclusively to the consideration of eternal truths.

CHAPTER XXVI.

It was at Iliceto Alphonso first began to publish. Until then he had laboured only for the countries in which he was placed; but this was a field too narrow for his burning zeal; he would that all Christians should profit by the reflections he had made. When he lived in the world, he had found the Blessed Sacrament the object of his most tender affection, and the source of all his grace. He groaned over the indifference of men, and their estrangement from that adorable mystery, and he resolv-

ed to publish the sentiments with which he was penetrated towards the Beloved of his soul, and arrange them in the form of visits for each day of the month ; and as his affection for the most holy Virgin Mary was only inferior to that he bore to her Son, he published also his sentiments of affection for her, in order to induce the faithful to love and serve her.

This little work, which he entitled "Visits to the Most Holy Sacrament, and the Most Holy Virgin Mary," was everywhere received with applause, and fully answered the purpose for which it was intended ; for before long almost every one had the book in their hands, not only in the kingdom of Naples, but throughout Italy. In 1777 Alphonso received a French translation of this little work taken from the fiftieth Italian edition.

If his heart was afflicted to see the indifference of men towards the Blessed Sacrament, he was no less sorrowful at seeing their coldness towards Jesus crucified. "That man," said he, "has no heart, or he has no faith, who is not afflicted at the sight of the Crucifix." This induced him to publish another little work, entitled, "Reflections and Affections on the Passion of Jesus Christ," which he also arranged in the form of visits for the convenience of the faithful.

When Alphonso embraced the ecclesiastical state, his uncle, Canon Matthew Gizzio, had urged him to take St. Theresa for his special advocate, and from that time he had a peculiar affection for this Saint, having often in his

spiritual wants experienced the efficacy of her intercession. In order to please her, he strove to imitate her virtues, above all in her difficult vow of doing nothing but for God and for His greater glory. Desirous to see her honoured and imitated by others, he published several meditations, in which were comprised all the beautiful things that could be said in praise of the Saint, offering the collection to the devout souls who would prepare themselves for her Feast. This Novena in honour of St. Theresa was generally approved, and Alphonso received the special thanks of the Barefooted Carmelites. Considering the baneful effects of obscene songs on the young, and, on the contrary, the great good resulting from devout canticles, he exerted his genius for poetry in composing hymns to replace the scandalous songs of the day, and had the satisfaction of witnessing their beneficent effects. His poetry contains all that is beautiful in mystic theology, and may dispute the palm with the divine canticles of St. John of the Cross.

In order to awaken the zeal of the Bishops, he produced a little work on the precise obligations of the episcopate, which he transmitted to all the Bishops in Italy, many of whom wrote to him thanking and complimenting him on the occasion. Mgr. Salerno, Bishop of Molfetta, wrote to him as follows: "I have read your useful reflections to Bishops, and I am much edified. I see that it is great zeal, aided by much wisdom and profound science, which has led you to write it. Your Reverence has rendered a great

service to the Episcopate, and I thank you on my part; but I fear the charity which has guided you in this pious occupation may not meet with the recompense it deserves."

About this time he had publicly proclaimed his opinion regarding certain cases of conscience which had been considered reserved cases. This gave offence to a priest belonging to a religious house in the Pouille, who instead of discussing the subject wrote to him thus: "Who art thou who comest out of the woods with the pretension of making thyself doctor, and giving laws to others?" and having nothing else to say he treated Alphonso as a heretic, and accused him of condemning vocal prayer. He replied to the accusation by saying, "How can I proscribe vocal prayer, I who have made the vow daily to recite the Rosary of our Lady; I who in all my missions exhort every family to recite it in common every evening; and have we not established in our Congregation, that the Rosary accompanied by a meditation precede the grand exercises made in the church?" He finished his letter by thanking his accuser for the advices he had given him, without testifying the least resentment.

CHAPTER XXVII.

ALPHONSO was not alarmed by the obstacles that succeeded each other at Nocera; on the

contrary, as a wise pilot he redoubled his vigilance as the tempest augmented, to save the vessel and bring it into the port. Seeing that the designs of his adversaries in attacking the establishments of Nocera and Pagani were to undermine the Congregation itself, he thought of the best means to put it once for all out of danger. The argument they constantly brought forward was, that no similar Congregation existed unauthorised by the King; and in order to deprive his enemies of this pretext, and insure the existence of the houses already founded, he was determined in spite of every difficulty to obtain the necessary authorization. Immediately that the missions in the Pouille were finished, he went in April, 1747, to Ciorani; there he found the novitiate filled with virtuous young men and priests eminent for learning and sanctity. He then returned to Pagani, where he found the church frequented by persons of all conditions, the pious practices taught by the Congregation existing in all their vigour, and a confraternity of artisans, among whom were found persons eminent for their sanctity. The success of these two houses was a subject of great consolation for him, making him shed tears of joy. He thanked God for the success that had attended his labours, and hoped that the pains he had taken would not prove useless.

Arriving at Naples in the month of June, he immediately addressed himself to the Marquis Branconi, Minister of State. Before he would hear him say a word, he first announced

his determination to make him a Bishop. Alphonso was confounded by the proposition, which the Marquis did all in his power to persuade him to accept. "If you love me," said Alphonso, "never again speak to me of such a thing. I have abjured the world; its dignities can only inspire me with horror." The debate was an animated one, but he would not yield, and at length the Marquis promised to torment him no more on this subject.

After recommending to the Marquis the interests of the Congregation, he addressed himself to the Chamberlain, Don Bartholomew Rossi, to obtain for him an audience of the King. He had not long to wait; for one day as he was walking in the cloisters of St. Catharine occupied in saying his office, he was suddenly told the King waited for him. He wore then as usual an old patched cassock, and his beard unshaven; it was, however, in this miserable condition that he ran in all haste to the palace. Introduced to his majesty, he exposed to him in animated terms the multitude of souls groaning for want of spiritual succour, the ignorance in which the inhabitants of the country were plunged, and the deplorable effects thence resulting to the peace of the kingdom. He told him how urgently he desired to remedy such an evil, the zeal with which his companions burned, and the reforms they had already produced in so many dioceses. But the missionaries could not sustain themselves in a position so precarious, and being daily engaged in struggles which

threatened their existence it was necessary that his Majesty, who had already deigned to authorise individual establishments in the dioceses of Salerno, Nocera, Bovino, &c. should now recognise their institute for a Regular Congregation, and give it the same advantages enjoyed by the Fathers of St. Vincent of Paul, with the condition that they should be dependent on the King and on the Bishops. He presented to his Majesty the rules of the institute, explaining them in a few words. The heart of the pious monarch was touched; had it depended on him he would immediately have granted all that was desired; he took notes with his own hand, and placed the rules with the petition in the hands of Mgr. Celestine Galiano, his Grand Almoner, recommending him to examine them and make his report without delay.

Father Don Vincent Mandarinini, Superior of the Congregation of the most Holy Sacrament, soon learned what was going on, and more anxious than ever for a reunion, he went to Ciorani, and in the name of himself and his companions, offered to embrace unreservedly the rule of Alphonso, to submit to his authority, and renounce all into his hands. He insisted on his agreeing to this; but Alphonso still refused. He was touched doubtless with the protestations of Mandarinini, and believed him sincere; but he doubted if this union would be advantageous to the Congregation Mandarinini had already founded, and he justly feared it might be hurtful to his own. "He," he said, "who has been accustomed to possess

and to command, will have much repugnance to see himself poor and deprived of his liberty. To-day, before he makes the vow of obedience, he is ready to sacrifice his own will; but once bound, he will begin to repent of having submitted his opinions to another. You are sincere in wishing to submit to me, but be sure to-morrow your fervour will yield on reflection; the remembrance of your liberty will torment you and your brethren, and the contagion of insubordination and regret would seize upon my own Congregation. It is thus misfortune would menace two communities, and we ought to guard against this."

Mandarini, thus repulsed by Alphonso, turned to another side. He knew that the success of the application made to the King depended on the Grand Almoner; and he hastened to interest influential persons, who besought him to take into consideration the plan proposed by Mandarinini, and to endeavour to promote a reunion. The Grand Almoner was persuaded, and represented to Alphonso that he ought not to reject the proposal. Alphonso now found himself in a great embarrassment: he could not contradict the Almoner, for fear of indisposing him towards the Congregation; and on the other hand, he foresaw from the reunion only confusion and trouble. He explained to the Almoner the motives which inclined him to refuse, but he cut him short by saying, "I wish it." Although much alarmed, he did not give up hope, but doubting his own judgment, he had recourse to

prayer, yielding himself entirely to the will of God.

In this state of things he began to look about for some influential persons who would interfere in his favour with the King and the Grand Almoner. He hardly took time to eat or sleep, and during the burning heat of the day he traversed the streets, going from one palace to another, although overpowered with fatigue and bathed in perspiration.

While Alphonso exerted himself to the utmost to insure success, hell was not less busy to overthrow his schemes. He was often not well received; many refused him an audience, and others listened coldly; and if he was received once, he was refused admittance when he came again. A volume might be filled with the affronts he received on these occasions. One day he had with difficulty been permitted by the valets of a certain prince to wait in the antechamber, when the princess who knew him happened to pass. Seeing him so poor and ragged in appearance, she exclaimed, "How dirty you are!" "I do not understand you," said Alphonso. "Ah, then," she said, turning her back upon him, "you are from Calabria." Many others received him however with marks of profound respect; in either case he was unmoved, always calm and serene.

The Almoner on examining the affair more closely was embarrassed between his desire of obliging Alphonso and his supposed duty to the state. Considering these difficulties, he on the

21st of August declared himself against it, and added that a reunion with Mandarinini was consequently useless. This declaration afflicted Alphonso, but yet he did not lose courage. He put his confidence in God and tried to obtain from Heaven what man refused. The different houses of the Congregation commenced regular prayers on the occasion, masses were said, in the evening they prayed with fervour and exposed the Blessed Sacrament. Many religious houses united with them in prayer, while they themselves redoubled their penances and mortifications.

He went with Mandarinini five times to obtain an audience of the Almoner, but was always refused; yet he neither lost courage nor showed discontent. Persisting in his enterprise, he struggled against contempt, and seemed to brave it. A sixth time he went to the Grand Almoner, and was at last admitted, when he knew so well how to plead his cause that his Lordship could not refuse promising to protect him.

His Lordship, viewing the question both as a politician and as a prelate, placed before the King what he considered the advantages that would result from authorising the Congregation; but in the event of its being authorised, he wished them to unite with the Congregation of Mandarinini. Upon this point the Council of State was divided, and also upon certain other conditions not very satisfactory, so that at last it was decided the affair should stand over for the present, and continue to rest on its present precarious basis.

It was two days after this decision, that Alphonso learned the result from Marquis Branconi. He bowed his head, adoring the will of God in the will of his sovereign, and only said, "Fiat voluntas tua:" that night he got no sleep. The King regretted this decision, and in order to comfort him sent a message by the Marquis, bidding him rest assured of his protection, and continue to labour with the same zeal to promote the glory of God and the good of the state.

Although Alphonso was vexed at the refusal he had met with, he did not allow himself to be cast down; but one morning while he was saying mass, the devil attempted to destroy his peace of mind. Just before the consecration, he was made to see in spirit that this refusal of the King's would overturn his Congregation; that when the decision would become known at Nocera, their adversaries would make it impossible for them to remain, and hence ruin would be brought upon all the other foundations. This temptation came so strongly, that, deprived for the moment of interior light, he ran in all haste bathed in perspiration to the house of Marquis Branconi, to tell him his fears before the despatch was sent off. They did not open the door immediately, and Alphonso sat on the steps exposed to the gaze of the passers-by. The Marquis seeing him from a window, ordered him to be admitted instantly, and forbade his domestics ever to make him wait, let him come at whatever hour he might. He reminded Al-

phonso that the anterior decrees of the King were sufficient to sustain his institute at the present juncture, upon which he regained his calm, and recognised the temptation. After these last attempts F. Mandarini ceased to insist on the union of the two Congregations. It was not the will of God that they should be one, but two powerful institutions, to sustain the welfare of the church and the state.

Alphonso made yet another attempt in favour of his Congregation, but it also fell to the ground. He explained to the King the impossibility of giving missions in many parts of the country where the spiritual destitution was great, because of their own poverty, and the poverty of the people, and he requested his Majesty to make them some allowance for the purpose. The King was touched. "The demand is just," he said: "we must try to furnish them with some subsidy." It was accordingly arranged that they should have the surplus revenues of the chapels of the Castle de Sangro in the Abruzzi; but the individuals who had the management pretended that there were no surplus revenues; they consequently got nothing.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

ALPHONSO, whose heart was set on establishing his Congregation, which he regarded as the work of Heaven, sought to merit the grace by

devoting himself to every work that could extend the glory of God. During his stay in Naples he husbanded his time so well that not a moment was lost. He often went at the request of the director of the seminary in the town, to animate the young people by his exhortations to fly sin, to love Jesus Christ, to frequent the Sacraments, and to have a great devotion to the Blessed Virgin. The Religious Orders were no less anxious to hear him; he frequently visited convents of nuns who desired to have the affairs of their conscience regulated by him, and he gave retreats in different monasteries. At the same time Father Fatigati wished to have him at his College of the Holy Family. Alphonso had a special love for this College, established to promote the conversion of China. Considering the young men as so many apostles, he delighted to animate them with love for Jesus Christ, and zeal for the salvation of souls. The young men were charmed with his discourses, and always besought him to return. While he was enjoying these delightful labours, a storm was preparing to overtake him. The church of Palermo became vacant in the July of this year by the death of Mgr. Rossi, and his Majesty insisted that Alphonso should succeed him in that see. Knowing his talents and his worth he said to Marquis Branconi, "The Pope makes good promotions, but I will make one still better than the Pope." The Marquis was pleased with the election, and applauded it as a divine inspiration.

Having sent for Alphonso and made known

to him his Majesty's determination, he was as it were thunderstruck, and with tears endeavoured to show the Marquis the scandal that would be given to his companions if he broke the ties that connected him with the Congregation, especially at a moment such as this, when its very existence was menaced; he begged the Marquis to return his grateful thanks to the King for the honour he proposed conferring on him, but to explain the solemn vow he had taken to refuse all dignities, and the ruin it would cause were he to abandon his brethren at such a juncture. The Marquis was distressed to see the affliction of Alphonso, he entered into his feelings, and promised to help him with the King. But the prince would not take a refusal; he said the Pope would dispense him from his vow, and that those made the best bishops who were unwilling to accept the dignity. This obstinacy of the King alarmed Alphonso; he foresaw that he would be supported by the Pope, and that in spite of himself he would be made bishop. The thought left him no repose by night or by day, and he wrote to F. Cafaro, his director, that he would sooner conceal himself in the depth of the forest than be made bishop. He wrote at the same time to all the houses of the Congregation to pray for him, and he had also recourse to many holy souls and houses of nuns to help him by their prayers, while he redoubled his austerities and penances.

During the whole month that the King persevered in his resolution Alphonso was in continual

fright. At length the Marquis succeeded in persuading his Majesty that he was far more useful as a missionary than he ever could be as Archbishop of Palermo; and he consequently abandoned his resolution, though with much regret.

Many were offended because of the refusal of Alphonso, but when they considered the matter more calmly they were edified by his conduct, above all the King, who learnt better than ever how to appreciate the Congregation, and would fain have chosen bishops from among them; but Alphonso represented to the Marquis the evil consequences that might result by introducing a spirit of ambition, which would cause great evil to the mission. "The Church is not in want of bishops," he said, "but of men who will labour for the salvation of souls in remote and destitute places."

In the midst of all this business he had gone to Ciorani for a few days, when immediately on his return he was requested to preach the Novena of the Assumption in the Church of St. John Major. Although unprepared, he had not the courage to refuse, and the result was as miraculous as usual. He treated successively the humility of Mary, in opposition to the pride of man; the ardent love of Mary towards God, and the coldness of men; the union of the will of Mary with the Divine Will, and the great opposition of the will of man to the Will of God. He depicted the precious death of the Blessed Virgin contrasted with the horrible death-bed of the

sinner; he spoke of the assaults of the devil to which the sinner is delivered up at the moment of death, and the help the servants of Mary receive from her in this last hour. He drew a picture of the horror which seized the sinner at the sight of his damnation, contrasting it with the peace of those who die under the protection of Mary. He represented the happiness of those who die in a state of grace, and the misery of those who perish in their sin, animating all to implore the protection of Mary. He showed how certain salvation was for the faithful servant of Mary, and the care she took to procure their salvation. On the day of the Assumption he enraptured his audience by retracing the glorious triumph of Mary crowned in heaven. Each of his sermons occupied not less than one hour and a half. During this Novena thousands of souls awoke from sin, and, penetrated with a lively repentance, returned to God.

At this time Canon Nicolas Borgia, then Superior of the Apostolic Missions, invited Alphonso to give a retreat. During his discourses on that occasion, he spoke to them of the obligation they were under to make known Christ crucified, and not to preach to make themselves known. He grieved to see the measured style and far-fetched expressions which some of them had adopted, above all when treating of moral subjects, or the lives of the Saints. He spoke with vehemence against a celebrated preacher lately dead, whom he said by his manner of preaching showed himself an enemy of souls and

a traitor to the word of God; and he blamed some among them who strove to imitate him. "Fill your discourses," said he, "with evangelical truths, without embarrassing yourselves with vain ornaments, which produce no fruit, but exhaust the preacher in seeking for them." This language offended some of the young missionaries at first, but afterwards they recognised the truth of what he said, and were filled with a salutary confusion.

During this sojourn in Naples he was one day celebrating mass in the church of the Fathers of the Oratory, when turning towards the assistants to give the communion, he observed a gentleman seated in the choir with his legs crossed. After having said "Ecce agnus Dei," and seeing this person still sitting and showing no sign of reverence towards the Holy Sacrament, he exclaimed, "Have you lost the use of your limbs that you cannot kneel?" The gentleman quite confused immediately knelt, but excessively provoked, he began to cough and make different noises until the end of mass, when he ran hastily into the sacristy to ask what wretched priest had said mass; but when he heard the name of Alphonso Liguori he felt greatly ashamed. During the time he spent in Naples he took no repose, always busy, always employed in procuring the salvation of his neighbour and the glory of God. For three weeks he suffered from a violent toothache, but never ceased his labours in consequence. At last being obliged to have the tooth extracted, he went to a miserable barber's shop,

like the lowest of the people ; seeing a lay-brother who had followed him attempting to preserve the tooth, he flung it into a ditch. Towards the end of September he returned to Nocera.

CHAPTER XXIX.

At the beginning of the year 1748, Alphonso returned to Naples. Marquis Branconi then informed him that the King was dissatisfied that the Council of State had refused his request, and advised him to take advantage of the favourable feelings of the King towards him, and obtain a subsidy for his Congregation. Instead of this, he presented a new petition to obtain the confirmation of his institute, saying to the Marquis that he wished for nothing else ; a mark of disinterestedness which pleased him, and induced him to present the petition himself to the King.

Canon Matthew Testa took a great interest in the affair, and spoke of it to the minister Tanucci, with whom he was very intimate. Tanucci promised, and as he had sufficient interest to carry the measure, Alphonso's hopes were at their height ; but the political views which directed the minister did not accord with the pious views of the King, and again the business fell to the ground.

He had been scarcely twelve days in Naples

when he was seized with an asthma, so violent that he could not speak, and was almost dead. He was unable to say mass for some weeks, and forced to keep his bed, yet he nevertheless continued to give advice and consolation to those who came to him on affairs of conscience; the house was never empty. Immediately after his recovery, he began again to preach and give spiritual exercises. All ranks attended these instructions, and multitudes were converted.

This could not go on without exciting opposition; on one occasion, when speaking of the extreme goodness shown by our Saviour in the Sacrament of the altar, where He is always ready to give audience, he used the following words of St. Theresa's: "It is not thus with the kings of the earth; they give audience only a few times in the course of the year, and how much it costs one to obtain an audience! and then no one can speak as they would wish to do, nor with the same confidence with which all can go to Jesus Christ in this Sacrament, and at any moment. There we may all speak to Him as a friend with his friend, and expose our wants to Him with the utmost confidence." Who would imagine that these words of St. Theresa could be construed into an insult to the King? Every one knew the respect Alphonso bore to his sovereign. Yet there was one person present who, thinking to ingratiate himself with his Majesty, added to these words all that his wickedness could suggest, and represented Alphonso as a man discontented with the King, and who would

misrepresent him to his subjects. The accusation was listened to by Marquis Tanucci, who, being a stranger, was unacquainted with his integrity, and threatened to banish him from Naples. The affair became public, and Alphonso was looked upon as a guilty person about to be banished for disrespect to his sovereign.

It was not until six days after that he heard from one of the Canons the bad construction that had been put upon his words. He was extremely annoyed at being accused of disrespect towards a sovereign whom he esteemed so highly, to say nothing of the mischief likely to result towards his Congregation. He went immediately to Cardinal Spinelli, to implore his protection. The Cardinal was extremely indignant at the calumny. He then went to Marquis Branconi, who, convinced of his respect for his sovereign, bid him continue his apostolic labours and fear nothing, for the King knew him too well to lend an ear to such a report. The Cardinal and the Marquis both spoke to Tanucci, who was soon undeceived, and from that time held Alphonso in the highest esteem and veneration.

In the midst of all these anxieties, strong in the purity of his intentions, he never interrupted his missionary labours, and during his stay in Naples every moment was employed for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

Through the interest of Marquis Branconi he obtained another audience of the king, when he strove to convince him of the necessity of

his approbation for the new-born Congregation, in order to sustain it against the attacks of its enemies. He assured his Majesty that he was indifferent to the temporal regulations he might be pleased to make ; he had no desire that his Congregation should acquire wealth, a simple maintenance was all he looked for. The King was much pleased with all he heard, and dismissed him, bidding him take courage and rely upon his protection.

Before leaving Naples he gathered another rich and abundant harvest from the army. He was requested to give a retreat in the garrison of Pizzofalconi, which he opened on the 28th of March. Prince Castropignano assisted with the state major and many other cavaliers. All admired the apostolic liberty with which he spoke. When the prince saw the effects produced on the officers, he besought him to give the spiritual exercises to the men. The only time he had for this was immediately after his meeting the officers, when he never spoke less than two hours. Nevertheless he consented, and gave two hours more to the soldiers, although he suffered much from the excessive cold of the church. On the 7th of April these exercises terminated ; scandals had disappeared from among the soldiery, blasphemies were no longer heard, taverns were deserted, and lewd women banished from their quarters. He procured for them books of devotion, and as they could not afford to purchase, he furnished a little library for them. An eye-witness declared the soldiers

might be seen frequenting the church with their books in their hands, looking more like the novices of a rigid community than soldiers. The effect produced on the officers was still greater; five among them quitted the service and entered religious houses; and when he left Naples to return to Ciorani, he was regretted by all.

The Congregation at Nocera was still agitated by the tempest, when an event occurred, which, though melancholy in its outset, brought peace at last to the establishment there. Don Dominic de Majo, a dean in the neighbourhood, had been prejudiced against them, and abstained from having any communication with them. This priest had a young relative who led a very debauched life, and whom he had often remonstrated with, because of his irregularities. Offended by his fraternal warnings and advice, this young man overtook him one evening as he was returning home, and falling upon him like a madman beat him on the head with some sharp instrument and left him for dead. He was carried into a neighbouring convent apparently dying, which when our Father Mazzini heard he ran in all haste to render him assistance, and continued to attend him with the utmost care until he was convalescent. The other fathers were also assiduous in their attentions to the worthy dean, and such was the change produced in his mind towards them, that he could think of nothing but how to recompense their services. His conduct disconcerted all the malcontents, for Mgr. Volpi,

delighted at gaining him, joined with him in labouring to disabuse the superiors of religious houses and the few priests who still stood out against them, and as soon as the leaders of the conspiracy were convinced of the pernicious influence of their proceedings, peace was immediately restored.

Towards the middle of October, Alphonso went to Pagani, and a few days previous the King's council had decided in his favour, and against Cantaldi; but having the tranquillity of the Congregation more at heart than its temporal interests, he succeeded, though with difficulty, in persuading the Bishop to allow him to resign at once the donations made by Cantaldi, only requesting him as a favour to pay a debt of nine hundred ducats, contracted in building. This disinterested conduct gained him more than ever the esteem of good men. He was applauded throughout Naples as well as at Nocera; and as for the Dean he could never cease expressing his admiration; he came to make a retreat at Ciorani, and ever after continued to be a powerful protector of the institute in every emergency.

Mgr. Volpi, by the consummate wisdom of all his actions, contributed much to the re-establishment of peace. A just appreciator of the merits of others, he knew how to value Alphonso. He frequented the house, and consulted the missionaries on all occasions of difficulty. He gave audiences in their house, so that their enemies had either to come thither, or abstain

from speaking with him ; and sometimes he did not scruple to make them wait for hours before he saw them. He ordered a great number to come to the house for spiritual exercises, to be instructed in the rubrics, or to reform their conduct, and obliged them to bring a certificate from the Fathers as to how they had made their retreat. The esteem shown by the Bishop ended in conciliating the respect and veneration of their greatest enemies.

CHAPTER XXX.

ALPHONSO had left Naples and returned to Ciorani to rest from his fatigues, but invited by the people and the neighbouring curates, his burning zeal would allow him no repose, and he continued his warfare against the strongholds of Satan in every direction and with his accustomed success.

There had been so many demands upon him in Naples with which he could not comply during his last visit, that he resolved on returning thither in October. "Who knows," said he, "what God requires of me; perhaps the predestination of certain souls may be attached to some one of my sermons?" He commenced by opening a mission in the church of St. Anna de Palazzo. The people went in crowds; no one had ever seen such multitudes in that church.

The most careless and indifferent libertines, when they heard that Father Liguori was to preach, could not resist the impulse which urged them to go and hear him ; numbers were converted who had never before approached the tribunal of penance, it seemed as if he had only to cast the net, to receive the miraculous draught of fishes.

He had no sooner concluded this mission than he was sent for to preach penance in the suburb of St. Anthony, that suburb to which, by the endeavours of F. Sarnelli, the unfortunate women of the town had been compelled to withdraw. His labours were not unfruitful ; many of these unfortunate creatures touched by grace, began to detest their crimes ; numbers were placed in houses of refuge, others were taken care of by charitable individuals, and they all persevered in their amendment. He saved besides a great number of young girls, who though not yet embarked in the ways of sin, were preparing for it. The fruits of this mission were had in remembrance for many a year.

He also visited and preached in many houses of religious women ; while the most eminent in the priesthood, and the most virtuous among the laity, daily came to him for instruction and advice. He had scarcely time to breathe, and had difficulty in finding leisure to recite his office and perform his other devotional exercises. Cardinal Spinelli, full of consolation at seeing the wonderful conversions effected by Alphonso, desired him to give a retreat in the cathedral.

The church could scarcely contain the multitude. There was but a small proportion of the common people, for it was filled by the élite of Naples. An eye-witness has remarked, that eternity only can disclose the wonders of grace then operated, and this even among many professed infidels.

At length leaving the city to the care of the numerous able and holy men who resided in her, Alphonso departed for the country, to distribute the bread of eternal life among the hungry and the destitute. At the town of Vietri, a daring fellow, renowned for his incredulity, went one day into the church, for the purpose, he said, of criticising the sermon. He had not listened long, when entering into himself he recognised his deplorable condition, and full of repentance detested his former blindness. "The sermons of other preachers," said he, "speak but to the mind of the hearers; but the sermons of Father Alphonso penetrate to the heart." He immediately went to confession, and persevered to the end.

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