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AD MAJOREM DEI SANCTÆQUE MARÆ GLORIAM,

The Saints and Servants of God.



LIVES OF THE CANONIZED SAINTS, AND The Servants of God,

BEATIFIED, OR DECLARED VENERABLE BY AUTHORITY,

*And others who are commonly reputed among Catholics to have died
in the odour of sanctity, especially in modern times.*

1. It is proposed to publish a Series of such Lives, translated from the Italian, French, Spanish, German, and Latin, in small 8vo. volumes, of about 400 pages each, and to bring out at least six volumes in the year.

2. The Editor and Translators not making any profit on the work, the volumes will be sold as cheaply as possible. Each vol. will be sold separately, and will be complete in itself, except when one Life occupies more volumes than one, and the price not exceed 4s.

3. The works translated from will be in most cases the Lives drawn up *for* or *from* the processes of canonization or beatification, as being more full, more authentic, and more replete with anecdote, thus enabling the reader to become better acquainted with the Saint's disposition and spirit; while the simple matter-of-fact style of the narrative is, from its unobtrusive character, more adapted for spiritual reading than the views and generalizations, and apologetic extenuations of more recent biographers.

4. The objects of the friends who have jointly undertaken this task have been—1. To supply English Catholics with a cabinet-library of interesting as well as edifying reading, especially for families, schools, and religious refectories, which would for many

reasons be particularly adapted for these times, and would with God's blessing act as a counter influence to the necessarily deadening and chilling effects which the neighbourhood of heresy and the consequent prevalence of earthly principles and low views of grace may have on the temper and habits of mind even of the faithful;—
 2. To present to our other countrymen a number of samples of the fruit which the system, doctrine, and moral discipline established by the holy and blessed Council of Trent have produced, and which will be to inquirers really in earnest about their souls, an argument more cogent than any that mere controversy can allege, and
 3. To satisfy a humble desire which they feel to spread the honour and love of the ever-blessed Queen of Saints, by showing how greatly an intense devotion to her aided in forming those prodigies of heroic virtue with which the Holy Ghost has been pleased to adorn the Church since the schism of Luther, *more than in almost any previous times*, and whose actions, with a few exceptions, are known to English laymen only in a very general way, and from meagre abridgments; while the same motive will prevent the Series being confined to modern saints *exclusively*.

5. The work is published with the permission and approval of superiors. Every volume containing the Life of a person not yet canonized or beatified by the Church will be prefaced by a protest in conformity with the decree of Urban VIII., and in all Lives which introduce questions of mystical theology great care will be taken to publish nothing which has not had adequate sanction, or without the reader being informed of the nature and amount of the sanction.

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 guese Oratory in Ceylon.

Of the Oratory
of Naples

This list is not put forward as by any means complete, or as intending to exclude other Lives, especially those of the older Saints. The Editor will be glad to hear from any who may wish to satisfy their devotion, and employ their leisure to the greater glory of God and our dear Lady, by contributing translations of the Lives either of older Saints or of those mentioned in this list, or any others who have died in the odour of sanctity, and are not named here. The arduousness of the undertaking makes it very necessary for him earnestly to repeat his petition for coadjutors in his labours; and perhaps he may at the present time urge it more forcibly than before. Eight volumes of the Series are now published; the work has obtained an extensive circulation both in America and England; besides the many testimonies to its utility received from very various quarters among Catholics, not a few who are still unhappily out of the One Fold have borne witness to its attracting influence upon them; the increasing demand for books of devotion and ascetical divinity, while it proves the growing thirst after Christian perfection amongst us, shows how necessary as well as useful a Series of Lives of the Saints at length and in detail must be:—these are all so many grounds on which the Editor may rest his claim for co-operation. Although many Lives are advertised as being in hand, yet the translators have in most cases so many other important avocations that a still larger number of labourers are required to feed the press steadily, and to enable the Editor to go on keeping his promise to the public.

Circumstances have hitherto delayed the publication of Pope Benedict XIV. on Heroic Virtue, but the project has not been abandoned, and some progress has been made in the work. It is a portion of that pontiff's great book on the Canonization of the Saints, and contains a most interesting account of the tests used by the Church in examining ecstasies, visions, raptures, the higher degrees of mental prayer, and the practice of bodily austerities, and supernatural penances. It will be bound and lettered uniformly with the Series of the Modern Saints, and will be found replete with most interesting anecdotes, as well as being of immense use to spiritual directors, and to all students of ascetical theology and Christian philosophy. An original dissertation on Mystical Theology will be prefixed to one of the future volumes of the Series, in which an attempt will be made to distinguish between the heights of Catholic contemplation and the vagaries of recent heretics, and the doctrine of the most judicious and discreet Mystics will be stated and explained from the authors most approved among theologians, and such general information given on the subject as will be interesting and edifying to ordinary readers.

A number of the portraits of the Saints prefixed to most of the volumes are to be had separately, on sale at the Publishers, for those who may wish to increase their collection of religious engravings, or to distribute pictures of the Saints to whom they may have a devotion; and the Essay on Canonization, published with the first volume of St. Alphonso, may now be purchased in a separate form. The editor will be glad to receive any suggestion which may assist him either in meeting the wishes of subscribers, or in making the Series a more complete and perfect Library of Catholic Biography.

F. W. FABER,
PRIEST OF THE ORATORY.

Maryvale,
Feast of St. Alphonso Liguori, 1848.

TO THE TRANSLATORS AND SUBSCRIBERS.

St. Wilfrid's, Feast of St. Martin, 1848.

It has become my duty to inform you that I have suspended the publication of this series, which you have so kindly encouraged, whether by subscription or by taking part in the labour of translation. A few words will suffice to explain the circumstances which have led to this suspension. When, in February last, I entered the Congregation of the Oratory, I submitted my work to the Fathers with a view to obtaining their judgment on its continuance. They, for various reasons, put off their determination till the close of the year, and upon what grounds they have at length made it will appear from the following letter which I have received from the Father Superior.

Maryvale, Oct. 30th, 1848.

My dear Father Wilfrid, I have consulted the Fathers who are here on the subject of the Lives of the Saints, and we have come to the unanimous conclusion of advising you to suspend the series at present. It appears there is a strong feeling against it on the part of a portion of the Catholic community in England, on the ground, as we are given to understand, that the lives of foreign saints, however edifying in their respective countries, are unsuited to England, and unacceptable to Protestants. To this feeling we consider it a duty, for the sake of peace, to defer. For myself, you know well without my saying it, how absolutely I identify myself with you in this matter; but, as you may have to publish this letter, I make it an opportunity, which has not as yet been given me, of declaring that I have no sympathy at all with the feeling to which I have

alluded, and, in particular, that no one can assail your name without striking at mine.

Ever your affectionate friend and brother,
in our Lady and St. Philip,
J. H. NEWMAN,

Congr. Orat. Presb.

Rev. F. Faber, St. Wilfrid's.

That this determination will be a great disappointment to you, who, as subscribers and purchasers number nearly one thousand, and especially to the sixty-six friends, who, in our colleges and elsewhere, are engaged in the kind labour of co-operation with me, I cannot doubt; but I am sure you will at once submit with the most perfect confidence, that what has been done so religiously will turn out for the best. It is, in fact, a great gain to have to give up a plan for the good of others upon which our hearts were bent; and if we have for the present to see removed from us what we knew was profiting so many, and looked upon as an additional help to perfection for ourselves, we must not therefore think that it will come to nothing, or be labour lost. Allow me to thank you all most sincerely for your willing and affectionate support and co-operation in this arduous and extensive undertaking. Meanwhile, you with me will find no little comfort in the words with which mother church has been haunting us for many days past, and which have only just died away upon her lips. *O quam gloriosum est regnum, in quo cum Christo gaudent omnes Sancti, amicti stolis albis, sequuntur Agnum quocumque ierit.*

F. W. FABER,

Congr. Orat. Presb.

The life of F. Claver, which is in the press, will appear in December, and the Lives of S. Alphonso, and S. Ignatius, will, in justice both to the publishers and subscribers, appear in successive volumes at the usual periods until they are concluded.

Libes of the Canonized Saints.

The Congregation of the Oratory is now enabled to take upon itself and to continue the Series of Lives of Saints, which was begun some time since by the Rev. Father Faber, and has lately been suspended.

The Fathers have never yet been formally responsible for that Series; their connexion with it being limited to the accident that, when it was already in course of publication, its Editor joined their body. On taking this step, the Editor felt, as they did, that some new arrangement was required by the

altered position in which he stood, and that either they must take his work upon themselves, or he must bring it to a close. They postponed the determination of so important a question to the end of the current year; when, by accidental coincidence, a strong opposition to the Series manifested itself in one quarter of the English Catholic body, resting for support, as was supposed, on venerable names, which necessarily commanded their most serious attention and deference. Anxious not to involve the Congregation in a party contest at the commencement of its course, the Fathers forthwith came to the decision of not committing themselves to the publication for the present; and in consequence recommended the Editor to suspend it.

It is both a surprise and a great consolation, and they give thanks and praise to the Father of mercies, and to the intercession of the Saints, whose Lives were the subject in dispute, that they are enabled, after so short an interval, with the kind wishes of their ecclesiastical superiors, of the heads of Colleges and Religious bodies, and of all generally whose good opinion they covet, and by whose judgment they desire to be guided, nay, at the express instance of those parties who had been foremost in the opposition, to take upon themselves a responsibility, from which, without such general countenance and encouragement, they felt themselves justified in shrinking. And they hope they may without presumption accept it in some sort as a reward for the readiness with which they gave up their own wishes to the claims of christian charity and peace, that the very suspension of the Series has been the means of eliciting an expression of sympathy towards themselves and it, so cordial and unanimous, and testimonies to the good it was effecting so decisive, as to allow of their undertaking it consistently with the edification of their brethren, and with comfort to themselves.

Accordingly they propose, in the ensuing August, when the last volume promised by F. Faber is to be published, to transfer the Editorship from him to themselves; and meanwhile they earnestly beg of the good friends who have given them so zealous a support, to assist them also with their prayers, that they may continue this important work with that wisdom and discretion which become the glorious Saints to whose honour it is dedicated.

The following Lives will form the first volumes of the resumed Series:—St. Charles, St. Francis Borgia, St. John of God, St. Francis Jerome, St. Jane Frances de Chantal, St. Vincent Ferrer, Ven. Paul of the Cross.

St. Wilfrid's,
Feast of the Epiphany, 1849.

PRINTED BY RICHARDSON AND SON, DERBY.

The Saints and Servants of God.

THE LIVES

OF THE

VENERABLE SERVANT OF GOD,

FABRIZIO DALL' ASTE,

FOUNDER OF THE CONGREGATION OF THE ORATORY OF FORLI;

AND OF THE

VENERABLE SERVANT OF GOD,

FATHER MARIANO SOZZINI,

PRIEST OF THE CONGREGATION OF THE ORATORY OF ROME.

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



LONDON:

THOMAS RICHARDSON AND SON,

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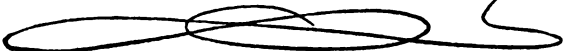
M.DCCC.L.





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

Given at London, the Feast of the Purification of our B. Lady, A. D. 1850.

Nichols
Bishop of Melipatanus


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

ST. WILFRID'S,
 TRANSLATION OF ST. THOMAS OF CANTERBURY,
 M. DCCC. XLVII.

PROTESTATIO.

Cum SS. D. N. Urbanus Papa VIII. die 13 Martii 1625 in Sacra Congregatione S. R. et Universalis Inquisitionis Decretum ediderit, idemque confirmaverit die 5 Junii 1634 quo inhibuit imprimi libros Hominum, qui Sanctitate, seu Martyrii fama celebres e vita migraverunt, gesta, miracula, vel revelationes, seu quæcumque beneficia, tanquam eorum intercessionibus a Deo accepta continentes, sine recognitione, atque approbatione Ordinarii, et quæ hactenus sine ea impressa sunt, nullo modo vult censi approbata. Idem autem Sanctissimus die 5 Junii 1631 ita explicaverit, ut nimirum non admittantur Elogia Sancti, vel Beati absolute, et quæ cadunt super Personam, bene tamen ea, quæ cadunt super mores, et opinionem; cum protestatione in principio, quod iis nulla adsit auctoritas ab Ecclesia Romana, sed fides tantum sit penes Auctorem. Huic Decreto, ejusque confirmationi, et declarationi, observantia, et reverentia, qua pars est, insistendo; profiteor me haud alio sensu, quidquid in hoc libro refero, accipere, aut accipi ab ullo velle, quam quo ea solent, quæ humana dumtaxat auctoritate, non autem Divina Catholicæ Romanæ Ecclesiæ, aut Sanctæ Sedis Apostolicæ, nituntur. Iis tantummodo exceptis, quos eadem Sancta Sedes, Sanctorum, Beatorum, aut Martyrum catalogo adscripsit.

PREFACE.

THE Life of the Ven. Fabrizio dall' Aste is translated from the "Memorie storiche della Congregazione dell' Oratorio," by Father Marciano, Naples, A. D. 1693. The Life of the Ven. Mariano Sozzini is translated from the Italian Life written by a Father of the Congregation of Rome, the edition used being that of Venice, A. D. 1751.

London,
The Oratory, April 18, 1850.

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THE LIFE
OF THE
VENERABLE SERVANT OF GOD,
FABRIZIO DALL' ASTE,
FOUNDER OF THE CONGREGATION OF THE ORATORY OF FORLÌ.

THE LIFE
OF THE
VENERABLE SERVANT OF GOD,
FABRIZIO DALL' ASTE,
FOUNDER OF THE CONGREGATION OF THE ORATORY OF FORLÌ.

CHAPTER I.

COUNTRY AND PARENTAGE OF FATHER FABRIZIO DALL' ASTE. AFTER HIS STUDIES HE GOES TO ROME, WHERE HE IS ORDAINED PRIEST. HE RETURNS TO HIS COUNTRY, AND AFTER VARIOUS LABOURS OF PIETY, FOUNDS THE CONGREGATION OF THE ORATORY.

ALTHOUGH it be true that the greatest honour of holy men is their virtue, nevertheless, when they are of noble descent, it is not well to pass over such a circumstance in silence; inasmuch, as when the two are united in the same person, virtue shines like a jewel set in gold, and oftentimes appears more dazzling, because it is preserved in its lustre and brightness in spite of the many dangers there are of its being sullied. Accordingly, before narrating the virtuous life of the venerable servant of God, Fabrizio dall' Aste, we deem it right to give a brief notice of

the nobility of his family. Among the ancient and noble families of the city of Forli, is numbered the house of Aste, inasmuch as it has ever been fruitful in men illustrious both in arms and in literature, and its ancient nobility is attested by the arms of the never-vanquished order of Jerusalem, with which the family is distinguished. Additional splendour has also been derived from the great powers of Europe, who have honoured its various branches with noble titles and military appointments, as well as the Holy Apostolic See, which has dignified it with honours and with the prelacy. Among the most distinguished of these was Nicholas dall' Aste, who, after many honourable employments, was sent as nuncio to France, and was afterwards raised to the episcopal throne of Recanati, where he displayed no less his great zeal than his love and liberality towards his flock. Out of his own revenues, which were abundant, he was the first to endow the Holy House of Loretto; to his clergy of Recanati he made over eight thousand scudi, and twelve thousand to the confraternity of St. Lucy. This liberality and his other virtues earned for him, even after his death, which took place in Rome in the year 1470, the reputation of extraordinary goodness, which is still preserved among the citizens of Recanati.

No less noble was the blood of Fabrizio on his mother's side. She was of the family of Numai, of the same city of Forli, celebrated both by old and modern historians for the num-

ber of men it has produced, distinguished as well in arms as in the arts of peace. Not the least honour of this family was that of having given, in the person of Cristofero Numai, a minister-general to the entire united seraphic order of St. Francis, a dignity which neither before nor since has been conferred in the same way upon any individual. After having supported it in a holy and prudent manner, he was deemed worthy of being honoured with the purple, and became one of the most illustrious and renowned cardinals of the holy Church. From the union of those two illustrious families was born Fabrizio, the subject of our history, on the 3rd of October, A.D. 1606. His father was called Thomas, and his mother Isabella, who as they were noble in rank, were no less so in Christian piety; and accordingly, from his very infancy, they undertook to instil into the tender heart of Fabrizio the holy fear of God. He was of a sanguine and bilious constitution, and therefore inclined to hastiness of temper, and eager for honour and applause. He delighted in fine clothes and in playing the grandee, for which the wealth of his family supplied him the means.

In conversation, however, he was affable and cheerful, and showed a spirited and lively disposition, so that when his parents made him apply to the study of literature, he willingly attended to it, and at the same time gained the good will of his companions. When he was twelve years old he resolved to assume the clerical habit; but still retained in that state

the inclination he had for cheerful and amusing conversation, in which he delighted, as well as in displaying his good manners and refinement. Once when a comedy was to be represented in his native place, and by an accident the youth who was to have played the part of a high spirited boy was missing, he, without any preparation, supplied his place, with such grace and vivacity, that after the comedy he was commonly called Fellino, which was the name of the character he has so well sustained. In after time, when he followed a life of perfection, this gave him an opportunity of exercising his virtue; for when some poor old men asked an alms of him by the name of Padre Fellino, although the servant of God was filled with confusion and humbled by the bitter recollection of the detested vanities of the world, he felt no resentment, but answered them with kindness, and promptly supplied their necessities.

These pastimes, however, did not serve to divert him from steady application to study; for being ambitious of renown, and desiring to rival his ancestors in the acquisition of honours and dignities, he applied himself with all diligence to learn the sciences, and especially that of law, which he studied in the famous university of Bologna. From Bologna he proceeded to Pisa, in order to prosecute the study of the same science, where he received the honour of the doctor's degree in reward for his attainments. Having received this new honour, he returned to his country; but soon resolved to

betake himself to Rome, as to the most suitable theatre for the display of his great talents, and a place where he should be able to see the wishes he had formed fulfilled. He set out from Forli in the year 1631, and on quitting his beloved country, as he took leave of it, he was seen to bless it with the sign of the cross, thinking never to see it more, as he was resolved to plunge himself into the ocean of the court, there to find his fortune. But how different are the designs of men from those of God! Divine Providence guided him to Rome, because it there intended to withdraw him from the vanities of the world to the service of his Maker, and then to restore him again to his country, in order that by his virtuous example, and by founding the Congregation of the Oratory, he might promote its spiritual welfare.

Meanwhile, on his arrival in Rome, he was received as a fellow-countryman by Clemente Marlino, one of the most distinguished personages of the court, being Datario under the happy government of Gregory XV., and afterwards dean of the Sacred Rota, a man of great merit and remarkable talents, who admitted him to his cabinet with every mark of affection, by reason of the esteem he had for his family as well as himself individually.

This served to make his eminent talents the more conspicuous; for as many literary men had access to the same cabinet, emulation had the effect of rendering his understanding more acute, and he had the opportunity of showing how accurate and lofty it was.

At the same time, however, he did not neglect to labour equally after spiritual perfection, as he employed himself with fervour in devout and pious works. He had chosen as his confessor and guide a father of the most praiseworthy order of Clerks Regular Ministers of the sick, a man of acknowledged goodness and perfection, under whose direction he frequented the Sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist; and perceiving what advantage his soul derived from these powerful means, bequeathed to the faithful by their Redeemer, in order to their holy living, he resolved to oblige himself by a vow to confess and communicate several times in the week; but having conferred on the subject with his guide, he was advised to cherish his holy purpose without the bonds of a vow. And thus it most happily came to pass, that Fabrizio, who was to be not only a priest of the Oratory, but its founder in his own country, accustomed himself from this time to live as a religious, but without vows; for, as is well known, the holy father wished his spiritual children to use every effort to emulate the virtue of religious, but freely and spontaneously without the bonds of the religious profession.

He often visited the sacred places in which the holy city of Rome abounds with great modesty and devotion, and employed himself in other exercises of Christian piety. This course of life, so exemplary in a young man of his age, he followed for the space of about two years; and it served, as it were, to dispose his mind

for heavenly illuminations, enlightened by which, he walked happily along the way of perfection.

Grace for the most part works strongly but sweetly. Accordingly, at the beginning, in order to instil into the heart of Fabrizio a distaste for the court, which he had intended to follow in order to advance his fortune, it was so ordered, that one day when he went to have an audience of some great personage, he was kept waiting a long time, so that wearied with the long delay, he said to himself, "My God! in order to gain an audience of a great one of this world, we have need of so much patience, and yet the Majesty of God listens to all in prayer at any time and in any place!" This was the first powerful ray of the light, by which grace was to draw him out of the agitation of the court to the haven of a religious and perfect life. But soon, in order to give him a lively apprehension of the vanity of worldly things, and of the transitory nature of the dignities and honours of the world, he was led to take up the Life of his future father St. Philip, towards whom he had always a great devotion. In it he happened to read of the remedy given by the saint to Francesco Zazzera, a young man, who still aspired after the attainment of earthly honours, and entertained thoughts of advancing his fortunes, and whom, by this short, but impressive question, "And what next?" he made to understand how vain were the hopes, and how ill-bestowed the labours which were directed towards the attainment of goods so fleeting; inasmuch, that

turning away his thoughts from the greatness of the world, he applied himself wholly to the pursuit of eternal goods, and of those honours which never come to an end. Fabrizio read in this memorable event the history of what was passing in his own mind, and he applied to himself the same remedy which the holy father had given, which renewed in his own case the very same effects which it had already produced in the heart of Francesco. So true it is, that the soul often finds in the perusal of holy books a remedy suitable to its needs, and although in the sacred pages we appear to read but dead words, yet in truth it is not so, because God Himself speaks by means of such spiritual reading.

These words, "and what then?" remained so deeply impressed on the mind of Fabrizio, that he seemed to hear them inwardly repeated to him by the same saint his protector; so that they served as a barrier against every desire of earthly greatness which arose within him, and as an inducement to him to look to the welfare of his soul and his advancement in spirituality. So astonishing was the effect of these words on the heart of Fabrizio, that they may be compared to a small but potent dose of helebore, a fit remedy to aid the recovery of those who madly hunt the vain shadows of worldly honours. Accordingly, he deemed it best to confer about the whole matter with his confessor; he told him the great impression which this narrative had made on his mind, the force of the inward

voice which appeared to be ever echoing in his heart these mighty words, "what then?" the disinclination which he felt to continue to aspire after worldly advancement, and the ardent desire he had conceived of making sure of the eternal glory of Paradise. His guide was a person of great prudence and perfect virtue, so that he soon perceived to what an eminent degree of perfection his disciple was called by this interior voice of God; and he accordingly recommended him to prepare to receive sacred orders, that he might be able to serve his Lord more entirely and more profitably. And that his ardour might not grow cool through delay, when he dismissed him, he said, "My son, do it quickly."

Fabrizio was all submission to his confessor, although the step he was to take appeared to him too exalted; and he immediately took care to procure from his own bishop demissorial letters for his ordination. Meanwhile it is impossible to describe with what humility and purity of heart and long prayers he prepared himself to celebrate worthily the holy sacrifice of the Mass. Accordingly, having received all the necessary documents, by a brief from the Pope, he was admitted to all the holy orders in the year 1632.

He had been accustomed to dress handsomely in silk, in keeping with his rank and his own inclination, which from his childhood had delighted in showy habiliments; but on receiving the priesthood, he resolved to lay aside his former dress, and began to wear garments of simple wool, like

the fathers of the Oratory; and at the same time he stripped himself interiorly of all earthly affections and pretensions, and endeavoured to adorn his soul with all Christian virtues. He went frequently to the Chiesa Nuova to celebrate the holy sacrifice, and as his devotion in this great function was not transitory, as is sometimes the case with certain priests, who after celebrating their first Mass, never again experience any devotion, as though each sacrifice were the last he had to offer to the Most High, he prepared himself for it by long meditations, and to arouse his devotion still more, always kept in remembrance that most tender devotion with which his ancient patron and future father St. Philip used to approach the altar. Moreover, he took extreme delight in all those various and fruitful exercises instituted by the holy father, and faithfully practised by his children in Rome, from whose example he derived no little advantage; insomuch that his greatest delight was found in the Chiesa Nuova. Thus, as he continued to employ himself in holy and devout exercises, and as the dew of Divine grace, so to speak, dropped from heaven on his heart, he soon attained a most exalted perfection of spirit. He felt himself wholly estranged and detached from every interest and affection of the world, and enjoyed so great a sweetness and tranquillity of mind, that in order to render it perpetual, he had already mentally resolved to live in Rome in the condition of a simple priest.

Fabrizio, however, was not destined by Heaven for the repose of a tranquil life, but rather to endure many fatigues for the glory of God and the salvation of his neighbour; insomuch, that although he had determined to enjoy these spiritual delights in Rome, it was intimated to him, by a voice not to be mistaken, that he was to return to his country, in order there to fulfil the counsels of Heaven. One day when he had gone to his confessor, he, without having any apparent motive for giving him such advice, unexpectedly said to him, "My son, return to your own country." Such a resolution might seem too premature and hasty even for the spirit of Fabrizio; inasmuch as he would thus be deprived of many incentives to devotion, and meet with many occasions to chill him in the pursuit of perfection. Moreover, he was young, and by quitting Rome, he would be removed from his guide, who had hitherto directed him so well in virtue, nor would he have before him the virtuous example of the fathers of the Oratory, which excited him to imitate them. And besides this, in his own country, and amidst the comforts of his father's house, and the mutual affection of relations and friends, his devotion would be exposed to the danger of growing cool rather than likely to increase. Nevertheless, as in the course of the narrative it will be clearly seen, the voice of his confessor was the voice of God, which called him to Forlì, to employ him in cultivating the vineyard which God had assigned him.

Fabrizio had ever with blind obedience obeyed the directions of his guide, acknowledging him as the interpreter of God's commands on earth ; so that continuing on this occasion to recognise him as such without demur, he immediately set out on his journey, in which he chose for his faithful and sole companion a devout picture of St. Philip, which he took with him.

It was in the year 1633 that he returned to Forli, where he began to attend the church of the fathers of the Company of Jesus, in which he generally celebrated the divine sacrifice, and according to the custom which he learned from the fathers of the Oratory in Rome, served other masses out of devotion. Moreover, his occupations were so holy, his humility so religious, and his modesty so full of devotion, as to cause more than ordinary admiration in those who had before known his high spirit and vivacity. Such a noble example of virtue, and the natural attractiveness with which he was endowed, in a short time drew many young men of noble birth, and inclined to exercises of devotion, to join themselves to him, so that they daily conversed together with a sweet and holy familiarity, and united in engaging themselves in works of piety. Fabrizio was the head of them ; but as his profound humility made him shun the least shadow of superiority, and made him ambitious of learning rather than teaching perfection to others, it was decided by the director of their consciences, to whose authority they had recourse in their contest of humility, that for the

future, in their exercises of devotion, they should take the lead each one for a week in turn. Their most frequent occupations were to visit the churches with modest devotion, to frequent the hospitals and succour the sick poor in their own houses, to whom also they distributed abundant alms with their own hands. Their conversation was always on things heavenly and divine; they discussed among themselves the maxims relating to the spiritual life, that by digesting these eternal truths, they might be the more excited to fervour and devotion. And exercising charity and zeal at the same time, they mutually corrected their defects, and imposed penances on one another. To avoid idleness, they employed themselves in making instruments of penance, such as disciplines and hair shirts; and lastly, that in the midst of these continual occupations there might not be wanting at proper times some honest recreation, they invited one another to their country houses, there to amuse themselves with modesty and in a religious manner; and that the spirit might not on these occasions be left without proper nourishment, as they went along the road in these parties they sang spiritual songs, and the table was seasoned with the reading of devout books, or with conferences on spiritual subjects. So unusual and astonishing was this excellent manner of living, that this devout assemblage of young men afforded a bright example to the whole city, always united as they were, and intent on works of Christian piety.

But new occasions presented themselves to Fabrizio of exercising himself in virtue and in perfection. His confessor, who was also the confessor of his companions, being a man of great goodness, and desirous of promoting the glory of God and the welfare of souls, seeing this little company around him so well disposed to learn virtue, like a tender vine assigned by the Lord to his care, that he might cultivate it, was always devising new exercises of devotion, to which these young men might apply themselves. He had founded a congregation, called the Congregation of Penance, in the same college of his company, in which every Saturday the penitential Psalms were recited, the word of God preached, and the discipline used for the mortification of the flesh. Moreover, for several years, all the brethren of the congregation went in procession to visit the miraculous picture of the Most Holy Virgin, called, "del Fuoco," the protectress of Forli, on the vigil of her feast, which is celebrated with great pomp and devotion on the 4th of February, on which occasion, as well as in the exercises above-named, Fabrizio was always foremost. He walked before all the others, carrying with the greatest modesty a heavy crucifix; and such was his appearance, that all who beheld him were not only edified, but moved to tenderness and compunction. The same father afterwards introduced private conferences to be held in his presence, at which Fabrizio and his companions assisted.

These served to move their hearts with the

holy love of God, by means of the ardent colloquies and the acts which were performed in them, and by exercising them in humility and mortification; for they mutually told one another of their defects, as they observed them, and then washed the feet of some poor persons. This last act of Christian humility supplied the servant of God with a means of mortifying himself most thoroughly; for he was seen, to the great astonishment and edification of his companions, to drink the loathsome water which had served for this pious purpose. A short time afterwards, in the same year 1633, another congregation having been formed by the same confessor in the college of his company, under the title of the Congregation of Perseverance, he found in it greater scope for the exercise of his fervour and humility; for he took, as due to himself, the office of sweeping and preparing the room of the congregation. Often he would present himself to his companions like a criminal with a rope round his neck, and humbly beg their pardon for the disedification which he had given them, meekly kissing their feet. With a holy importunity he begged them to warn him and correct him of the faults with which he acknowledged himself to be laden; although his life was so spotless, that it required the quickest perception to detect any even slight ones. God having chosen him to be founder of the Oratory, put it into the mind of his confessor to try him with sensible mortifications, such as those which the holy father had used towards his children.

Accordingly, in order to exercise him the more perfectly, the good father for the slightest defects would reprove him severely in public ; and Fabrizio would not only submit, but receive the reprehension with joy ; he would often send him to the public Flaminian road, when it was most crowded with people, to cry with a loud voice, "We must die." At other times he would make him pass through the most populous places of the city in a torn dress, and loaded with plates and dishes of soup to distribute to the poor. He would send him about the shops to ask the owners for goods which it was not their trade to sell ; as to the apothecaries, to ask whether they had cloth for dresses, and other such things, that they might be provoked to laughter or perhaps indignation at his ill-timed demand, and so hold him in contempt. But nothing could be more sensibly felt, or more severe than the command which he gave him to discourse publicly without any preparation in the same congregation, before a great assemblage of noble and intelligent persons. The subject was given by one of the brethren, and was this, "*Mors intrat per fenestras*, Death enters at the windows." Although this unexpected command in a matter so delicate, might have put to confusion any speaker however experienced, the obedient Fabrizio promptly obeyed ; and, as if in reward of his obedience, received so great a facility in speaking, that the bystanders were no less surprised at his readiness, than at the eloquence and efficacy of his discourse. To these and the like

mortifications Fabrizio submitted not only with patience, but with cheerfulness and joy, when God, in order to try him more thoroughly, and that he might learn by experience to be a truly great master in the spiritual life, touched him to the quick, by allowing him to be harassed in a violent manner by scruples. This cross to holy souls is the greatest of afflictions, because in the midst of their spiritual darkness they fear lest they should have offended the Lord, to whom they have consecrated all their love.

Like a skilful pilot, his spiritual father used the greatest dexterity in guiding him well through this troublous storm, employing all those means which spiritual masters esteem most available to convey repose to souls agitated by scruples. But all proved useless to Fabrizio, as he could not attain the desired tranquillity of conscience. Accordingly, his director, as a last remedy, sent him to other confessors who had the reputation of learning and prudence, that he might receive some instructions from them. But neither was this sufficient to calm the tempest which God had raised, not for the shipwreck of His servant, but to try him; so that he remained many years in this state of painful agitation, until at length, as it were, by a gentle breeze springing up, this dark obscurity, which clouded his mind and heart, was dissipated; and the fierce struggle having ceased, Fabrizio recovered his tranquillity of conscience in such a manner, as that from this time to his death he abounded in heavenly consolations.

Meanwhile the bright flame of divine love, which he still retained burning in his ardent soul, increased to such an extent, that desiring to bind himself closer to his Lord and to estrange himself more from the world, he resolved to find a more retired apartment, and to abandon the comforts of his father's house in order to live for God alone. With this view he ordered some rooms to be prepared in the neighbourhood of a church called the Madonna del Popolo, situated without the gate of St. Peter, in which there was venerated a picture of the Queen of Paradise, which was afterwards transferred from the middle of the church to the splendid high altar, by the exertions no less devout than generous of Fabrizio, where it is to be seen at this day. After he retired to these rooms, the life he there led was marvellous; for he spent not only the day, but a great part of the night in prayer and other pious exercises. He went with his companions every morning to the adjoining church dedicated to the Queen of heaven; and there they spent the greater part of the day, and often the night also, that, being far from any disturbance, they might give themselves better to the consideration of heavenly things. Thus their minds were always occupied in holy meditations, and their tongues ever reading devout books, or Lives of the Saints, or singing praises to God. And in order that prayer might be accompanied by mortification, he practised himself in various acts of this virtue, macerating and afflicting his body with severe penances, and even

the hours of recreation he spent with his companions in adorning the pictures of the saints, or in some other suitable occupation.

On feasts alone, so to say, did he converse with men ; and then for no other end but to teach them the way to heaven ; for on those days the peasantry and other ignorant people flocking to the same church, he instructed them in the rudiments of the faith with incredible patience and charity ; so that he was thought worthy to be elected prior-general by the brethren of the Company of Humility, which had been founded in Forli, to teach the ignorant the Christian doctrine ; and although these zealous brethren always practised this holy work with the greatest benefit to souls and to the glory of God, nevertheless, during the time he held the office of prior, the zeal of these pious labourers was still more increased by his example and his unfailing solicitude. During the last two weeks of Lent, desirous in this devout retirement of still greater solitude to converse alone with God on the interests of his soul, he was accustomed to go through the exercises of St. Ignatius under the guidance of the same confessor ; and as he, according to the most praiseworthy custom of his most illustrious company, employed himself in missions to the very great profit of souls, Fabrizio assisted him in this holy ministry to the extraordinary edification of all.

The sweet odour of the virtues of Fabrizio and his companions spread from this devout retirement to the adjoining city of Forli, and the re-

port of them reached the archbishop, Giacomo Teodoli, at that time bishop of Forli, his native place, who delighted to betake himself with his canons and attendants to those rooms, and took no little pleasure in beholding this noble company spending so many hours in the divine service.

Sweet indeed to Fabrizio was his stay in this retired spot; for his spirit rejoiced in its union with his God; and at the same time his zeal had an opportunity of exercising charity towards his neighbour, so that he never quitted it to enter the city, unless urged by devotion or charity. Accordingly, he only went to Forli to assist at the congregations and to visit the hospitals, or to succour the poor with timely alms. An instance of which timely assistance occurred at this time, when meeting with a poor man who had no garments to cover himself with, and was already stiff with cold, he was so moved with compassion as instantly to take off his own under-waistcoat and gave it to this poor creature.

Meanwhile the time having now arrived which God had predetermined for the foundation of the Oratory in Forli by means of Fabrizio, although he had felt some inclination to enrol himself under the banner of the holy patriarch Ignatius, and to fight in his most illustrious company, yet being assured by his spiritual father, that it was the will of God that he should found the Oratory in Forli, and being called the same way by celestial impulses, he put his hand to the work. Accordingly, he removed his habitation

first to the church of San Carlo della Carità, and afterwards to the site of the Guasto degli Orsi, or ruins of the Orsi palace, where he built a church in honour of the holy father, and a house for the dwelling of his spiritual children, as shall be more fully related in the next chapter.

CHAPTER II.

THE FOUNDATION OF THE CONGREGATION OF THE ORATORY IN FORLÌ.

SINCE the time Fabrizio had been called by an interior but powerful and heavenly voice to embrace a life of greater perfection while reading the Life of St. Philip, as has been related in the previous chapter, he had conceived a strong inclination towards the institute of the Oratory founded by the saint. Moreover, his spiritual father, the excellent Jesuit of whom we have spoken, expressly told him that God designed to make use of him as the guide and ruler of many souls, and that he should be the founder of the Congregation of the Oratory in his own country.

Accordingly, no sooner did the advice of his spiritual father confirm him in the inclination he already entertained, than he became eagerly desirous of beginning the work ; but inasmuch as it was an undertaking which surpassed his own powers, Fabrizio had recourse to God, and by means of frequent and earnest prayers recommended to the Divine Majesty the important affair

which he contemplated. These thoughts were the more agreeable to him, as he considered the great fruit which his country would derive from the exercises peculiar to the institute ; so that being at this time tried by God with the grievous cross of scruples, there was no more effectual means of diverting him and relieving him from these torments, than to speak to him of the new foundation. With his director especially he was accustomed to speak frequently about it ; and together they bestowed much reflection on the means most suitable for carrying into effect the resolution they had taken. The most important subject of their thoughts and conversations was to find a suitable place for the foundation.

In the year 1490, one of the most illustrious members of his family, Thomas dall' Aste, bishop of Forli, had, with a holy zeal, instituted a company called the Company of Charity, the church of which in course of time was called San Carlo della Carità. Fabrizio was enrolled among the brethren of this company, and in it had exercised himself in continual works of charity ; so that he naturally turned his eyes towards this church. And God, who ordained that the first foundations of the Congregation of the Oratory in Rome, should be laid by the holy founder in the church of San Girolamo della Carità, was pleased that the rising Oratory of Forli should be cradled in the church of San Carlo, also called della Carità, to show that the institute of St. Philip is made up, so to say, of charity, inasmuch as this is the only rule which he has

imposed upon his children. Fabrizio, accordingly, applied to the brethren of the company to grant him the use of their church of San Carlo for the exercises of the Oratory, and his request was obligingly complied with; and in addition to this, that nothing might be wanting, he obtained the consent of the bishop of Forli.

Having thus obtained what he desired, Fabrizio next bought a house close to the same church, to serve as a dwelling for the fathers, and thither he removed in the year 1637, together with some companions whom he had chosen for his fellow-labourers in the new vineyard. He employed himself with the greatest zeal in advancing the glory of God and the salvation of his neighbour; and although at this early beginning the Constitutions of St. Philip were not observed with rigour, yet for the most part they were practised out of devotion. The first exercises practised at San Carlo were like those which the holy father introduced at San Girolamo della Carità. There they held the oratory with mental prayer in common and the accustomed discipline. He preached in turn with his companions, according to the style of the institute, that is to say, omitting all vain ornament of words; he administered the word of God in a familiar manner, contenting himself with the grace and beauty of God's word, and the words of His saints. Some devout spiritual book was also read, and afterwards a discourse made in the form of a dialogue on the subject which had been read, in order that these truths having been, so to say, digested, might

be more perfectly impressed on the hearts of the hearers. These fervent labourers were indefatigable in their attendance in the confessional, and some employed themselves in dispensing the Eucharistic Food ; so that as the concourse of people to the above-mentioned exercises of the Oratory was very great, so proportionably great was the number of those who frequented the sacraments in the church of San Carlo, by reason of the facility of receiving them at the hands of these virtuous priests.

At the very outset also Fabrizio introduced into his native city the practice of visiting the hospitals, whither he frequently betook himself, to succour the wretched inmates. Nor was he content with the large alms which he dispensed to them, and the provisions he brought them ; but he desired also to employ his own person in their service. Accordingly, with his own hands he would make their beds, and clean their clothes, and assist them to take their food and drink, when sickness disabled them from doing this alone. It is impossible to express how greatly his example roused charity and compassion in those he took with him, towards these poor creatures ; and by them others also were stimulated to imitate them, so that in a short time many began to attend the hospitals, usually considered so loathsome. This great work of Christian compassion became so thoroughly established in Forli, that even to the present time the nobles employ themselves in it to the great edification of all. Lastly, in imitation of the artifices of his

great father, to draw people from the dissipations of the Carnival, he introduced the exposition of the Quarant' Ore on the "Giovedì grasso," or Thursday before Lent, and the two following days. He had thus arranged it with his confessor, in order that, as the same exposition was made in the church of the Company of Jesus the last three days of the Carnival, Christ in His Sacrament might be exposed on the altars during all these days of peril.

This holy zeal of Fabrizio met with the most happy results; for as the number of persons of every class was very great, who came to adore the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament at the church of San Carlo, so the excesses of the Carnival were not a little diminished.

The devil, seeing these holy exercises introduced by Fabrizio into his native country, and that by these means many souls were set free, which groaned under his tyrannical yoke, in order to impede the great good which was done, stirred up certain persons to hinder the completion of the buildings which were in course of erection near the church of San Carlo. They first with insults and injurious words gave vent to their indignation against Fabrizio and his companions, and then threatened the workmen.

To these unreasonable insults the servant of God opposed the shield of his virtuous meekness, receiving them with a cheerful air, and without answering a word in his defence, although he was naturally of a disposition easily provoked. The sharp arrows of this first assault being thus

blunted against the mild but impenetrable shield of Christian patience, the devil raised a new persecution against the rising Oratory. He obscured the minds of certain persons with vain and false suspicions, making them fear, lest by means of the confessor before named certain rich persons might be induced to join Fabrizio, and with their incomes support the new congregation, to the prejudice of their families.

This suspicion was most false, and these fears without any foundation, since neither he nor his confessor had ever thought of such a thing; while the detachment of Fabrizio from every earthly thing was so great, and so great the confidence he had in God of the success of the undertaking, that he often used to repeat the words of the holy father, "God has no need of men." Notwithstanding all this, so greatly had interest inflamed the hearts of these suspicious persons, that as if what the devil depicted to their imagination had been certain, they wrote a letter to the Father-general of the Company of Jesus, and used such efforts with him, that the confessor above named was ordered to quit Forli. But as it was afterwards proved more clearly than the noon-day that this was a calumny, within a few months the said father, by order of the general, returned to Forli.

Although the church of S. Carlo della Carità had been sufficient as a cradle for the infant congregation of Forli, yet it did not correspond to the magnificent ideas of Fabrizio, who desired that it should be large and situated in a place

suitable for the exercises of the Oratory, and as he was most devoted to his holy father, he wished that it should be dedicated to him, and that a house should be annexed to it, which might serve for a convenient habitation for the fathers. Accordingly, having deliberated maturely on this important project, before coming to a determination he wished to hear the opinion of some of the most prudent inhabitants of the city. They having many times met together for this purpose, decided that there was no site better adapted for it than that called the "Guasto degli Orsi," or ruins of the Orsi, which was so called for the following reason.

In the year 1488 the lord of the city of Forli, together with that of Imola, was Girolamo Riario, nephew of Pope Sixtus IV., from whom he had formerly received the investiture; who, finding his treasury exhausted by the heavy expenses he had incurred, imposed new burdens upon his subjects. These new taxes with which they were encumbered were so displeasing to them, that they formed a conspiracy, the head of which was Checco degli Orsi, belonging to one of the principal families of Forli, who with his companions stained his hands in the blood of his own prince, and then consigned the city to Giacomo Sarelli, governor for the Church. Meanwhile Catherine Sforza, wife of the murdered Girolamo, and guardian of her son Ottaviano, seeing herself excluded from the lordship of Forli, had recourse to the Duke of Milan, her brother, who, moved by her prayers, assembled a large force to replace his

nephew in his lost possessions. The conspirators were obliged to yield to his superior strength, and Catherine, with her son Ottaviano, was reinstated in the lordship of Forlì; and she, in punishment of the conspiracy, caused the palace of Checco, which was of wonderful beauty and magnificent structure, to be razed to the ground. In the year 1514, on a large part of the site of this ancient and beautiful edifice, was built the Monte della Pietà, the rest remaining covered with the old ruins, and called the Guasto degli Orsi.

It was on this spot that Fabrizio designed to build a church and house for his congregation; but he did not wish to take any step without first conferring on the scheme with his own bishop. He, however, when he heard of the plan, not only disapproved of it, but declared he would never give his consent to it, as it was much too gigantic for their narrow means, both because it would be necessary to raise the building from the very foundations, and also because it was indispensable to clear away in the first place a great quantity of earth which was heaped up upon the ruins, where it had been the custom for a long time to carry rubbish from all parts of the city.

Fabrizio well knew the difficulties he should have to encounter in providing himself with another site of sufficient dimensions and suitable for the exercises of the Oratory; nevertheless, hearing his designs disapproved by the mouth of his superior, without a moment's demur he submitted to his will.

Meanwhile, however, the feast of St. Philip arrived, and was solemnly celebrated by him in the church of San Carlo, which the bishop also visited. While there, without the reasons being known, he unexpectedly changed his opinion; and kindly turning round to Fabrizio, said to him, "I think it will be best for us to set to work on the site of the Guasto."

The approval of the bishop being thus gained, in order to prosecute the design it was necessary to obtain also the consent of the Publico and of the curators of the Monte della Pietà. Fabrizio, accordingly, having requested them to be pleased to grant him this site for the new church, his petition was willingly assented to, so that on the octave day of the saint, A.D. 1642, signs of public rejoicing and delight were shown by the whole city, which was desirous, almost beyond belief, of this sacred edifice; and on the same day, Mass having been sung in thanksgiving to the Lord in the church of San Carlo, Fabrizio carrying on his shoulders a heavy cross of wood, assisted by one of his priests, and preceded by his other companions habited in cottas, walked in procession to the Guasto, where in the presence of a most numerous assemblage he planted that holy and triumphal standard. He had no other funds to begin the work with, than two thousand scudi, furnished him by the liberality of the gentlemen of the above-named congregation; and yet he had not only to raise the church and house for the Oratory from the foundations, but first he had to clear the site of the rubbish there

accumulated; and to accomplish this, it was calculated, that besides a large sum of money, it would be necessary to employ many labourers for a number of years. Nevertheless, hardly had Fabrizio planted the cross, when, taking a spade in his hand, he began to toil at this heap of earth; and then not only his companions, moved by his virtuous example, but a great number of persons, secular and noble, employed themselves in this toilsome work.

Nor did their efforts continue for a day only; but all exercising themselves with so much the greater fervour as the undertaking appeared more difficult, within the space of little more than a month this mountain of earth had disappeared, having been carried off at the expense of much fatigue by the hands of these devout persons.

This seemed a miracle, and in truth it was universally attributed to a special grace of St. Philip, that with such ease and in so short a time they had been able to accomplish the arduous undertaking; and it was thought that he from heaven had given this great force and vigour to those who employed themselves in his service.

The place was now in such a condition that they were able to dig the foundations of the new building; and accordingly, on the 7th of July, A.D. 1642, the first stone was solemnly laid by Giacomo Teodoli, Archbishop of Amalfi, and afterwards Bishop of Forli, habited pontifically with the accustomed ceremonies of the Church, in the presence of both the magistrates of the

city. The common joy which the whole city felt on this occasion was manifested by the festive sound of trumpets and musical instruments, and the firing of many pieces of cannon. So universal was the satisfaction caused by the building of this church, that the senate of Forli granted a thousand scudi without solicitation, that the much-desired edifice might be raised with the greater expedition.

So great was the zeal of Fabrizio in promoting this undertaking, that not content with being present, in order that the workmen might fulfil their duties with the most diligent punctuality, he oftentimes assisted with his own hands, and carried the building materials to the masons, and thus in three years the new church was rendered fit for the celebration of the divine offices. Accordingly, on the 4th of December, A.D. 1645, it was pontifically blessed by the same Archbishop Teodoli. Upon this, for the sake of greater convenience, Fabrizio and his companions, to the number of eleven, removed from S. Carlo to a nearer house, which was with the greatest liberality gratuitously lent to Fabrizio by the noble family of the Marchesi.

Thus, after having remained during eight years at San Carlo, employing themselves in the above-mentioned exercises, the fathers of this infant oratory removed to their new abode, to be nearer at hand to supply the new church.

Meanwhile, the number of those who were devoted to the institute and attended the exercises, increased, inasmuch as the new church

was larger and more convenient; and the worthy labourers therein following the example of Fabrizio, their founder and father, spared no toil to promote the glory of God and the salvation of their neighbour.

Fabrizio, on his part, considering that the work of the foundation was now well set on foot, introduced the faithful observance of the constitutions of the Oratory, watching with all possible solicitude, that whatever is prescribed by them should be observed with the greatest exactness; and that the congregation might be more firmly and securely rooted in his country, he obtained from the bishop the confirmation of it.

Having thus brought the house of God to such a state, that the divine offices could with decency be celebrated in it, and the functions be carried out; he did not fail to turn his thoughts to the building of a house for his children, who were the ministers of it; and such was his diligence, that in a little more than four years, he so far completed it, as to make it habitable. Accordingly, on the 4th of February, A.D. 1650, which is a day of great solemnity for the city of Forli, being the feast of the Most Holy Virgin del Fuoco, its chief protectress, he removed with his children and companions to live in the new house which he had built with so much labour and in so short a time. And in truth, it seemed an astonishing thing, that so quickly and with such scanty resources he had been able to complete this noble church and the house of the fathers, so that by

many it was thought that the Almighty hand of God had in an especial manner concurred with him, not only in directing the work, but also in opportunely supplying the means. The servant of God himself was accustomed to say to those who expressed their astonishment at his having completed so difficult a work, "*Opus Dei hoc est, This is the work of God.*" And, indeed, from the very moment, when he determined to build a church in the *Guasto degli Orsi*, he placed all his hopes in God; for having planted the cross on the site, as has been related above, he placed the following inscription under it: "*Opus grande est; non homini sed Deo præparatur habitatio, This is a great work; we are preparing a dwelling-place not for man, but for God.*" Accordingly, having reposed all his confidence in the Lord, he was never seen to lose courage when money failed, and he speedily reaped the fruit of those cheerful hopes; for suddenly, and unexpectedly, he was provided with money so as to be able to prosecute the work successfully.

Although it was represented to him by many persons, who regulated themselves according to human prudence, that the building he had undertaken was too magnificent, and that it seemed impossible to complete it; nevertheless, his courage and confidence in God did not waver a moment. Many times also his children, seeing how great a part of the building remained to be done, were accustomed to say, "*Father, there remains a great deal to be done;*" and he used to answer, "*For the material building we shall*

do well enough; but it is the interior edifice on which we ought to spend the greatest pains."

Thus, if the servant of God was so anxious and diligent about the material house of his congregation, as has been already shown, still greater was the care he had of the spiritual edifice of his community, employing himself to make them always increase in virtue and in the faithful observance of the rules of the institute they had embraced. Hence, hardly was the house of the congregation finished, when he resolved to bless it; and then he took the opportunity of making a spiritual exhortation to his children, explaining to them the method they ought to observe in exercising the Christian virtues towards God, towards their neighbour, and towards themselves. He took occasion from the favours they had received from the Lord in assisting them in the temporal building, to exhort them to labour as faithful workmen of the Lord, in the spiritual building for the eternal salvation of souls. So strong and winning were the arguments which he used in this short address, that they remained deeply impressed in the hearts of all, so that they vied with one another in fulfilling what their good father exhorted them to.

His exertions did not cease with this address; but often did he take care by his efficacious discourses to kindle in the hearts of his children a great ardour in the Divine service, particularly by making great account of little things. In order to impress this great doctrine on their minds, he used often to say, "In the service of

God we ought to make a great account, and think much of little things, and to be diligent in our accustomed spiritual exercises, because if we omit one thing to-day, to-morrow we shall omit another, and so by little and little we shall abandon the service of God. It is a most difficult thing for one who has become remiss and tepid in the Divine service, to return again to the good way; and for this there is need of a great and especial assistance of God. Thus, by his words, he was ever striving to keep his children ever inflamed with fervour in the Divine service, even in things which seem small and trifling. And, because the devil, transforming himself into an angel of light, sometimes persuades men to undertake works which seem great, either to arouse in the heart the spirit of ambition and pride, or to distract the members from duties proper to the institute, the good father used prudently and wisely to remind his subjects, that in the service of God it is not well to be too ready to invent new things, but rather to accommodate ourselves to the usage of others, in order the more easily to avoid the spirit of ambition. By means of these and similar instructions, but above all, by his most virtuous example, did Father Fabrizio implant in the heart of his children and in his congregation the true spirit of the sons of St. Philip, which still lives in the congregation of Forlì to the edification of all the city, which derives the greatest advantages from their spirituality and continual example of excellent and Christian

virtue ; inasmuch as they always employ themselves with unwearied diligence in the administration of the most holy Sacraments. On feast days, after the singing of vespers, the usual sermon is preached, and in the evening there is the oratory with music and another sermon, and on week days daily prayer in common.

After Father Fabrizio passed to the other life, there were not wanting persons to add ornaments to the church he raised with such labour. Accordingly, they first entreated Mgr. Claudio Ciccolini, bishop of Forli, to be pleased to consecrate it solemnly with the ceremonies used by the Catholic Church, who, loving the congregation as a tender father, willingly acceded to their request, so that on the 5th of May, A. D. 1672, it was consecrated with great pomp, and dedicated to the holy Father St. Philip Neri. Afterwards they applied themselves to ornamenting the church with the finest marbles and most beautiful paintings. Thus the high altar especially is adorned with four great columns of red marble, which with those under the tribune have a very fine effect. On the paintings the pencils of the most skilful artists of the time were employed, such as Maratti, Cignani, Giovanni Francesco da Cento, Colonna, Metelli, and others ; so that in beauty, magnificence, and richness, the church of the Oratory surpasses all others in the city of Forli, according to the common consent of all.

The sacristy corresponds with the church, being a spacious room, surrounded with closets

of walnut well wrought, and not very unlike that of the Chiesa Nuova in Rome. Lastly, the house also is handsome and magnificent, being built on a modern plan, and capable of accommodating many persons.

CHAPTER III.

FATHER FABRIZIO EMPLOYS HIMSELF IN THE DUTIES OF HIS VOCATION, AND GOVERNS THE CONGREGATION WITH THE GREATEST PRUDENCE AND CHARITY, SO THAT IT HAPPILY INCREASES.

No sooner did Father Fabrizio behold the accomplishment of his holy desire of living with his companions in the house of the congregation, than he wholly applied himself to plant in it the true spirit of the holy father, and the exercise of the principal duties of the institute. It was for this end, as we have already said, that he made a fervent address to his subjects, animating them to the acquisition of the virtues proper to their vocation, to the faithful observance of the rules, and to consecrate themselves entirely to the service of their neighbour, no less in the confessional than by preaching in the Oratory, and in the other exercises practised by the sons of St. Philip. And if his words were full of ardour, no less zealous were his deeds; so that his example was most effectual in stirring up the hearts of his companions to imitate him. It is impossible to explain how exactly and

faithfully he observed the constitutions, not allowing himself to transgress even one, however slight and unimportant it might seem. He devoted himself moreover with the greatest diligence to the two principal employments of the institute, that is to say, to preaching and hearing confessions. He would wait a long time in the confessional, seeking to win sinful souls, to cleanse them and make them white in the blood of the Lamb. Nor was he content with staying there to reconcile sinners to God; he eagerly hastened whenever he was summoned to hear the confessions of the sick, with the greater fervour as their danger was more imminent, and their need of assistance more urgent. If at any time some father was sent for, without the name of any in particular being mentioned, to go to the house of a dying person to hear his confession, and to assist him in his last perilous struggle, he, although it were in the night, and the season inclement, would go to the house of those poor sick persons without putting the other fathers to any trouble.

Great indeed was the benefit he caused by his attendance in the confessional; and no less was the harvest he reaped from his sermons in the Oratory. He was a person of extensive knowledge, being well versed no less in sacred than in human learning, a good philosopher and theologian, and moreover well skilled in the laws civil as well as canon. Nevertheless, in order to accommodate himself to the customs of the institute which he had embraced, he chose a

simple and familiar style, studiously making use of common words, and such as are commonly employed by the people. His arguments, moreover, were so convincing, and his reasoning so effectual, that every one who heard him was obliged to acknowledge, that even the most hardened and obstinate hearts were compelled by a sweet violence to yield and be softened when they heard him preach. Nor is it wonderful that his exhortations so powerfully affected even the hard hearts of the obstinate, since his eloquence was learned, not so much by human art, as by means of most ardent prayer, as he was accustomed before preaching to have recourse to prayer, and to study his sermons in that book written within and without, the book of his crucified Lord.

As it is most certainly true that it avails little to undertake great works, if they are not preserved and maintained in their greatness; for this reason Fabrizio, while with such ardour and application he undertook the foundation of the Oratory, with no less solicitude exerted himself not only to preserve it, but to make it increase and advance in perfection. This result was most happily attained, thanks to the charity and zeal with which he governed the infant Oratory; so that I shall gladly take this opportunity of relating minutely his prudent and holy system of government, that it may serve as a model for those who hold the same office of Superior, so difficult to exercise, particularly over subjects who are free and without the bond of vows; insomuch

that it was acknowledged by the holy father himself to be no easy matter to know how to govern them.

In the first place, then, Fabrizio, with the greatest diligence and the most exact perseverance, as has been remarked, before everything else observed all the Constitutions left by the holy founder to his children; and hence he with justice required that they should be observed in the same manner by his subjects; nor did he allow anything to be omitted under the pretext of its being of small matter, but with the greatest zeal he insisted that everything contained therein should be carried out with the greatest precision.

He was, moreover, cautious in giving his commands, remembering the saying of St. Philip, that he who would be well obeyed must command but little. In his commands he never used harsh or authoritative words, but with the gentlest manner he used terms the most discreet and affectionate, and such as seemed to be entreaties rather than orders. By this sublime method of commanding as though he were entreating, he not only gained the affection of his subjects, who loved him most tenderly, but moreover won a reverential respect so great, that they obeyed his very signs. So far is it from the truth, that a discreet affectionateness of manner in a superior renders him contemptible to his subjects, that, on the contrary, it makes them obedient to him, and holds them in a sweet bondage; so that in obeying his orders they show themselves to be voluntary slaves rather than subjects. Again, in

order that abuses, which are so insensibly introduced even in the most religious houses, might not take root in his Oratory, he was ever on the watch to tear them up when they had hardly begun to spring. On one occasion, the father-minister, who had the care of the common table, having added an apple more than usual, this novelty was so displeasing to the zealous priest, that he gave him a serious rebuke; and when he attempted to excuse himself by saying, that if he had not distributed these apples to the fathers they would have been spoiled, he gave him this suitable answer: "What does it matter? let them be spoiled; but do not introduce new usages, which in time produce the worst effects."

But while he watched with such diligence that nothing should be added in the refectory, however small, beyond the custom of the congregation, he was equally careful that nothing should be wanting to the fathers, which was reasonable and according to the custom of the sons of St. Philip; and accordingly he used to order the fathers who successively held the office of minister to take care that the usual dishes were not wanting at table; "Because," said he, "if any one wishes to mortify himself by abstinence, he ought to do so willingly and of his own accord, and not from want of sufficient food, as the institute of the holy father is founded on charity; so that his children work not from constraint or by force, but freely and from choice."

If the greatest difficulty which superiors have to encounter is that of correcting the defects

of their subjects, the dexterity which Father Fabrizio used in administering correction, is truly deserving of admiration. To the zeal of the Superior he joined the gentleness of the father, and in this manner he was able to accomplish his intention without in the least wounding the offender. The silence which is observed at the common table of the Oratory is most rigorous, and is never dispensed with, nor is it allowed to any one except the Superior and minister, to open his lips even to ask for anything he may require. Once, however, it happened that one of the fathers raised his voice somewhat to ask for water to mix with his wine. Fabrizio noticed this violation of the rule, and was secretly displeased at it. Nevertheless he passed it over at the time, but afterwards meeting this father in the church, when there was no one else there who could notice it, he affectionately approached him, and laying his hand on his shoulder, whispering in his ear, begged him to mortify himself by not speaking at table. So effectual was this correction, sweetened by gentleness, that this father resolved to avoid this fault for the future. To another father, who, with more zeal than discretion, had mortified the child of some one who frequented the Oratory, he administered a reproof in a manner no less gentle than original. Taking a little picture, on which was represented our most loving Redeemer surrounded by children, with whom, by reason of their simplicity and innocence, he conversed willingly, and on which were inscribed

these words, "Sinite parvulos venire ad me, Suffer little children to come to Me," he presented it to him. He understood what Fabrizio meant by this significant gift, and understanding the mild admonition, as if impelled by a gentle violence, moderated for the future this indiscreet zeal.

By a silent but most effectual reproof he brought to repentance another father, who, feeling a repugnance to wait at the door of the house, (for at that time, owing to the small number of subjects, the priests, as well as others, performed the duties of porter,) had, not without some impatience, thrown down the keys. The good Superior witnessed all this, and without the least change of manner, when he saw an act so unseemly, and so unlike a son of St. Philip, without saying a word, extended his hand and took up the keys, and punctually performed the duties of porter for eight days, although he was Superior and founder of the house. By this example the priest at the same time was filled with confusion, and corrected his fault, and having resumed the office, which so short a time before was most offensive to him, he continued to fill it, not only without annoyance and regret, but with great consolation. So true it is, that the example of the Superior often removes the disgust which subjects feel for their employments.

The more difficult was the correction of a defect from its being inveterate, so much the more did Fabrizio make use of gentleness in

order to cure it. Accordingly, although it was but a slight fault which one of his subjects had been in the habit of committing, nevertheless, as he obstinately persisted in the same failing, the heart of the zealous priest was inflamed with the desire of seeing him corrected. With this intent, so far from arming himself with severity, he showed the greatest mildness, and going to the room of the offender, humbly prostrated himself before him, and with the greatest tenderness entreated him to be pleased to correct himself of this error. At this proceeding this father was not only brought to change his mind, but was filled with compunction, so that he immediately promised to use every effort to correct himself. Accordingly, by keeping a constant watch over himself and his actions, he overcame this inveterate habit, which by long use had become, as it were, a second nature.

These gentle ways of his in correcting the defects of his subjects sprang doubtless from his great prudence; for he knew by experience how difficult a thing it is to administer correction to those who have not sacrificed their liberty by vows, as he himself declared to a father who was persuading him to give a severe reproof to another father; "Oh! if you knew," said he, what it means to correct a free man! but you will know when you are Superior." These last words were a true prediction of what was to happen after his death, for this very father was his successor in the office of Superior of the congregation.

Lastly, if he ever discovered that the advice or correction he had given to any one was undeserved, he immediately begged his pardon, as he once did in the case of a certain father, to whose room he went, and humbly asked his forgiveness for his presumption, as he called it; although he had not been influenced in giving him this advice by any other motive than the zeal he had for the observance of the rule.

But while in administering correction, and in zealously maintaining the exact observance of the rules and laudable customs of the Oratory he blended gentleness with rigour, though in such proportions that the former always seemed to prevail, yet in promoting the welfare and even the suitable gratifications of his subjects, he rather resembled a most tender and affectionate mother; for he kept an anxious watch that nothing should be wanting to them, and assisted them in their needs.

At the very commencement of the rising Oratory, knowing that these young plants had need of cultivation by means of the sciences, that they might become fit to exercise the principal and exalted duties of the institute, he took care, while they still remained in the church of San Carlo della Carità, that a Camaldolese monk, a celebrated theologian, should teach them philosophy and theology, under whose instruction many of them made such progress in the sciences, as to be most profitable, not only to the infant congregation, but to the whole city of Forli. If for any just reason any of his chil-

dren were separated from him by going to some other city, they were not on this account withdrawn from his paternal and loving care. On the contrary, he was then more than ever solicitous about them, recommending them continually and with the greatest affection to the Lord in his fervent prayers, that He would deliver them from every untoward accident, as well in soul as in body.

On one occasion, when one of them was obliged to go from home, he had borrowed a horse so high spirited and unmanageable, that he would scarcely submit to any one who wished to ride him. The good father, when he accepted the offer, did not recollect the temper of the animal, considering only the need he had of him; but when he was about to mount, became not a little alarmed, fearing lest some great danger might befall him. In this difficulty, he could think of nothing better than to have recourse to his good father, to tell him his fears and the necessity he was in of setting out immediately. The compassionate heart of Fabrizio was moved at hearing this, and he accompanied him to the door of the house; he then approached the fierce animal, and putting his hand on his head, said, "Be gentle." Strange to say! the animal at once changing his natural ferocity, became suddenly gentle, and not only allowed the father to ride without any accident, but even retained the same gentleness for the future.

Still greater was the compassion of the servant of God towards another father, because it

was in a spiritual matter ; and still greater the consolation he brought him by his kind words, and still more perhaps by his prayers.

One of the fathers of the Oratory of Forli had been accustomed to feel the most sweet and tender emotions in reading the heroic virtues of his Father St. Philip, and of enjoying a more than ordinary spiritual consolation. But as these feelings, however spiritual, are not permanent in this changeable and inconstant life, in process of time, not only did this sensible devotion cease, but whenever he took up the Life of the holy father, he experienced so great a weariness and disgust, that he was utterly unable to describe it. This strange change was most severely felt by this loving son of the holy father ; so that not knowing what to do, he had recourse to Father Fabrizio, to whom he related his trouble. Fabrizio looking him steadily in the face, and laying his hand on his shoulder, said to him these words, "Go on and continue your devotions, have confidence in the aid of your glorious father, and do not doubt." When he had said this, his afflicted son, feeling confidence in his words, again took up the Life of the holy Father St. Philip, and again experienced in reading it the same devotion and spiritual joy, but in a higher degree than before, and never lost it again.

Meanwhile, the fathers having experienced the amiable conduct of Fabrizio, and his prudence and skill in governing, wished to have him always, as long as he lived, for their father and

Superior, and always confirmed him in his office after the expiration of the usual three years. Many were the artifices he employed to withdraw him from the burden, which his humility made him feel too heavy. He alleged in his favour, what he called his too great indulgence, as prejudicial to the faithful observance of the rules and constitutions bequeathed by the holy father to his children. He excused himself by saying, that he was no longer fit to put his hand to any work, as a Superior ought to do, in order to fulfil his duties well and perfectly. He blamed his memory, as having become so defective that he could not remember things even the most important, so that he was quite unfit for the office of Superior. Lastly, he represented by earnest and powerful arguments to the electors, that the wish to render his government perpetual was an abuse, and a very bad example, which would produce the worst effects in impeding the happy advancement of the Congregation. To his arguments he added tears and prayers, and falling on his knees on the ground, when the new election was about to be held, he humbly entreated the fathers to release him from the burden, to which he had hitherto submitted only to obey and to gratify their desire, whereby he had deserved that for once at least they should allow him the satisfaction he asked, of being able to experience in his life-time that true happiness which is enjoyed in exact obedience to superiors.

Although on any other point his prayers were

as commands to the electors, who recognised him for their father and founder, and although his tears were most moving, yet he could not obtain what he desired; for the fathers, regarding the common good of their congregation, which depended on his most happy administration, would on no account deprive themselves of it; and accordingly it lasted as long as his life.

CHAPTER IV.

THE LAST SICKNESS AND DEATH OF THE FATHER FABRIZIO, AND HIS HONOURABLE OBSEQUIES.

As the death of any one is, for the most part, a faithful counterpart of his life, so that we may say, "*Qualis vita finis ita*, As is life, such is death;" so as the life of the servant of God Fabrizio dall' Aste was virtuous, his death in like manner was virtuous and exemplary also. He had governed his congregation happily and with the greatest prudence for the space of about eighteen years, and had shed a lustre over it by his exemplary life, interwoven, as it was, with the most noble virtues, which will supply abundant materials for the following chapters, when about the early months of the year 1655, he was seized, as it were, with the desire of reading with especial attention the narratives of the deaths of the saints.

From these narratives, which are glorious ra-

ther than sad, inasmuch as they contain the account of victories gained in the last contest with the common enemy, he drew not only ample matter for devout and tender meditations, but also ardent desires of imitating these most glorious examples in the last struggle. Accordingly, this devout reading served as the best preparation for his death, which was near at hand.

On the 2nd of November, the day on which the holy Church, like a tender mother, celebrates the annual commemoration of her departed children, in order to move the living to render assistance by their works of mercy to the dead, he was assailed by a fever, the forerunner of death.

This sudden and unexpected attack did not find him unoccupied or with his hands folded in idleness, but labouring for the glory of God and for the benefit of his neighbour, as it had been his wish to the very last day of his life to employ all his powers and himself entirely on so worthy and glorious an object. He occupied himself with his spiritual children in the usual conferences which he had the custom of holding; and the subject of his discourse was exactly what the Church supplied for that day, that is to say, the obligation which charity and piety impose on us of praying to God for the dead; and the gratitude which these blessed souls show in obtaining a happy death for those who practise this devotion towards them, and who by their suffrages have delivered them from their dark and painful prison. He treated, moreover of

the preparation which it was necessary to make, in order to be secure at the last extremity of gaining a happy eternity ; and lastly, he made some reflections which contained allusions to his own approaching dissolution, which perhaps God, either by express revelation or an inward presentiment, had made known to him. While he was with the greatest fervour proceeding with his discourse, which, according to his custom, he delivered while walking about, he felt himself seized with a sudden illness, insomuch that he was obliged so say, "My children, I feel unable to stand ; allow me to sit down." The undaunted Fabrizio did not, however, at that assault lay down the arms of the Divine word, which he had so successfully handled throughout his whole life ; but having taken a seat, he was resolved to continue the discourse he had begun. After this, as it was then the time for the common prayer in the evening, the love which he felt for this chief exercise of his institute, overcoming his weakness of body, he went to the Oratory, and assisted at the meditation, prayers, and ceremonies which there take place.

The violence of the malady now forced him to throw himself on his bed ; but before going to lie down, he went to seek his confessor, upon whom he depended entirely and in all things, and told him that he had been seized with the fever, adding, that he thought of going to repose without taking any supper, if he approved of it.

His prudent confessor not only granted his

request, but, moreover, strictly insisted, that he should not rise the next morning without receiving his permission. Thus having received the benediction of his spiritual father, he went to bed, from which he was never to rise again.

With anxious step, before the break of day, this father hastened to the apartment of Fabrizio, to learn some tidings of his health; and having found that he was very severely afflicted with sickness, he thought he ought not to be neglected, and accordingly sent for the physician, who, having paid him a visit, found that he was attacked with a very severe fever occasioned by erysipelas, which had appeared on the head in two different places, and also on the chest; and when he came to visit him the second time, he found him still worse than before, so that when he felt his pulse he remained some time in suspense. Fabrizio perceived this, and hardly had the physician left the room, when he again sent for his confessor, and told him with the greatest confidence, of the hesitation he had noticed in the physician, and said, that having placed the interests of his soul in his hands with the greatest reliance, it was then time to show his fidelity, by proceeding to inform him unreservedly, and without any disguise, of the state he was in, which he entreated him to do by the mercies of the Lord with the greatest confidence, desiring to provide for himself, as far as the infirmity of his spirit allowed, in order to be prepared for death.

Meanwhile the malady increased, and in con-

séquence the suffering and pain; but his patience was incomparably superior to it, as he endured cheerfully all the weariness and suffering which this painful infirmity occasioned him, passing over in silence what caused him still greater pain; for he not only endured, but concealed even from his physician a putrid tumour, which had risen on the inner part of his right arm, though he revealed it to his spiritual physician, that is to say, to his confessor, to whom he related what great suffering the tumour caused him. And he added, that he supported it without making it known, in order to exercise a little act of patience, as he said, in penance for his sins. He expressed a desire, however, that he should examine it, that he might be directed by his orders, when on uncovering the place where the evil was seated, the tumour burst, and immediately the severity of the pain which it caused him was mitigated.

From this unexpected event the sick man gathered two important reflections: the first, that in recompense of this little act of confident obedience, God had delivered him from the pains, for which he returned humble thanks to the Giver of all good; the second, that by being thus suddenly relieved from this affliction, God had made him perceive how slight the evil in reality was, and that it was no great thing which he had supported for love of Him.

On Saturday, the 6th of November, his malady had in no degree yielded to the force of the remedies, but obstinately resisted, or rather

gathered greater strength; so that on the morning of that day, when his confessor, according to custom, entered his room, the sick man turned to him, and said, "Father, do you say nothing about communicating me? I have already placed my soul in your hands." It was principally for this very object, that this Father had entered his apartment; and, accordingly, he replied, that his wish should soon be gratified, for that on the next morning the Bread of Angels should be administered to him as the Viaticum, and that he might prepare himself for the great action he was about to perform.

The father, however, was obliged to change his intention, and to anticipate the execution of what he purposed to do; for the physician, having visited the sick man in the evening, gave him up in despair, and declared that life must very soon fail, perhaps even before sun-rise the next morning.

It is impossible to explain the emotion and grief of the confessor at this sad intelligence. That he might not, however, fail in the promise he had made with all sincerity to the sick man, he again hastily entered the room. Before he could open his lips, Fabrizio said to him, with a composed and smiling countenance, as though he foresaw the joyful intelligence he was bringing him, "What good news have you to tell me?" To this question the good father first answered by a most bitter lamentation, not being able to restrain the tears which the desperate condition of this excellent priest drew from his eyes; but

afterwards, with due fidelity, he declared to him his real state, and the sad prediction made by the physician.

Hardly had he uttered these words, when Fabrizio, placing his arms in the form of a cross, and raising his eyes to heaven with very different feelings, replied to the tears and words, interrupted with sighs, of his confessor, with a serene countenance and words of joy and gladness, and broke out into these words: "*Lætatus sum in his, quæ dicta sunt mihi, in domum Domini ibimus, I have rejoiced in the things which were said to me, we will go to the house of the Lord;*" adding, "I thank you, father, for the good news you have brought me, than which it is certain you could give me none more agreeable; for the miseries of this world will come to an end, and by the grace of God, I hope to go to enjoy Him in Paradise."

So true it is, that to the servants and friends of God, the tidings of approaching death, which to men of the world prove so hard and bitter, cause joy and pleasure. Meanwhile he wished to dispose of his goods, that his brothers might have it in their power to put in execution some pious works, which appeared to him to be still imperfect. Accordingly, with the consent of one of them, who at that moment came to visit him, the public notary was called in, to whom he dictated his last will. As justice required, he made his brothers his heirs; and only bequeathed some legacies for the succour of poor families, and particularly for the support of a strange

woman whom he had converted, and placed for security in the house of St. Mary Magdalen; he willed, moreover, that certain magnificent furniture, which he had undertaken to provide for the sacristy of the congregation, should be completed; and, lastly, to the Congregation itself, which was his daughter, as he had founded it, he bequeathed a legacy of six hundred scudi. When his will was completed, he consigned to his confessor all the money he had about him, which amounted to almost an hundred scudi, begging him to use a portion of this sum for the common sacristy, another portion in having masses celebrated for his soul, and the rest in alms for the poor on the day of his death. By this act, he exercised poverty no less than charity, depriving himself of all the money he had, to die in the bosom of poverty, which had always been dear to him.

Having thus well disposed of his earthly inheritance, Fabrizio only aspired after the possession of that which is heavenly and eternal; and therefore eagerly desired to receive the pledge of it, that is to say, the Holy Communion as the Viaticum. Accordingly, he prepared himself from that moment to receive the Divine Sacrament the following morning, as he had been told by his confessor; and first he desired to purify his conscience by a general confession. When this was done, the confessor remembering the opinion of the physician, said he thought it better to communicate him the same evening without waiting for the following morning. Here-

upon the dying priest was still more delighted, from the desire he had of uniting himself with his Lord, and the evidences of this inward joy were manifest in his cheerful mien; and, although he assured his confessor that he should not die that night, he expressed himself ready to receive the holy Viaticum the same evening.

He wished, however, for half an hour before, to converse with his great Father St. Philip on the important affair of his eternal salvation, and to invite him, so to speak, to bear him company in receiving with honour and devotion the Divine Guest. He, therefore, entreated his confessor to remove everything from his table, and to place there the relics of the Holy Father. When this request was granted, he dismissed every one from his room, that he might remain alone with his glorious father. What were the affections and what the sentiments of this worthy son of the Saint, whose venerable relics he had before him, in order that he might obtain for him, and make him partaker of those seraphic ardours, with which, in his life-time, he used to receive that Divine Food, may be better imagined by the devout than described by my rude pen. The Divine Sacrament was brought to him by his confessor; and at the sight of the adorable Host, his fervent love was still more enkindled, so as to shine forth in his countenance, which appeared all radiant with joy. Then thinking that he had not prepared himself sufficiently to receive so great a Majesty, he made a protestation to this effect before the fathers who were assem-

bled for this scene: "My fathers," said he, "my father confessor had told me, that he intended to communicate me to-morrow morning, but as he has now ordered me to receive the most holy Viaticum this evening, before God and you, my fathers, I accuse myself of my negligence and little preparation to receive so great a Sacrament, and pray the Lord, to forgive my insufficient preparation; and you, my fathers, that you will be pleased to pray God to pardon me so great negligence. And as I have no time to prepare myself better, I will at least perform this little act of reverence, and receive Him on my knees on the ground, to express more perfectly, that I make this accusation with all my heart." Having said this, he leapt from the bed, in order to prostrate himself on the ground, his feeble limbs deriving new strength from the love and reverence he had for his Lord in the Sacrament. He was, however, prevented from doing this, and kept in bed by the charity of the fathers, who justly feared lest such an impetuous movement might accelerate his death.

But the mere voice of his confessor had more power to retain him than the force used by the fathers; for when he would not consent to his doing an act which might be so prejudicial to his life, and assured him, that God would accept his good intention, he changed his wish, and contented himself with making an act of obedience instead of humility, as he had intended. And now that he was on the very point of receiving his beloved Lord within his breast,

he gave a manifest sign of his inward joy ; for his whole countenance became wonderfully inflamed and joyful to such a degree, that those who were present remained not a little affected, and inwardly filled with compunction ; and many through emotion were unable to restrain the tears which flowed from their eyes.

After having received the most holy Viaticum with the usual ceremonies performed by the Church in this extremity, he besought the bystanders to be pleased to leave him alone, as he desired without disturbance, and without being observed, to treat with his Lord on the great affair of his eternal salvation, making use of his great father St. Philip, whose dear relics he would always keep present before him, as his mediator in this all-important matter.

The life of Father Fabrizio was of the greatest importance, not only to his own Congregation, but to the whole city of Forli ; so that the fathers in the greatest affliction for so heavy a loss, continually recommended him to God with the most earnest prayers ; and when the morning of Sunday dawned, exposed for this just cause the most holy Sacrament to the adoration of the faithful. When the news of this was spread abroad, many persons assembled in the church of the Oratory to join their prayers with those of the fathers, to obtain from God the prolongation of the life of one, from whom they were continually receiving so many temporal and spiritual benefits. His brothers, who from their relationship, as well as the motive

common to all, most ardently desired his life, had recourse to Mary, the dispenser of all graces, making a vow to take him to visit her venerable house at Loretto, if he should recover. But the sick man, who was cautious of disposing of his own will, which he had consecrated entirely to God, would not give his consent until he was ordered to do so by his confessor, to whom he was always most submissive. In the meantime, some sign of amendment was seen, but so faint, that the physician thought that no account could be made of it; nevertheless, the bishop, who then paid him a visit, conceived some hope that he should not so soon lose this labourer, so worthy of his vineyard. The sick man, however, having besought him humbly to recommend his soul to the mercy of God, and to be pleased to give him his benediction, when he left the room he gave him this consolation, and bestowed upon him his pastoral blessing.

But short indeed was their joy from the hopes they had conceived of his amendment, for about the seventh hour of the following night, that, namely, which preceded Monday, he was observed by the infirmarian who assisted him, to be in so sad a condition, that all dismayed and out of breath, he ran to give notice of it to the confessor, for he thought that but a short time remained for him to live. He without delay went to the room of the sick man, who, when he asked him how he felt, answered, smiling, "As it pleases God." This father, judging more

by his condition than his tranquil answer to his question, thought it best to anoint him with the holy oil; and that he might more profitably receive this sacrament, which brings such comfort to the dying, he first told him what he was going to do. On hearing this, he declared that he desired nothing more than to fortify himself with this powerful help in that last struggle, and then placing his hands in the form of a cross, and raising his eyes to heaven, he expressed with great fervour the following sentiments of lively hope and resignation to God, which were faithfully noted, together with others, which he uttered in the course of his sickness, by his confessor above-named: "O my Jesus and my Lord!" said he, "I confide in your boundless pity, that you will pardon the multitude of my transgressions, although I be unworthy of it. Such indeed is your mercy, that by means of it I hope to go to enjoy you in Paradise. But, my Lord, I protest that if it were your will that my soul should go hence to suffer eternal punishment in hell, I should be willing to suffer eternal punishment rather than not submit to your most holy pleasure; should I then have deserved to go to hell in punishment of my sins, I entreat you, O my Lord, to pardon me, and to be pleased to lead me to enjoy you eternally in heaven."

After these words, knowing that Extreme Unction is, as it were, the appendix of the Sacrament of Penance, he wished to confess before receiving it, and afterwards, out of reverence

for so great a sacrament, desiring to add bodily cleanliness to purity of conscience, he besought the infirmarian to wash the parts which would be touched by the sacred oil. Although the sufferings of the dying priest were at this extremity excessive, yet preserving his accustomed serenity of mind, he received this sacrament with great consolation of spirit, always responding to the forms used by the holy Church.

When this ceremony was over, the confessor placed in his hands the only comfort of the dying, the image of Christ crucified, and reminded him that now, more than ever, it was time to make his dwelling-place in the open side of his Redeemer, he then proceeded to call to mind the meditations in which he took the greatest delight; and particularly he repeated to him the words of the holy Church: "*Ibi nostra fixa sint corda, ubi vera sunt gaudia*, May our hearts be there fixed, where there are true joys." At these sweet and pleasant remembrances, Fabrizio answered, "Amen. Pray God that I may be able to accomplish all that He has ordained for me." Lastly, in order that no consolation and spiritual assistance might be wanting to this virtuous dying man in his extremity, he received the papal benediction from the same confessor, to whom the Bishop of Forli had delegated the authority he had received from the chief Pontiff. As the longing was great with which he received this treasure of Indulgences, which in their greatest need the common father and universal pastor dispenses to his children; so great

in proportion was the obligation which he acknowledged that he owed to the bishop, for the charity he had showed him in making him a partaker in the Pope's bounty ; for which he entreated his confessor to offer the prelate his most humble thanks. While they were performing these devout rites, all the fathers of the Congregation formed a sorrowing circle round his bed, and observing that exhausted nature, oppressed by the weight of the malady, continued gradually to fail, they entreated their dying father, through the same confessor, that when the Lord should conduct him to Paradise, he would remember to pray the divine goodness on their behalf, and that in the meantime he would leave them some useful and fruitful piece of advice, which, as his last words, might remain firmly impressed on their memory. At this reasonable request, Fabrizio turning towards them with his countenance full of tenderness, spoke thus : " O my fathers and children, remain always united, and love one another. Compassionate one another's defects, and correct them with love. Persevere in the service of God. Be diligent in the duties of the Congregation, which each one is bound to perform. Avoid the conversation of seculars, and courts, and curiosity, as pests of the soul ; nor suffer yourselves, under pretext of seeing sights or hearing music, to yield to curiosity, since these are oftentimes the delusions of the devil. Honour and serve all, as children of God. Solemnize your feasts to the

glory of God alone, and not to gain credit for them from the world."

His children were not satisfied with this affectionate counsel; for they still desired to receive the last blessing of their dear father. But when the confessor made this request to him, he declared absolutely that he was unable to gratify them; for he said he had not lived in this world in such a manner as to have a right to bless any one, and that he had no merit to perform such an action, but that he was even unworthy to be numbered amongst them. The anxiety of the fathers to receive this consolation only increased with his refusal; and the confessor, knowing well how great was the humility of Fabrizio, and that he would never be induced to do it voluntarily, made use of his authority, that the fathers might have this consolation, and expressly commanded him in virtue of holy obedience, to bless his children. Then without further remonstrance, wishing to be obedient to death, the servant of God raised his hand, and tenderly lifting his eyes towards heaven, as though he were using all his efforts to obtain it for them, he said, "In virtue then of holy obedience, '*Benedictio Dei Patris omnipotentis descendat super vos et maneat semper.*'"

His children were much consoled by this action, but felt even more emotion than before; so that torrents of tears, so to speak, flowed from their eyes. They then thought it best to leave his room, that he might take some repose, and not to interrupt his tender and final union with God.

Meanwhile day broke, Monday, the 8th of November, and the sad news of the sick man's condition was spread abroad. Many of his spiritual children and penitents came to his room to have the consolation of seeing him for the last time, and he gave to all some holy instructions or useful advice, and when they left, besought them to recommend the interests of his soul to God, and to his great father, St. Philip. Meanwhile the dying man, the nearer he approached his end, was the more absorbed in the consideration of heavenly and divine things, exercising his spirit in contemplating the excesses of the Divine Love, and the Passion of his Lord. His confessor, who saw that he was now approaching his passage, incited him to turn his thoughts especially to the eternal glory of Paradise, which he ought firmly to expect of the divine goodness; and as he was then going to the church to say Mass for him, he left him as a subject on which he might employ his thoughts, the words of the martyr St. Cyprian, "*Patriam nostram Paradisum computamus, We consider Paradise to be our country.*"

When the divine sacrifice was ended, the confessor, anxious to know the state of the sick man, went immediately to his room, and seeing him now in his agony, asked whether he wished him to make the recommendation of his soul; and on his answering that he did, he began those holy prayers in the presence of the fathers and other devout persons there assembled.

He did not lose the use of his senses until the

last moment of his life ; so that he attentively listened to all those most devout prayers, which the Church has so well adapted to the great need of her children at that extremity. While this was going on the crucifix was given him to kiss, on which, in his heart rather than with his lips, he impressed devout and tender kisses ; and then inhaling, as we may say, fresh life from this dear and beloved sight, he began to reason so clearly and sweetly on the Divine love and eternal glory, that one who had the good fortune to be present, was able to give the following exact account of what he said, which was recorded by Ottaviano Petrigiani in the short compendium of his Life, which he published. "He discoursed," said he, "of the love of God and the eternal glory of Paradise, which he hoped to go and enjoy, with as great freedom as if he had been preaching from his desk. His confessor fearing, and not without reason, that the fervour with which he was moved, while reasoning on so affecting a subject, should prove injurious to his weakened frame, and so hasten his death, twice besought him to end his discourse ; but as the dying man, led on by his ardour, still continued to speak, he had recourse as usual to holy obedience, and enjoined him to remain quiet, and to meditate with the heart alone. Fabrizio immediately obeyed, and answered with great humility, 'I thought I was doing well,' and then at once ended this loving discourse."

But the devout child of Mary would not at this extremity be forgetful of this great queen,

or fail to have recourse to her powerful patronage; and accordingly having ceased to speak that he might not violate the laws of holy obedience, he besought the fathers to recite for him the Litanies of the most Holy Virgin; and when they were begun, he fixed his eyes on the crucifix, and so kept them during the whole time that these sacred prayers lasted, and at the close of them he ended his life in a manner so sweet, that it seemed to be a sleep rather than death. It was observed, that while they were reciting the Litanies of the most holy Virgin and until he drew his last breath, his aspect was that of an angel, rather than a man in his agony. This has been very well described by Petrigiani in these words: "Meanwhile with an angelic aspect, which plainly showed the inward joy of his heart, so that he appeared to be rather in the midst of the joys of Paradise than the agonies of death, and with his eyes always fixed on the crucifix, as soon as the Litanies were ended with the collect of the Madonna, he breathed out his soul into the arms of his Redeemer, so gently and without any contortion of the limbs, contrary to the firm expectation of the physician, and the nature of the malady, that he seemed rather to have fallen into a most sweet sleep."

As soon as he was dead an affectionate discussion arose among his children on the command imposed upon him by his confessor, to put an end to the fervent discourse he was making a little before his passage; some asserting that he ought not to have imposed upon him this unsea-

sonable silence, as he would otherwise have expired preaching with the very words on his lips ; others, however, more justly affirmed that the Lord had inspired him with this command, in order that Fabrizio might expire with the merit of a final and persevering obedience.

The death of this great servant of God took place on the 8th of November, A.D. 1655, at mid-day, when he was forty-nine years of age. Before his body was committed to the grave, it was, according to the ancient custom, washed and habited in sacerdotal vestments ; and his humility was betrayed, as we may say, by his most pure body itself ; for there were discovered in different parts of it many scars and wounds, occasioned by the instruments of penance, with which he was accustomed to afflict his innocent flesh. These were the most apparent where the heavy blows of the discipline had wounded him, and where he wore sharp and rough hair-cloths. But it would seem that the same body bore manifest testimony, not only of his penances, but of his other virtues also ; for some persons perceived an odour so sweet and agreeable proceeding from it, that unable to distinguish of what kind it was, they pronounced it to be the fragrance of Paradise. The dead body being decently habited and arranged, was on the following morning of Tuesday carried processionally into the church, accompanied by all the fathers of the Congregation vested in cottas ; and many sacrifices were there offered for his soul. Great was the concourse of persons who assembled in the

church of the Oratory, to behold the lifeless body of this good priest; and many were the signs of esteem and high opinion in which they held him; for they vied with one another in going to kiss his hands and feet; and some touched the dead body with their coronas and rosaries, while others used every effort to have something of his to preserve as a relic. The entire population proclaiming with one voice, "The holy father is dead, the father of the poor is dead," spoke more truly his merits than any panegyric could have done.

When these pious offices were ended, which his afflicted children paid to their dear father, they began to think of burying him; but as they were on the point of executing this intention, the people, who crowded the church, becoming aware of it, began to exclaim most piteously, that it was not fit to bury so good a priest, until they had carried the body processionally round the piazza for the consolation of those who, owing to the great crowd, had not been able to enter the church, and so had not had the good fortune of even beholding him. Such unusual demonstrations were very much opposed to the quiet ways of the fathers of the Oratory; but, notwithstanding this, they were obliged to yield to the importunities of the people; for when the tidings of their wishes were brought to the governor of the city, he expressed a desire that they should by all means be gratified; although the fathers alleged many reasons against this novelty, among which one of the strongest

was, that no preparation had been made for such a ceremony.

Nor was it long before many priests and seculars appeared in the church of the Oratory with lighted torches in their hands, without having been invited by any one; and the senate, with pious munificence, to honour a fellow-citizen, who had deserved so well of his country, sent a great number of torches, that the function might be performed with greater solemnity. They also ordered that the great bell of the town-hall, which is only tolled when the universal Church is bereaved of its bishop, or on the decease of one of the senators of the city, should with its mournful voice proclaim the common grief which all felt for the loss of so great a man; an example which was followed by the other bells of the city, echoing its sad sound. The procession then moved with mournful but solemn pomp, the fathers of the Oratory carrying the bier, on which lay the dead body of their dear father and founder, nor would they yield to others their place in bearing this honoured burden. Behind the coffin followed a vast number of men and women, who with loud voices blessed the virtues and goodness of the deceased, and every one pressed forward that he might at least touch the bier out of devotion.

When the procession, or rather, triumphal array, had in this manner gone round the public square, they returned to the church of St. Philip. But not even then could they place him in the grave already prepared; for the peo-

ple, full of devotion, demanded the additional satisfaction of touching and kissing the body. About the first hour of the night, however, the crowd having in some degree become less, after they had with great difficulty laid the body in a coffin, they gave it honourable burial under the lamp of the high altar. Twenty-five years afterwards, the grave having been opened for some reason or other, his body was found incorrupt, and was recognised by the bishop and physicians of the city.

God was pleased to honour His faithful servant by bestowing through his intercession many graces upon those who were devoted to him, as well in his life-time as after his death; but as they have not been recorded by the author of the compendium of his Life, I cannot here relate them, as neither can I mention many supernatural gifts with which he was adorned by the goodness of the Most High. All I can do is, here faithfully to transcribe the words of the same Petrigiani on this subject, which are as follows: "It would now remain to recount the numerous and most wonderful graces obtained by the faithful through the intercession of Fabrizio, as well during his life, as while his body remained exposed, and almost daily after his burial, together with the many gratuitous and supernatural gifts bestowed by the Lord on His most faithful servant during his life, but the publication of them is reserved to be given hereafter in a more copious narrative of his life, to be divided into several books and chapters.

Meanwhile the authentic processes of them will be made." These are his words; and I add, moreover, that even to the present day, those devoted to him continue to carry tablets and votive offerings to his tomb for the great graces which through his intercession they obtain from the most merciful God, which, however, in obedience to the revered orders of the Holy See, are preserved by the fathers of the Oratory in another place, as I have been informed by the Father Superior of the Congregation, in a letter dated the 18th of February, A.D. 1699, in which he says, "The devotion towards Father Fabrizio is so much increased, that there is not a sick man who does not recommend himself to his prayers; and many profess to have received considerable graces; and, in fact, offerings of silver are continually brought, which, however, are kept concealed, not to oppose the decrees of the chief Pontiffs."

Besides the compendium of his Life, which was published in the year 1674, by Ottaviano Petriguani, who, though only in his younger days, had had the happiness of knowing him, and of being an admirer of his most perfect virtues, a portrait of this great servant of God was engraved on copper for the consolation of those devoted to him, around which were engraved the following words of the cxviii. Psalm: "Servavi mandata tua et testimonia tua, quia omnes viæ meæ in conspectu tuo Domine, I have kept Thy commandments and Thy testimonies, because all my ways are in Thy sight, O Lord!"

CHAPTER V.

OF THE FAITH, HOPE, AND CHARITY TOWARDS GOD OF
FATHER FABRIZIO DALL' ASTE.

THAT strong threefold cord, which, according to the teaching of Solomon, can scarcely be broken, "*Funiculus triplex difficile rumpitur*," is a true symbol of the blessed chain of the three theological virtues, by means of which the just soul is happily bound and united to God. It is faith which opens the eyes of the soul, blinded by the sin of our first parents, and raises them to behold that eternal and unchangeable truth, which hope with incessant prayer sighs to attain, and which charity happily and eagerly embraces. Faith is, so to say, a shadow, or a faint ray of the eternal light, by means of which our minds, which would otherwise be dazzled by its sovereign brightness and splendour, are enabled to gaze on the eternal and uncreated Sun. Then, hope, longing and striving to unite itself to that surpassing beauty, which faith amid lights and shades at once reveals and obscures, sighs for the possession of it, and with a holy confidence looks to obtain it; and, lastly, charity, which, as Cassiodorus says, "Faith conceives, and to which hope tends, passing beyond the shadows of faith and the longings of hope," unites the soul to its God.

By this most glorious threefold cord was

our Fabrizio united to his Lord, inasmuch as the three theological virtues were found in a degree of great perfection in his soul.

In the first place, he was a man of great faith, insomuch, that he not only wished, but languished in his desire to give his life, in pledge of his unshaken faith; and that it might be spread by his means in barbarous countries, he would have been more than willing to yield his life; and the more cruel the hand that smote him, the more grateful would he have been to it. He had, moreover, in his own family an illustrious example, which served as a whetstone to sharpen the keen desire he had to shed his blood in the service of our holy faith; for among his illustrious ancestors, one who had rendered himself most distinguished, was Cesare dall' Aste, lieutenant-general in the siege of Famagosta, when it was closely beset by the Turkish army. For when, all succour failing, the place was finally surrendered to the barbarians, not choosing to embrace the false superstition of Mahomet, to which his followers would have persuaded him to submit, he endured death with invincible courage and a generous heart, together with Bragadino, a Venetian, and Astorre Baglioni, of Perugia; thus rendering himself more renowned by shedding his blood for our holy faith, than by all his military skill, and his courage and intrepidity in war. This desire of Fabrizio to die for the faith was also inflamed by reading the histories of the holy martyrs, who had courageously endured the greatest torments rather than

fail in fidelity towards their Lord. It was not without a holy envy that he regarded the happy lot of these champions of Christ, and desired that he too might shed his blood and lose his life in so glorious a cause; nor could he at times restrain himself from manifesting to others these holy desires; for often when reflecting on the courage of the holy martyrs, towards all of whom he had the greatest and most tender devotion, he would give utterance to these heartfelt words: "O, who may expect so happy a lot!"

He was not one who took the least pleasure in hearing the news of the world, or in listening to the various events which take place in this lower earth, the knowledge of which affords occupation to the idle, for he remained continually recollected in God, and although he lived on earth, his conversation was in heaven. Nevertheless, he was not only willing, but even eager to know the progress made by the faith in remote and barbarous nations by means of the evangelical labourers engaged in planting it. Thus, he was not a little rejoiced when he heard of the happy success with which the sons of the great patriarch Ignatius, and other religious employed in this apostolic ministry had extended it in the Indies and other regions unknown to us. Accordingly, that he might have some part in this great work, in his prayers he ardently entreated the Lord to prosper with the aid of His heavenly grace the noble-minded efforts of those zealous labourers, while at the

same time he felt himself inflamed with the most ardent desires to unite his own labours with theirs, and to shed the last drop of his blood with them.

His great humility, however, moderated these ardent desires of his intrepid heart of shedding his blood in confession of the faith. On one occasion, having read, with no less diligence than devotion, some Lives of the holy martyrs, in which were described the grievous torture and cruel deaths they had endured for Christ, he remained buried in thought, like one meditating upon some serious and important matter. A father of the Congregation having noticed this, and asked him the cause, he returned this humble reply: "I am thinking," said he, "of the intrepidity of the holy martyrs in giving their lives amidst the most cruel tortures for Christ. And then I think, 'if the case should happen, in which you, Fabrizio, should have to support so much for the holy faith, how would you bear yourself?' And knowing that I should be bound to show myself prompt and constant in the same manner as the martyrs, that greater torments might be prepared for me, and on the other hand, seeing my great weakness and spiritual misery, I cannot but feel afflicted by it."

Thus spoke Fabrizio, plunged by his humility into so low and mean an opinion of himself. And when the same father replied, that on such an occasion no one could expect by his own power to have so great constancy, but that God on such occasions always strengthens our

weakness, and invigorates our sloth by the succour of His grace, he was not a little pleased with so prudent a reply, and highly commended it; and humbling himself still more, with this hope of timely aid from the mercy of God, he became perfectly calm, and his peace of mind returned.

Fabrizio, however, seeing that the good fortune of planting the faith in the uncultivated soil of barbarous countries, and of watering it with his blood, was not in store for him, set himself with all zeal to cultivate it in his own country. God had bestowed upon him the special gift of an eminent degree of knowledge and a most clear understanding of the sacred mysteries of the Catholic religion; hence it was, that he had a wonderful facility in teaching other persons, not only those of rank and education, but even the most rude and ignorant, the most profound mysteries and the most hidden treasures of the holy faith. So great indeed was the clearness with which he explained these profound mysteries, that men of the least capacity and education were amply instructed in them, and spiritually consoled.

Lastly, his faith was at once perfect and sublime; it was perfect, because he not only confessed with mouth and heart the Catholic truths, but because it shone forth in his works, inasmuch as they were regulated according to the maxims of the faith; nor could he understand how a man once enlightened by this heavenly ray, could ever be induced to violate the divine

law, and to transgress the path of God's precepts. It was sublime, inasmuch as his profound humility, which veiled from his eyes all the great virtues which adorned his soul, could not hide or diminish in his sight the greatness of his faith, as is related by Petrignani, the author of the compendium of his Life, in these words: "Among so many virtues which crowned his merit, there was not one which he recognised in himself, except that of holy faith."

Lastly, his faith was not wanting in that rare good quality of being blind and unarguing. When anything was proposed by the Church for belief, nothing more was required to make him fully persuaded of the truth of it, so that he was accustomed to say that in the mysteries of our faith, we have no need to aim at raising the understanding, or seeking subtle reasons in support of them; but rather to humble ourselves profoundly, to believe what God and our holy mother the Church command.

So utterly infallible did he consider all that the Catholic religion professes, that he could not understand how a man could be found so dull of understanding as not to be enlightened by the clear rays of holy faith, which to his mind appeared evidence rather than faith. Hence it was, that on one occasion being asked which he considered greater, the faith of the Magi, who, under the guidance of a new and portentous star, hastened to adore the Infant Jesus in the cave of Bethlehem, or that of us Christians in believing in the real existence of Christ in the

consecrated Host, he at once replied, that beyond a doubt he considered that of the holy kings to be greater, since the existence of Christ in the Sacrament could no longer be called faith, owing to the continual miracles wrought by our Lord in the consecrated Host.

Hope has been called by the father St. Zeno the glory of faith, and that with good reason; inasmuch as it is the boast of faith, that after it has unveiled heavenly secrets, hope, guided by its light, so completely elevates man, that though he is but a little and vile worm of the earth, he not only aspires, but with a holy presumption has the firmest confidence of entering into possession of the eternal kingdom and enjoyment of God Himself. It is the property of hope to despise all perishing goods here below, and to aim only at those which are imperishable and eternal, in the certain confidence of obtaining them from the Father of Mercies.

All earthly goods, for the attainment of which men of the world toil and even shed their blood, were regarded by our Fabrizio as husks incapable of satisfying the hunger of a Catholic, and food fit only for those who live as unclean animals. Moreover, dignities and riches, the amusements and recreations of the world, were generously trampled under foot in his affections, which were raised towards his blessed country of Paradise, where his hope sought to find entrance. Hence after his return from Rome, on the vacancy of the office of Penitentiary in the cathedral of his native city, which was one of the most honourable and

richest canonries of Forli, although his brother Antonio dall' Aste wished by all means to exert himself to get it conferred upon him, and although there was no doubt of his obtaining it from his close and confidential intimacy with the bishop, Fabrizio seriously told him that there was no need for him to trouble himself about the matter, since he was not fit or worthy of ecclesiastical dignities, and had firmly resolved to remain in the condition of a simple priest.

So little account did he make of riches, that he willingly scattered them among the poor, in order to transmit them with interest to Paradise, after which he sighed. So estranged was he from the amusements of this world, that he commonly occupied himself in his own room, meditating on heavenly things, and it was only when charity opened the door that he quitted those beloved walls.

As he thus generously trampled underfoot and made no account of the things of this world, so in a far greater proportion was his confidence increased of obtaining the happy possession of that eternal kingdom. At the close of his life, the nearer he felt himself to be to this inheritance, so much the more ardent became his hope ; so that having once been visited by one of his spiritual children, he said to him, " My son, the judgments of God are great and to be feared ; but I hope in the divine mercy, and in the Passion of Jesus Christ, to save my soul." Nevertheless, according to the maxim of the saints, to his hope he united fear, which makes hope perfect,

for thus the soul distrusting its own merit, relies only on the grace of its Lord. He often used to repeat in the course of his life, that the judgments of God are great and to be feared, and have made the greatest saints to tremble.

The same fresh and blooming hope which was so firmly rooted in his own heart, he used every effort to plant in those of his spiritual children, ever animating them to hope in the divine mercy. For this end he was accustomed to say, that our soul is created for the eternal enjoyment of Paradise; and that therefore we ought always to hope in God, who desires to lead all to everlasting glory. In all his difficult undertakings, he placed all his confidence in the divine goodness, that they would succeed; so that he never undertook anything, however difficult and intricate, without expecting the most happy results, since he had placed all his hopes in God.

One undertaking, which was certainly beyond his own means, was that of building the new church for his Congregation on the site of the Guasto degli Orsi, where merely to clear the ground of the rubbish there accumulated, required a large sum of ready money, as has been related; nevertheless having put his hand to the work, he was never seen to lose courage, inasmuch as he rested his hopes in Divine Providence. Accordingly, although many thought the building undertaken with too great haste, and that it would never succeed; yet his hope, which relied entirely on his Lord, never wavered in the least, and was not disappointed. For when from

time to time money failed him, immediately unexpected supplies came to hand, by means of which he was enabled to continue and complete that noble building, on which, according to the calculation of those who understood such matters, the sum expended exceeded forty thousand scudi.

He had therefore good reason to say to those who were surprised to behold this building rise, they knew not how, "*Opus Dei est*—It is the work of God."

Lastly, it was this virtue of hope which made him always constant in all his undertakings, and preserved his countenance ever calm and smiling amidst the accidents of this mortal life, enabling him to support, not only with patience but with joy, every temporal calamity, and the bitter pains of his most severe sicknesses.

The sweet bond of charity not only unites the soul with God, but according to the saying of St. Bernard forcibly binds it, "*fortiter stringit*," and like a heavenly cement closely joins it to its beloved Good. With this most tender cord was the soul of Father Fabrizio dall' Aste happily enchained and strongly united to his Lord. A living flame of holy love burned in his breast; and although he strove to hide it as much as he could from the eyes of his fellow-men, content that it should be known only to Him who was his chief good, nevertheless as a bright flame can scarcely be hidden, its brightness and heat were betrayed in his words, gestures, and actions.

There was no subject on which Fabrizio more

willingly spoke, as well in private conversations as in his public addresses, than on the love of God. In these discourses so tender and to him so dear, such were the sentiments of love which he experienced, that his countenance became so bright, that it seemed a seraph and not a man who spoke. At such times his face appeared not only inflamed, but even resplendent, and the bright flame of holy love seemed to shine forth on his features.

His appearance, while he was speaking on this subject, has been well described by Ottavio Petrignano, whom we have so often quoted, "His heart," he says, "was so moved to tenderness, and his countenance so lighted up, that he seemed to be a seraph speaking, his face shining in a most wonderful manner, as if his interior piety and devotion breathed through it, and, as it were, transpired from it." So touching too and appropriate were the words and arguments of these affectionate discourses, that the hearers were not a little inflamed thereby and moved in spirit. Nevertheless, though he spoke with such grace on so favourite a subject, and used expressions so well adapted to it, he always protested, that he was unable to say so much upon it as his heart really felt and enjoyed. And indeed he was right, for his tongue could not express what his heart enjoyed. His gestures, moreover, no less than his words, showed the inward ardour he felt; for such was the unwonted vehemence of them, though he was not in the least aware of it, that it was easy to see the fervour of his

charity. Not content that his beloved good should be loved by himself alone, he endeavoured by these gestures to kindle the same flame in the hearts of others.

Once during the celebration of the solemn feast of Pentecost, which he rightly called the feast of Divine love, because on that day the Divine Paraclete visibly appeared in the form of fiery tongues, to inflame the Apostles and the whole infant Church with holy love, while he was preaching in public on those celestial fires, he was so overcome that, without being aware of it, he tore open with his own hands the band of his dress.

At other times, when he was discoursing on his favourite subject, he would take the berretta, or sometimes the hat which he wore, and violently throw it on the ground; and afterwards, when his discourse was ended, and he discovered what he had done, he was not a little distressed at it, for he abhorred all outward demonstration, and often called to mind and repeated the old saying of the holy father, "that when in any public function or in the presence of others we feel abundance of spiritual consolation, we ought to say secretly, 'I do not wish for you here, but in my chamber,' and there to give rein to the same spirit."

After having done such things, though without being aware of it, he would accuse himself in the presence of the fathers, and humbly entreat them to warn him with sincerity for the

future, and to correct him that he might not fall into such defects. Such was the name by which he called those vehement impulses, which so far from scandalizing his neighbour, inflicted surprising wounds of love in the hearts of the bystanders.

The walls of his chamber were not able to conceal these his sweet flames of love ; for while he was there occupied in continual prayers, he was still more closely united with his beloved Treasure, and the ardour of this flame of love so increased, that not being able to confine it within the narrow bounds of his own breast, he was oftentimes compelled to pour forth day as well as night fervent sighs, mingled with groans and tender wailings, which were distinctly heard and noticed by the fathers who occupied the adjoining rooms. These fathers knew well that he had no earthly reason to send forth such sighs, and though he had had, they were well aware that his noble spirit was not of so weak a nature as to yield so easily to human misfortunes ; so that with common consent they decided, that these sighs were the consequence of his ardent love. Nevertheless to be more assured of the truth, they had recourse to the common confessor of the house, that by virtue of holy obedience he might ascertain the cause. He could not resist the force of this command, but confessed, while his face was covered with the blush of modesty, that so great was the ardour which his spirit felt, when he was particularly engaged in the holy exercise of prayer, that his heart

would burst within his breast, if he had not given it some vent by these sighs. From this time he strove with the greatest diligence to suppress all these sighs, which had unconsciously betrayed him, by discovering the living flame of holy love which burned in his breast. But however great was the violence he used towards himself, he was at times constrained to unburden his loving heart.

But if the inward flame of his great love was discernible in his words and gestures, much more was it discovered by his actions; for as a true and sincere lover of his divine Treasure, he had nothing which so much interested him as His glory.

Accordingly he used every effort, that in all his works the glory of God alone might appear, and not his own taste or will, so that he used to say, that in our actions we must seek the pure glory of God and not our own interests.

That all his actions, even the least, might be directed to so high an end, he did nothing, however trifling, without first having recourse to God by means of prayer, beseeching the Divine Majesty to direct each action to the end most acceptable to His holy Will, and with this view he also requested the prayers of others, as a thing of the greatest importance to him. Besides this, he had so great a zeal for His honour, that he could not patiently endure, that while so much was vainly spent by men for their own convenience, and the useless decoration of themselves and their houses, such parsimony and meanness should be showed in things relating to the wor-

ship and service of God and His Saints. Thus he desired that with a pious liberality all should be spent that was necessary to celebrate the feasts with all possible magnificence.

He did not, however, rest contented with this outward show alone ; but desired that, in order to celebrate these solemnities in a becoming manner, devotion should be joined with magnificence ; so that he was accustomed to say, that neither in the ornaments of the church, nor in the music, nor in the crowds of people, must we be satisfied with outward appearance alone ; for else we often get nothing more. At other times he would say, it is better to go to the feast after the feast, for on such occasions, instead of satisfying our devotion, we often satisfy our curiosity, with but little profit to the soul. When the beautiful decorations of their own church were completed, he advised the fathers not to be too frequently seen in it, that they might escape any vain complacency, which might arise when they heard the praises which people bestowed upon it, to the prejudice of the right end, which they ought to have in celebrating festivals with splendour, namely, the glory of God alone.

Lastly, the great love which he had for his Lord, is testified by the works which he did, and the labours he endured, to hinder offences against the Divine Majesty, or to blot them out by penance, when already committed. Such was the hatred and the horror he had for mortal sin, as being an offence against his Beloved, that not only had it never any place

in his soul, as has been affirmed with the solemn testimony of those from whom he could not conceal the secrets of his heart; but he spared no labour and no expense, that God might be honoured and loved by His creatures, and he readily exposed himself to any inconvenience, to bring back stray sheep to the fold. And the Lord, prospering his zeal, was pleased to give him such grace, that many who had already been carried away by the infernal wolf, and were on the point of being devoured by him, by his means escaped from his grasp, as we shall presently relate in the proper place.

Although the flame of holy love which burned in the heart of Fabrizio was so strong, it seemed to him but a little spark; and so desirous was he of increasing it, that he wished that all the hearts of men could be united together, that they might with one accord and more ardently love their God.

At times, stimulated by his fervent charity, he would say to his spiritual children, "Let us up and love, my children; let us up and love." And as if all the charity which is formed on earth were not enough to satisfy his enamoured heart, he would say, that with every breath he drew he would desire to draw to himself all the love with which the most Blessed Virgin and all the Saints bore our Lord God, and that with every sigh he would wish to breathe it out again into the heart of Christ.

He often lamented to see how men who apply themselves to serve other men with such zeal,

are so cold and careless in the love and service of God; and being most jealous that all his love should be consecrated to his Creator, he would not bestow the least portion of it on creatures; so that he was accustomed to say, that he does not truly love God who does not love him with his whole love; and it was in this that he placed all the happiness and contentment of reasonable beings, saying that none could be called happy and contented, but he who loves and serves God with his whole heart, and is detached from every affection and interest of this world.

It was with reason, therefore, that Fabrizio had the greatest devotion to the Feast of Pentecost, to celebrate which he prepared himself with especial care, because as he himself said, it was the feast of divine love; and on the days which preceded it, and those which immediately followed it, he showed even in his bearing a certain especial joy which flowed from his heart. He also desired that this solemnity should be celebrated with equal devotion by others; so that he taught many young men, for seven days before it, to offer devout and fervent prayers to the Holy Ghost, humbly beseeching Him to bestow upon them the divine love, and afterwards to say seven times, "*Veni Sancte Spiritus, et emitte cœlitus lucis tuæ radium,*" to obtain from the same Divine Paraclete His seven most noble and most precious gifts. This great love which he had towards his God was to him a firm pledge, and a sure hope, of obtaining from the Divine Majesty the virtues

which he desired in an heroic degree ; and he used also to teach others who were desirous of acquiring them, that to obtain them, the best means were to distrust themselves, and to confide in the divine love, asking those virtues which they desired to acquire, not neglecting, however, to do what each could on his own part. And in order to protest that all the good that was in him came from the Divine Mercy, he was ever repeating these words, "*Scivi, quia aliter non possum esse continens, nisi Deus det.*"

CHAPTER VI.

OF THE GREAT LOVE OF FATHER FABRIZIO TOWARDS HIS NEIGHBOUR.

ST. PETER and St. Paul, those two great and most brilliant luminaries of the Catholic Church, are equally zealous in impressing on the faithful the praises of fraternal charity, and the need which all have of this virtue. The former writing to the Hebrews who were in Greece, and whom he had himself begotten to Christ, the same year in which he passed from Antioch to Rome, gave them this admonition, "*Ante omnia mutuum in vobis-metipsis charitatem continuam habentes—* Before all things having continually mutual charity among yourselves." The other writing to the Colossians, after using every effort to reclaim them from the dangerous path of vice, and to place them once more in the fair road of vir-

tues, many of which he particularly enumerates as most necessary, in conclusion, adds, "*Super omnia hæc charitatem habete, quod est vinculum perfectionis*—Above all these have charity, which is the bond of perfection." Accordingly our Fabrizio, before all things and above all things, strove to love his neighbour, and to labour for his good. His charity was at once zealous and prudent, for he was most indefatigable in labouring to bring sinful souls to penance, and in preserving those of the young not only from sin, but even from the occasions of sin.

In truth, it would be impossible to relate his zeal and the labours he underwent for the noble end of converting sinners, and especially public prostitutes, who served as a snare in the hands of the devil to bring careless souls under his heavy yoke; the unwearied pains he took to preserve young women who were in danger of falling; and lastly, the trouble he underwent to reconcile married persons who were at variance; so that we shall only relate some few of the most public and well-known cases. A married woman from another country once came to Forli, that she might there live with greater freedom according to her own caprice, at a distance from her husband. Great was the scandal which she caused in Forli by her dissolute life; insomuch that when it reached the ears of Father Fabrizio, through a friend of his, his heart was so inflamed with holy zeal, that he went immediately to her house, accompanied by a priest as witness;

and then in the strongest terms endeavoured to make her understand the enormity of the vices in which she lived immersed, the danger in which her soul was placed, and, lastly, the loss of her own reputation, together with that of her husband. The obstinate woman, already hardened in evil, for some time resisted all the persuasion of the servant of God ; until at length the arguments dictated by his zeal, and sweetened by his charity, became so irresistible, that she was constrained to yield to his persuasions, and to promise to abandon her wicked life, and return to her husband, provided he would pardon the grievous wrong she had done him.

Meanwhile, seeing her thus moved to compunction, he prudently determined to give no time to the devil, by delay, to divert her from her good purpose ; and accordingly he arranged, that she should go at once in company of another woman, to the house of Filippa dall' Aste, his sister, who was the wife of Rinaldo Mercuriali, and a person of great spirituality and eminent piety, that she might live under her watchful care removed from danger, until she could be reconducted home by her own husband. Moreover, having provided for her honourable maintenance in the interval, he wrote with his own hand to the husband, persuading him with the most efficacious and Christian arguments to pardon the guilty woman her past offences, and to come to Forli in order to take her back to his home. The husband yielded to the urgent exhortations of Fabrizio, and having been recon-

ciled to his wife, took her back to his own country.

There was also another woman, who, although bound with the holy bonds of matrimony, lived according to her own pleasure; and that she might do so with the greater license, had, like the former, not only left her husband's roof, but also his country, and removed to Forli. The report of her wicked life reached the ears of Fabrizio, who accordingly sent by a fellow-countrywoman of hers, to tell her that he wished to speak to her. When she was brought into his presence, he represented in colours so lively the enormity of her sins, that he soon induced her to change her life. He then immediately betook himself to the house of the Marchesa Pollissena Albicini, a lady of great piety, who, besides the abundant alms which she dispensed to the poor, maintained in the city of Forli two houses, the one dedicated to the great patriarch St. Joseph, in which young women, who were in danger of falling, found a refuge; and the other under the protection of St. Mary Magdalene, for women who had fallen into sin, and were desirous of imitating the Saint in her penance. When he was admitted to the presence of this virtuous lady, he earnestly entreated her to admit the poor woman into this house; and having obtained her permission, he there maintained her by his own alms as long as she lived. For as her husband would not receive her into his house, lest she should be driven by poverty to resume her wicked course of life, he assisted

her most bountifully; and thus she continued to live respectably in this secure asylum. And here I ought not to omit to mention that it was through the exhortations of Fabrizio that this house was kept on foot; for when the Marchesa had resolved to close it, because some of those who had been received there had returned to their former course of life, he persuaded her still to maintain an establishment which was of such benefit to the public, by telling her that she rendered a great service to God by hindering sin even for one day, or but for a single hour.

There was another woman of notoriously bad character, who lived with great ostentation in the city of Forli; so that debauchery triumphed to the open contempt of the divine law. The ill odour of her sins was spread throughout the city, and was not a little displeasing to this chaste and holy priest; and his heart was sorely tortured by knowing the miserable state in which this unhappy soul was living. He was still more afflicted, by hearing that a relation of his own had been unwarily caught in her net. In order, therefore, to release his own relation from this snare, no less than to remove the scandal from the whole city, he addressed himself first to God, to obtain by his humble prayers for these miserable persons, light to perceive their most miserable condition, and then to them with most effectual exhortations. Accordingly after having recommended their conversion to God with many tears and sighs, as if secure of having obtained of the Divine Mercy

what he sought, he went one day with another priest as his companion to the house of this young person, taking with him several pieces of stuff, such as is used for the habits of religious. Then armed with zeal, no less than abounding in charity, he began to endeavour by earnest arguments to assail her hard heart ; concluding by saying, that although her soul had become thus defiled by the brutal vices of sense, nevertheless the heavenly Spouse would not disdain to espouse it, if she would wash out its spots with her tears, and clothe herself with the garment of penance. For this end he proposed that she should enter the monastery of Convertite, or penitent women, to enable her to do which he would not only at his own expense pay for the dress which he had brought her, but moreover all the dowry, and the necessary maintenance for her noviciate, and what was proper to spend on her entrance, that it might be made with greater solemnity. He accompanied his liberal offers with arguments so effectual, and with so great tenderness of spirit, that at last she was moved to compunction, and promised to become a nun.

But the mother proved more obstinate than the daughter, being grieved to lose the wages of iniquity with which she was maintained, and resolutely opposed the holy resolution of her daughter. Nevertheless, having overcome this grievous impediment, she shut herself up in that sacred cloister, to the great edification of the whole city, which before had been not a little scandalized by her shameless debaucheries.

Meanwhile Fabrizio, desirous of following up these noble victories, hastened to the house of his own relation, and having told him of the conversion of this soul, advised him to follow her example by embracing a life of penance. His words were at once so gentle and so penetrating, that the heart of the sinner being moved to tenderness, he burst into a most bitter lamentation, at once the sign and the effect of the great compunction of his soul, afflicted by reason of his past offences.

There was also another woman, who desired to quit the state of sin in which she lived, but ineffectually, inasmuch as she would not avoid the occasions of falling. Nevertheless she continued to go to the feet of her confessor, to ask absolution for those sins which she had not learned perfectly to detest. Accordingly Father Fabrizio many times prudently refused her absolution, and even positively forbade her to approach the altar at Easter to receive the Immaculate Lamb. And this he did with the design of making her enter into herself, when she saw herself excluded at such a time from partaking of the sacred table in common with others. So effectual was this prohibition, that she was seized with a most ardent desire of receiving this sacred Food, which was openly refused her. She protested that she was firmly resolved to change her life; and the good priest, in order that the change might be lasting, persuaded her to take a husband, with whom she afterwards led an exemplary life. Nor did this recovered sheep forget the

benefit she had received ; for after the death of the servant of God, while his body was exposed in church, she publicly declared her obligations to him, though by so doing she had to recall her former sins ; for she said, with many tears and sighs, "Behold the man who delivered me from a state of sin !" She affirmed, moreover, and with the most cordial affection declared, that his corrections were so powerful, that no soul could resist them, however obstinate it might be ; and that when conversing with him, she was filled at once with compunction and consolation ; and that when she looked on him, it seemed as if his countenance breathed and infused devotional sanctity.

The conversion of another woman of bad character, however, cost Fabrizio more trouble ; for having resisted his first exhortations, and fearing lest they should at length overcome her obstinacy, she refused to hear him again ; and if ever she saw the servant of God at a distance, she would shut herself up in her house, that she might not see or hear him. Thus like the deaf adder, she thought to avoid the awful words with which he sought to advance her eternal salvation. He perceived this, and one day passing by her house, said to a neighbour of hers with a loud voice, so that she might overhear him in her house, "Tell her not to think of me, but of God." A truly difficult task it was to bring under the yoke of the Crucified one who was so careful to hide herself whenever the servant of God appeared in the street ; nevertheless he did not lose courage,

but trusting in the goodness and power of his Lord, tried so many means that at last her obstinacy was overcome, and she was induced to retire to the above-named house of St. Mary Magdalene, where she lived with edification for some time, and afterwards was respectably married, in which state she continued until her death.

So frequent were the changes that happened in women of this character through his powerful exhortations, and the effectual assistance he gave them to carry their resolutions into effect, that a certain poor woman of respectable birth, who had been driven by destitution to abandon herself to a life of sin, but was desirous of quitting so hateful a course, knew not to whom to have recourse better than to Fabrizio. She told him with many tears of her unhappy state, and the desire she felt of retiring to some holy cloister to preserve her soul from new falls, adding, that as poverty and destitution had plunged her into such an abyss, so they also hindered her from escaping from it. The servant of God consoled and admonished her to persevere in her good purpose with a lively confidence in God, who would not abandon her. He then offered all the means in his power to assist her; and in a short time, having provided her with a dowry and all that was necessary, he made her a nun in a monastery, where she lived and died an exemplary religious.

As Fabrizio, moved by his zeal and charity, waged so unwearied a warfare against licentiousness and debauchery, and triumphed over them by overcoming those who were the devil's chosen

instruments of impurity ; so he was not less determined in offering a manful opposition to every other vice. Accordingly, in order to root out scandals from his country, he did not fail to correct sinners, employing at one time the sweetness of brotherly admonitions, and at another the severity of stern reproof, delivered with Christian liberty and without respect of persons, so that great were the abuses which he extirpated, and innumerable those whom he converted from a wicked life to observe the divine precepts, thanks to the unparalleled veneration and respect which all felt for him.

It was especially, when any one endeavoured to hinder the conversion of souls on which he was bent, that he made use of severity ; for as they made themselves, so to say, the partners of the devil, they well deserved to be treated with rigour and severity.

It is certainly no less good a work to preserve souls from falling, than to raise them up when they have already fallen ; nor does it tend less to the glory of God to prevent sins, than to lead men to detest them when they have been committed. Accordingly, if Fabrizio employed such efforts in bringing back stray sheep, he was still more careful to keep in the right path those who were in danger of going astray. Thus young women without number were by his exhortations and his alms removed from situations of the greatest peril. In so good a cause he would spare neither expense nor trouble ; so that he often supported entire families at his own charge,

and exposed himself to any inconvenience or trouble, that he might hinder an offence against God. While he was yet at San Carlo, he was once informed that a certain young woman was in imminent danger of making shipwreck of her virtue; and so eager was he to lend her assistance, that, dark as it was, he went immediately on receiving the intelligence to the house, that he might leave the devil no time to destroy her by his evil suggestions. He took with him a friend, a priest of great virtue, and with gentle but effectual words, persuaded her to remove immediately from that house, in which she was in danger of ruin, and took her to the house of Filippa dall' Aste, his sister. On the way the servant of God had to give proof of his fortitude; for two or three times had this champion of Christ to resist the attacks of certain young men, who endeavoured forcibly to take her from his hands. At length having conducted her in safety to his sister's house, he left her there, until he had found her a place of security.

In company with the same priest he also went in open day to another house, where he understood that a young woman had been placed with the detestable view of exposing her to prostitution. So clear were the reasons with which he proved to her the necessity of immediately quitting this miserable place, unless she wished to lose her soul; and so clearly did he show her the brutality of the crime, which she already intended to commit, that he induced her to confess, that there was no other way of preserving

herself, but to follow his counsels. But the devil, unwilling to lose this bait by which he hoped to allure many unwary souls, endeavoured by means of shame to make her lose virtue and modesty; for he suggested to her that it would be fatal to her reputation to quit the house at such a time of day. The servant of God, however, readily defeated the artifices of the devil, and devised a protection for her shame, although to his own cost and that of his companion; for he requested him to take off his own cloak and give it to her, that she might thus be concealed from the gaze of the bystanders. The two priests accompanied her, and placed her in safety in the house of his sister, where the reverence in which the servant of God was held served as her protection; for although some persons went, with the view of taking her away, yet from the respect they had for Fabrizio, they dared not make use of violence.

He also showed the same holy zeal in snatching from destruction another ill-counselled victim already entrapped; and the weapons which he was constrained to use to withdraw her from their grasp were the more powerful, as they were lowly. Fabrizio was one evening at prayer with the rest in the common Oratory, when he was told by a person in his confidence, that a foolish girl had been persuaded by some young men to accompany them to a house, where, amidst feasting and drinking, she was in danger of losing her chastity. At this news the servant of God ran, or rather flew, to the house, attended by a priest of most ex-

emplary life, having provided himself with a rope, not to bind his prey, but himself, the charitable plunderer. For when he reached this abode of infamy, where he found these unhappy young men and the incautious woman seated at table, or dancing in their merriment, throwing himself at their feet with the rope round his neck, he humbly and with the most tender and abundant tears besought them to be pleased to grant him this woman, by the mercies of Jesus Christ, who for that soul, which they designed to plunge in the abyss of sin, had not hesitated with infinite pain and ignominy to shed His own most precious blood. At this sudden and unlooked-for spectacle, these dissolute youths were at first immovable with astonishment; but afterwards they were so overcome by the humility of his entreaties and the efficacy of his words, that, changing their shamelessness into modesty, their mirth into sorrow, and their uncontrolled license into Christian obedience, full of mortification and compunction, they consigned to him their prey unharmed. He was filled with joy at having delivered her from this imminent peril, and employed his former artifice, covered her with a cloak, which one of these young men lent him for the purpose, and placed her in safety in his sister's house.

But innumerable were the young women whom he preserved in like manner from losing their virtue, snatching them forcibly from the hands of those who deserved to be called harpies rather than mothers; who, instead of protecting their chastity, endeavoured to make gain of it, and

who, in order to obtain some trifling profit, did not hesitate to destroy the life of their souls. He used, with the help of certain of his penitents, to place them in the service of some charitable lady, or else obtain their admission into the above-mentioned house of St. Joseph.

When he knew that any were in danger of thus losing themselves through poverty, he assisted them with abundant alms, oftentimes maintaining entire families, in order to preserve them from ruin, and to hinder the offence against Almighty God; and in this way many young women were by his means secured from danger.

Following the footsteps of his great Father, Fabrizio had a wonderful success in keeping young persons from occasions of sin, and after his example, while he allowed the young men within the walls of the Oratory, to occupy themselves in some game or harmless amusement, he did not care for, or did not hear, the noise and confusion they made, because they were thus preserved from offending God. He encouraged them to live cheerfully, but within the limits allowed by the law of God, and sometimes to encourage them, he would remain some little time watching their games, and give them some pictures of Saints.

He delighted to witness a holy cheerfulness in them, and would sometimes lightly tap them on the head, and say to them, "Purity, purity." In which act many declared that they felt their hearts wonderfully inspired with holy thoughts and resolutions of purity, to the preservation of

which he was ever in many ways exhorting them. Nevertheless, although he was thus winning and condescending in accommodating himself to the youthful temper of these boys, in order to gain them to God by means of cheerfulness, and to make them in love with virtue, they still looked upon him with such reverence, and had conceived so great an esteem and veneration for him, that if in his absence they transgressed by any word or gesture the course prescribed them, it was enough to mention the name of Father Fabrizio, at once to reduce them to order. To avoid idleness, he made them learn to sing or play on different instruments, that by such cheerful and innocent occupations they might be kept from falling into harm. If ever he saw any of these boys standing without anything to do, he would immediately find him some employment, bidding him cut out paper for the windows, or taking him to the garden to employ that time in labour which he would otherwise have spent in idleness. In the midst of such games and occupations it was his practice to instil spiritual maxims, that he might readily and skilfully impress on their tender minds the truths of eternity. He would often say to them, "O my children, that eternity! what do you think of it?" And he would also instruct them at such times to prepare themselves to receive worthily and with fruit the most holy Sacraments of confession and communion.

When they were conversing in these harmless amusements, he would not permit that a single

word should be used, which would be in the slightest degree prejudicial to purity or to the reputation of others ; but desired that even from conversations on indifferent matters, they should draw some moral for the soul, that body and spirit might be refreshed at the same time. He would sometimes take them to an open and pleasant part of the city or to some villa, that they might be amused with this innocent recreation ; but in the meantime, he did not fail to discourse on the way in a manner no less cheerful than devout on spiritual and heavenly things. He was accustomed for the most part, to introduce those profitable conversations by some such words as these, "What good spiritual book have you read to-day ! What good maxim of eternal salvation have you learned ?" If on the way they saw any poor person or simple countryman, he would kindly call him and ask him about the mysteries of our Catholic religion ; and if he discovered him to be ignorant, he would instruct him or make one of the youths instruct him ; and then making him recite the Pater, Ave, and Credo, send him away at once comforted and instructed in these most important matters.

Fabrizio was very quick in discerning a disposition to good in these young men ; so that every day he was accustomed to hold spiritual conferences with some of them who were most apt in acquiring perfection, and it is impossible to explain how great was the fruit derived from them. For as they drank in from the words of their good father the sweet milk of the spirit,

and thereby nourished their souls, they made daily progress in devotion and virtue. The day before he would assign them some spiritual subject to think over and meditate with themselves, or perhaps some virtuous action of some Saint, and then at the conference of the following day he would make one after another relate the fruit they had derived from it, and having heard the opinion of these infants, so to call them, he would give his own with a profoundness corresponding with his great spirituality. Even from the time when he lived at San Carlo, a great number of noble youths, who were under his spiritual direction, went every morning at a very early hour to that church, and there in company of their good father and his companions, would spend an hour in the holy exercise of prayer, while the day had yet hardly dawned. Hence it happened that many of them continuing this fruitful occupation, were not a little illuminated; so that abandoning the world and the comforts of the paternal roof, they clothed themselves in coarse woollen garments, and entered various most strict religious orders. Justly, therefore, might the school of Fabrizio be called the seminary of virtue, and an external novitiate of all the religious orders.

Although it was the chief care of this charitable priest to render succour to the souls of others, nevertheless, he did not neglect to relieve their corporal wants also; and in fact, so compassionate was he, and so abundant and frequent were his alms, that the poor of the city justly called him their father.

Though he had an equal right with his brothers to the family inheritance, he would never take from their common income more than was sufficient to pay his contribution to the Congregation for the service of the church and the fabric, and what was barely sufficient for his personal expenses, freely leaving all the rest to his brothers, without wishing to know even the profits of their patrimony. He would, however, always keep entirely to himself the administration of a benefice in the patronage of his family, which had been conferred upon him before he went to Rome; for looking upon it as truly the patrimony of the poor, he wished to employ the income of it entirely to their advantage; and in this he was so particular, that he would have made it a matter of conscience if he had employed the least portion of it in any other way, even though it had been spent on his own personal wants.

Noble was the answer which he once gave to a father of the Congregation, who seeing that he wanted fastenings for his shoes, remarked that it was a pity to trouble his brothers for such trifles, which would not cost more than ten quadrini, which he might very well take from the revenues of his benefice. He replied, that he would not and could not do it; for he should be defrauding the poor of the ten quadrini, with which he might support the life of one of them for a day.

This surely ought to put to the blush many ecclesiastics, who out of the income of their

benefices scarcely give ten quadrini to the poor, reserving vast sums not only for their own use, but to spend in vain and superfluous, and often sinful expenses, as though they were not what Pope Urban I. has called them, "*Vota fidelium, pretia peccatorum, patrimonia pauperum*," or the "*deposita pietatis*," according to Tertullian.

His great charity, moreover, made him prudent in devising means of having larger sums at his disposal for the poor. Thus his industry increased the revenues of his benefice; for all the wool, linen, and hemp, which were collected each year, he placed in the hands of a devout lady, a penitent of his, to be made into stuffs of different textures. These he had cut out into shirts, trousers, and doublets of different sizes; and after they had been distributed among his other penitents to be made up, he collected all together, and having provided a corresponding supply of shoes, when he saw any poor persons ill clothed, he would, like a kind father, dress them completely from head to foot.

Sometimes his provision was so abundant, that it exceeded the number of the poor who had recourse to him; he would then sorrowfully complain, "O my God! there are not this year the usual number of poor!" Thus the truly merciful, instead of being troubled at the sight of the many poor people who surround them, complain when there are few, because it seems as though their charity remained idle, when it has but few to relieve.

But Fabrizio was not content with thus pro-

viding an abundant supply of clothes and linen to clothe his beloved poor, and keep them from the cold, but in order to relieve the pains of hunger and restore their strength, he took care that every Saturday a large quantity of bread should be brought him from the baker's. This he placed in a large chest near the door of the house, to be distributed daily to the poor who came to ask for it, or sent to poor families, who, though suffering famine at home, were ashamed to make known their misery by begging. In order, therefore, to supply their needs without exposing them, he would charitably send them a supply by the hands of some friend. In the winter he would with fatherly care send the poor families wood and faggots, that they might be able to warm their frozen limbs.

In order too that his charity might not slumber even while he walked in the streets, he would always take with him a large quantity of small money; so that he had almost always his hand in his pocket, as he gave readily and cheerfully to all who asked him.

His compassion increased according to the greatness of the miseries he beheld, and he would assist with the greatest zeal those who were in the greatest need. Thus especially he would give large sums for marriage portions for poor young women, as being exposed to the danger of losing their character and their virtue. He would also abundantly relieve widows and orphans, as being for the most part destitute of help or succour. He had also compassion for poor youths, who,

though endowed by nature with talents to advance in the study of the sciences, were yet unable through poverty to get instruction, and would supply them with means to enable them to attend the schools. When these youths were of noble birth, but had fallen into poverty through the mutability of human affairs, he would furnish them with what was necessary with the greatest liberality, that they might by the cultivation of their abilities find a way to some employment corresponding to their birth. To many others he rendered especial assistance, that they might dedicate themselves to the altar, by embracing the ecclesiastical state, or entering some holy religious order ; while for others he would provide some honest employment suited to their capacity, that they might secure themselves a maintenance. Meeting one day with a poor boy of the country, in whom he detected very quick talents, but who was utterly destitute of any human assistance, he was so moved to compassion, to see such great abilities withered by poverty, that he himself undertook the care of him, providing him for the space of seven or eight years, not only with lodging but with food and clothes, and sending him to school to learn music, for which he had a great taste, and in which he succeeded admirably.

Unlimited also was the charity he showed towards the poor sick, as well in the hospitals as in private houses. He would visit them daily without ever growing weary, and if they were in need of meat, he would not only provide it, but would himself carry under his cloak, fowls

or some other kind of meat proper to nourish them, and give them strength to resist the force of the malady. Besides this, with sweet and effectual words, he would exhort them to support with patience the pains and weariness of their infirmities, would affectionately console them in their deplorable state by his soothing words, would administer to them the Sacrament of Penance, and patiently assist them in their agony, fortifying them by his exhortations in that last and dangerous combat.

Armed with zeal no less than with charity, he would reprove the carelessness of certain physicians, who, as is often the case, did not use the same care in attending the sick poor in the hospitals and their miserable dwellings, as they showed towards the rich, nor make them so frequent visits as was fit, as if their life were of little importance, and did not deserve to be taken any care of. His own example, moreover, was a silent but eloquent reproof to them, for he would so often go backwards and forwards, and take such pains to serve them, that he seemed to take no care of his own life or health. In fact, he twice caught their diseases from his constant attendance upon them; once especially, having taken the dangerous and often fatal disease of the petecchie, with which he was severely afflicted for many days. He rejoiced more on these occasions than in his other sicknesses, because they were the fruit of his beloved labours in succouring the poor, whom he loved more than had they been his own children.

When he had recovered, the experience of his past dangers did not make him more cautious in preserving his health ; but with even greater zeal he would expose himself anew to the same risks, and resume with more ardour than before this noble employment of Christian charity ; for he thought there could be no more favourable occasion of losing his life than in serving and assisting his beloved neighbour. Nor must we omit to show how he loved the poor more than if they had been his sons ; for like an affectionate father or tender mother, when he saw any of them at the door of the house or in the church, who for want of attendance or any other cause, were suffering from any disease of the head, with the greatest love and patience he would take them into the house, and with his own hand wash their heads and wipe away the putrid humour which flowed from them, take off the scurf, and cut the hair, and then, when he took leave of them, to console them, would give them an abundant alms, and provide them with a clean shirt, if he found they had need of one.

Out of pity for the fanciful appetite of the poor invalids, and the thirst which are the sad remains of past sicknesses, he would bring those who were recovering, lemons, oranges, apples, and other fruits, to restore and refresh them.

No less was the care and anxiety which Fabrizio showed for the poor pilgrims, as for those who were placed in the greatest necessity, by being far from their friends and country. He would supply them also with abundant alms,

and provide them with shoes, that they might be able to pursue their journey with greater ease, and in a word, he would show them all the kindness in his power. Accordingly, the deputies of the public hospital of pilgrims elected him superintendent of that pious institution, thinking that this great work of mercy could not rest upon shoulders more worthy than his. He readily accepted the charge, as agreeing well with his charitable disposition ; so that a large field was here opened him for the exercise of his unparalleled charity. In this sacred place he seemed to be the lowest servant rather than superintendent ; for he was continually employed in serving the pilgrims with his own hands in the lowest and most menial offices. But notwithstanding this, he did not neglect to watch over the others, that his beloved guests might be lodged with the greater comfort and cleanliness. As his charity, however, was far wider than the hospital, when it would not contain all, he would lodge part of them in a house, where he employed himself with equal care in serving them.

His charity moreover reached where the sun never penetrates with his benignant rays, that is to say, the darkest and most obscure prisons. He was not content to lend assistance to the inhabitants of these dark cells by means of his effectual intercession with the judges or their creditors, that they might be released from their chains and permitted to enjoy their beloved liberty ; but he visited them tenderly, and sent them seasonable supplies of bread and other food to

sustain their miserable life. And if any of them was for his crimes condemned to death, he would hasten to hear his confession and to comfort him, showing, in an especial manner on such occasions, the fervent zeal he had for the salvation of souls.

The benefice in the patronage of his family which he enjoyed, though rich, was yet by no means large enough to supply means for his great charities and profuse alms-giving ; so that many prudent persons, comparing the income with what he gave away, and finding that it was much less, were induced to think, that God, in order to further his charitable inclinations, miraculously multiplied the receipts which he never employed but to relieve the poor. But however this may be, he on his part supplied the necessities of the poor and the demands of his own generous charity, by depriving himself even of necessaries, and by procuring from devout rich persons large sums of money to succour the needy. When the clothes and other things which he prepared in the manner already related, were not enough to supply the needs of the poor, he did not hesitate to give them his own garments. And although he was very careful to conceal these acts of excessive charity, yet it is known, that one day when he saw a poor man utterly destitute, and had no other clothes at hand, he gave him his own trousers ; and to another he gave the waistcoat which he had on at the time.

There was also on one occasion a poor woman, who was reduced to such misery, that she had not in the house a bed on which to lie, so that

she was obliged to sleep on the bare ground with her little child. She had recourse to the servant of God to tell him her distress, which she did not without many tears; and his tender and compassionate heart was so affected by the recital, that he promised that towards evening, when the fathers were in the Oratory, he would send a porter with something for her relief. He sent for a porter at the appointed hour, and taking him into his own room, made him take off his own bed the palliasse, which by the kindness of the infirmarian had just been renewed, as the old one had become utterly useless; and then paid him to carry it to the house of the poor woman. He so effectually concealed this act of his from the eyes of men, that not even the fathers knew it, until the time of his last illness. On seeing the deficiency they made complaints about it, fearing that he must suffer in consequence; but his only answer was, that it was very well as it was.

Many times when he had no money to supply the wants of the poor, his generosity was so boundless, that, in order that they might not be without help, he would borrow money of his friends, or pledge at the Monte della Pietà some richly embroidered pieces of cloth, which he intended for the service of the sacristy, to which he had just given them, and so provide for their necessities. To such a pitch did his desire of assisting the poor attain, that, as if forgetful of every other civil obligation, he did not consider himself more strictly bound to satisfy any other

debt, than that which his charity contracted for the benefit of the poor. Thus once, when he had no means for his accustomed alms, he made use of twenty scudi which were in his hands as a deposit, and in a short time dispensed the whole sum, which he afterwards repaid to the owner through his brothers.

Lastly, what his own means could not accomplish, he effected by his persuasions; for he exhorted the rich persons of his country, many of whom were his intimate friends, to maintain at their own expense some little houses, on purpose to provide gratuitous lodging to poor families, and to make them some other allowance to preserve life.

CHAPTER VII.

OF THE CARDINAL VIRTUES OF FATHER FABRIZIO DALL' ASTE.

As four noble streams contributed to adorn and render pleasant the earthly Paradise, refreshing it with their clear waters, and with their pleasant murmur delighting the inhabitants of that blessed spot; so the soul of the just man, which is a mystical Paradise, has its four streams, which in a still higher degree adorn and make it beautiful. These four glorious streams are, according to the opinion of St. Ambrose, the four cardinal virtues, with which the soul of Father Fabrizio was abundantly watered.

Of his great prudence, which holds the first

place among the cardinal virtues, because it brings to perfection the most noble power, that is, the intellect, he gave the greatest proof, during the long period of his government of the new Congregation, as has been shown in a former chapter; nevertheless I will here add, that his prudence was of that stamp which alone deserves the name, that is to say, it was not worldly, but Christian prudence. Hence in all the resolutions which he had to take, he had first recourse to God by means of prayer, that he might enlighten his mind with the clear light of His grace. Accordingly he would not do even the least thing without first taking counsel of the Divine Majesty; and not content with his own petitions to obtain from the great Father of lights such illumination as is necessary in order to act in a holy and prudent manner, he would implore the aid of others, that by their prayers they might obtain from God, that what he was about to do might be directed to that end which was most agreeable to His most holy will. We ought not, therefore, to be surprised, that in all his undertakings and in all his discourses Christian prudence was so conspicuous; since before executing his designs, he took counsel with the Angel of great counsel. After having had recourse to God, he did not despise the advice of men, which, however, he sought from persons sincere and prudent, according to God, and not according to the flesh.

Hence it happened, that as he was mature in his deliberations, so he was prompt, courageous, and persevering in carrying them out.

A clear proof of his Christian prudence may be seen in the advice which he once gave to a father of the Congregation, who came to accuse himself at his feet of having suffered himself to be disturbed with an indiscreet zeal, whenever he observed the slightest and most trifling negligences in others. The advice which Fabrizio gave him was this: "Whenever you see anything which does not please you, retire to your own room and pray." He also recommended the same father, who was liable to be dreadfully oppressed with drowsiness after dinner, that when he felt himself attacked by this soft but resistless enemy, he should take up some spiritual book and read it, that if sleep overcame him, the image of what he read might be stamped upon his mind, and the shadows of spiritual things being thus represented in his dreams, he might derive advantage from the weakness of nature. His prudence being well known to the whole city of Forli, the chief and most important persons had recourse to him, in all the arduous and difficult undertakings they had in hand, to hear his opinion, and to regulate themselves according to his advice; and all confessed, that when they followed his instructions, every intricate affair came to a happy end, and protested that his counsel was always admirable.

Cardinal Stefano Donghi, legate of Romagna, bore a high testimony to his Christian prudence; for although he was adorned with great virtues, and his government was most successful, and so pleasing to the people that the remembrance

of it still remains fresh among them, nevertheless in all more difficult matters he had recourse to Fabrizio for counsel. Confiding in his skill, he laid upon him the most intricate affairs, and particularly he referred to him the settlement of the civil discords which sprung up in the city; that he might by his authority and prudence extinguish feuds and restore peace to hearts envenomed with anger and hatred. From the high opinion and esteem he had of him, he by his authority once induced him to be present at an exhibition, from which he would certainly have kept away, or rather avoided by every means in his power. As they were going to hold a tournament in Forli, in honour of its great protector and first bishop, St. Mercurale, and a great number of strangers assembled to witness so beautiful and dazzling a spectacle, the Cardinal justly feared, lest from the great number of people there assembled some disorder might arise; and as he had to be present on a platform, he determined to have Father Fabrizio at his side, thinking that through the great respect and veneration all had for him, he would by his presence be able to hinder any disturbance; or at least that if in the crowd and confusion, as is usual on such occasions, any tumult did take place, he would by his skill and prudence immediately put an end to it. Accordingly he commanded him to attend him at this festivity. Such a scene was truly contrary to his profession and inclination; but he was obliged to obey the express command of the Cardinal legate, and how

great was the merit of the servant of God on this occasion, will be told hereafter. The tournament, however, perhaps owing to his prayers, passed over most happily, without being embittered with riot or any ill-will.

No less favourable was the opinion which the Archbishop Giacomo Teodoli, whom we have many times mentioned in the preceding chapters, had of his Christian prudence, as also Francesco Maria Merlini, Bishop of Cervia, prelates of great virtue, both of whom being well acquainted with him, had recourse to him for counsel and help in their most important concerns. In a word, this esteem was common, or rather universal, in his country, and the opinion of his prudence such, that men vied with one another in availing themselves of it in all affairs of great importance.

His justice, the property of which virtue is to render every man his due, is most clearly proved by his eagerness to pay labourers their wages without delay. He knew well that a man has no money more strictly and properly his own, than that which is earned by his own toils, and is the fruit of his own labour; and therefore, as he was an ardent lover of justice, he would immediately pay those who served him in any work what was due to them, not choosing to keep it from them even till the next morning, according to the divine prohibition recorded in Exodus, nor even for one moment beyond the time. This was particularly seen when he was building the church of the Congregation; for although he had need

of so many architects and workmen, notwithstanding this, not one of them was ever heard to complain of the amount or delay of his wages, but on the contrary, all were loud in their praises of the integrity and justice of Father Fabrizio. And because many persons are culpable in this matter, and keep back the wages of those who toil to serve them, he would often speak of this important subject in his private and public discourses from the pulpit of the Oratory; and such was the fervour with which he spoke, in order to impress on his audience the obligation they had to satisfy, that it was easy to see the great love he had of justice. Indeed, so delicate were his notions of this virtue, that he would even restore what he justly possessed. He had once when a young man won a sum of money from a friend at some lawful and honest game, so that he had acquired legitimate possession of it; but notwithstanding this he insisted on returning it to him. But it was not only of his money, but also of his talents and his affection that he was so just a dispenser. Accordingly he held in his hand the balance of justice with the greatest exactness, and divided his paternal affection equally among all; so that neither the fathers of the Congregation nor his own spiritual children had ever cause to complain that some had greater intimacy with him than others. All were equally esteemed, all revered and served with the same affection and attention; nor did he ever allow himself to be influenced so as to favour one more than the rest, either by the breath of

affection or the bond of kindred, or by the wealth or nobility of any one. He justly thought so highly of this holy impartiality, as being a virtue which he esteemed of the greatest consequence in enabling men to make great progress in spirituality, that he often gave this maxim to his spiritual children: "We ought always to have the poor and the rich in equal esteem, and to be equally ready to serve them." But it was in his desire to preserve uninjured the name and character of his neighbour, more than in anything else, that his justice was clearly seen. Not only did he avoid attacking the reputation of the good, but he always interpreted in a favourable light the actions of others, and in conversation, making himself the advocate of his neighbour, he always excused and defended what he had done; so that if he ever heard the least word which might be prejudicial to the reputation of his neighbour, he would authoritatively put a stop to the conversation by saying, "Ad alia, ad alia," or else "Let us leave the judgment to God." With equal dexterity also would he stop any conversation which could in any way grieve or annoy any one.

As the light reed agitated by contrary winds is now bent down, and now raises itself again; so the soul assailed by misfortunes is beaten down and depressed, but when refreshed by successes, again raises its head and revives. In order, therefore, that it may become like the aged oak, strong to resist the adverse events of this mortal life, it needs to be strengthened by the virtue of fortitude. Father Fabrizio, resting

on the basis of this solid virtue, amidst the changes of this world was always the same ; so that to him might be applied the praise given to Anne the Mother of Samuel : "*Vultusque illius non sunt amplius in diversa mutati.*" With the same indifference of affection he heard of misfortunes or successes befalling himself or his house. He loved most tenderly both his father and his brothers, yet when they died he did not appear more distressed or afflicted than if any stranger had died. On the other hand, in the joyful events concerning his family, as desirable marriages, or the birth of his nephews, or other things of the same kind, not one drop of joy was apparently added to his usual cheerfulness ; but always regulating his affections with Christian fortitude, and looking upon every success as the disposal of Heaven, when he heard of any event, whether happy or calamitous, he would always utter this short exclamation, "*Benedictus Deus—Blessed be God.*" To such a point, however, had he attained, that he certainly felt greater sorrow and consolation in the adversity and prosperity of his neighbour than in what concerned himself individually ; so that as if transformed into the person of every one of his neighbours, he would thank God for their successes, and with earnest affection entreat God to be merciful to the unhappy and desolate. We cannot, however, be surprised that his mind was so constant and courageous, as not to murmur in times of trouble, nor be elated in times of prosperity ; since it was his maxim, that in all

human affairs, whether prosperous or adverse, a man ought to conduct himself as though he were already dead, and he left recorded this saying, "*Mortuus non videt non audit non loquitur, non irascitur, in prosperis non extolitur, in adversis non deprimitur*—The dead man sees not, hears not, speaks not, is not angry, is not puffed up in prosperity nor depressed in adversity." Again his fortitude was manifest in the works which he undertook for the glory of God; for never was he seen to lose courage on account of any accident which befel him.

To hinder offences against his Lord, and to check public scandals, he would not hesitate to go courageously against armed men and those too excited with anger and resentment; and as the reward of his fortitude and zeal, he often succeeded in pacifying discordant spirits, and changing the most fierce lions into meek lambs. With equal constancy and evangelical liberty he did not fear to reprove persons highly esteemed for their birth and rank, when they gave utterance to any words inconsistent with modesty and propriety, or for any other misdemeanor they might commit; and as though he were superior to any human power, instead of the reproaches which he might reasonably have dreaded, he obtained the desired improvement.

The sense of taste is a domestic and deceitful enemy no less of the soul than the body, which alluring by the sweet savour of meats, and the agreeable flavour of drinks, beguiles a man so to overload the stomach, that the mind becomes

in no slight degree clouded, and he is exposed to the danger of many great sins. In order, therefore, to curb this voracious monster, which, according to the holy Bishop of Milan, St. Ambrose, "*Semper expetit, et nunquam expletur*—Is always seeking and is never satisfied," every one has but too great need of the virtue of temperance, the office of which is to moderate the violence of the appetite in desiring what delights the taste and touch, withholding from those delights which are not in accordance with reason. By this virtue of temperance Fabrizio had so controlled his taste, that he never permitted it to exceed the limits of the most strict and rigid temperance. To avoid singularity, of which he was always the declared enemy, he fasted only on the days commanded by the church and on Saturdays; but he was always so abstemious in eating and drinking, as to cause astonishment to all who sat at table with him, particularly to Monsignor Luca Torreggiani, Archbishop of Ravenna, and many other persons of note who had sat at table with him, and were amazed, how a body of such a stature as his, and therefore needing plenty of nourishment, could be preserved alive on so scanty an allowance. Out of the common dishes which were brought to the fathers in the refectory, he would choose the most common and tasteless, and he was generally content with one of them; but in order not to disturb those about him, and that they might not be anxious about him, he would use his fork to turn over what was on his plate, and by this

virtuous dissimulation seemed to eat as others. He had not only entreated but absolutely commanded the cook to send him the worst and most scanty pittances, endeavouring to persuade him that they suited his constitution better, and that he should therefore like them better. In mixing his wine, which he did with his own hand, he used to pour so much water into the glass, that the colour of the wine was hardly discernible, so that his beverage had not even the taste of wine, though the few drops he poured in were enough to destroy the natural freshness of the water.

He would also conceal his moderation in taking so little wine, under the specious pretext of his natural temperament, which was warm and sanguine. Except at meals he would never allow himself the refreshment of a single draught, however greatly his parched throat might need it.

Nor is it to be wondered at that he treated his body so hardly, since he looked upon it as a beast of burden, and was accustomed to call it so when speaking with his spiritual children. "In order that the ass may not lag behind on the road," he would say, "we must take away the grass, and if this does not suffice, beat him with the stick, 'Vexo qui me vexat.' " At other times he would say, "The ass when well trained walks and obeys the bridle; but otherwise there is danger of his dismounting his rider." And indeed he had truly tamed it; for he had so reduced his body and become so thin, that those who had known him at Rome in his youth could

not recognise him. The same temperance he desired to see take root in his penitents, and therefore he would often give them this maxim, "Food ought to be taken in such a measure, that immediately after eating we should be able to begin our accustomed exercise with readiness. Nature is content with little, and we must not let ourselves be overcome by sense under any pretext."

That he might inspire them with the greater love of this virtue, he would speak in the highest terms of the merits of those who thus curb their appetite, and would say that more merit was gained by leaving a delicate morsel, than by taking the discipline to blood, because the mortification is more secret, and the sense mortified is more delusive than others. But he was not content to allow himself so scanty a portion of food, but he wished that this little should be mixed with ashes, and often did he entreat his confessor, whose least hint he obeyed, to allow it. But he, jealous for the preservation of a life, which he deemed so necessary to the well-being of the Congregation, constantly refused him permission, from the fear lest this secret, and therefore to him so desirable, artifice of penance might shorten his life. While he was thus scantily refreshing his body, he was fully occupied in feeding the better part with spiritual reading, to which he was so attentive that sometimes he did not know what he was eating, so that often when asked whether he liked such a dish, which had been handed round to all in the refectory,

he did not remember to have seen or tasted it. Such remarks were moreover very offensive to him; so that he was never heard to speak of eating and drinking, and did not wish that others should so speak, saying that it was not fitting for reasonable creatures. Lastly, he did not allow any relaxation to his body, even when he was weaker than usual from any infirmity; for even then he would on no account allow any change to be made for him, saying that the common food of the Congregation could do no harm.

CHAPTER VIII.

OF THE HUMILITY AND MORTIFICATION OF FATHER FABRIZIO.

FATHER FABRIZIO DALL' ASTE was truly a perfect priest of the Congregation of the Oratory, and worthy to found it in his country, richly adorned as he was with all virtues, and especially with those which are especially distinctive of the Institute, and are required by the holy Father in his children, that is, humility and mortification. For thus he was able both by his example and his labours to engraft them on these young plants of the Oratory, and so happily flourishing, they have with the help of grace given that lustre to the Congregation, which it from that time attained. As the chief basis on which the holy patriarch founded his Congregation was humility, Fabrizio did not think it meet to build the edifice

of his own perfection on anything less than a true and perfect humility, as well internal as external; insomuch that he was fully persuaded, that he was the most vile sinner in the world, and that he was unworthy of any regard or esteem.

This sincere and humble sentiment which he felt, he took care to acknowledge with sincerity and to confess with his own lips. He often called himself a great sinner, and the disgrace of mankind; and not content with thus proclaiming it, he wished to have it recorded in writing, and left written on a scrap of paper these words: "Fabrizio, the dishonour, disgrace, reproach, and pest of the Congregation." God, who exalts the humble, has so disposed that what he wrote for his own confusion and abasement should turn out to his honour and praise; for this paper, having been found after his death, was afterwards, according to Petrignani, preserved by the fathers with great veneration and inclosed in a gilt frame. But as their own humility is not seen by the humble, and they deem themselves void of that sweet virtue, Fabrizio offered earnest prayers to his Lord, that He would grant him to be the first to despise and condemn himself, and drew up this petition no less from his heart than with his hand: "*O quam justa petitio mi Domine! det mihi quæso bonitas tua, ut ego ipse a me ipso vilipendar. Rogo te mi amantissime Domine totis præcordiorum affectibus, licet indignus, ut mihi hanc dones gratiam, me vilipendere vilipendi, et nullo magis de vilipensione gaudere—O how just is my petition, O Lord! I pray Thy goodness*

to grant me to despise myself. I beseech Thee, most loving Lord, with all the affections of my heart, although unworthy, to bestow on me this grace, to despise being despised, and rather to rejoice in contempt." From his inward humility flowed, as from a fountain, the constant desire he had to employ himself in external acts of humiliation. With the greatest content he would busy himself in the lowest offices in the house; he would often serve in the kitchen, wash the plates, trim the lamps, or sweep the corridors; and if it happened that while he was engaged in such employments he was called to the door by any gentlemen, he would go immediately without changing his dress, that he might thus be looked upon with contempt. During the building of the church and house he had constantly opportunities of satisfying his humility; for as the fathers then kept some asses for the service of the builders, he so contrived by gentle but resolute entreaties, that the care of managing them was given to him. Thus the good father, though Superior and founder of the house, went down to the stable, to clean and prepare it, even so far as to pile up the litter in the public street; and in so mean and vile an employment he used the greatest care and diligence, so that it plainly appeared how highly he prized diligence and cleanliness. Indeed, he took so much pleasure in this work, that he declared he was fit for nothing else. Besides this domestic and continual occupation, which he had provided for himself in the house, he did not let the opportunity pass of doing other things equally

mean and laborious. When straw or faggots were brought for the use of the Congregation, he would at once go and help to unload them, and carry them to the place intended for them.

Once it happened during the season of the vintage that a waggon-load of crushed grapes was brought to the house, and the waggoner had no one to help him to unload it and carry the grapes in the tub. Fabrizio immediately ran up to him, and taking the place of the man who was missing, offered to assist the waggoner in this no less mean than laborious work; and immediately mounting the cart in the public street, without regard to human respect, completed the task with singular spiritual consolation. It was not that on this and the other before-mentioned occasions there was no one to serve the Congregation in these employments, but rather that he eagerly hastened with the greatest joy to perform such lowly works, because they were to be done publicly and in the sight of many, merely from the desire of being despised and held in no account. The servant of God expressed these his desires in these few words: "*Utinam totus mundus meam agnosceret vilitatem, et vilipendet me*—Would that the whole world could know my vileness and despise me!"

As he was thus willing to be employed in the service of beasts, it is no wonder to see him use the greatest care and diligence in the service of his fellow-creatures, even in the most lowly offices. Thus when any one was sick

in the house, or any stranger was lodging there, he would undertake the task of serving him in the most loathsome offices. Once he went so far as to insist on doing with his own hands what even hired workmen hold in the greatest abhorrence, namely, on cleaning the filthiest places in the house, and carrying out the filth, assisted only by another father of the Congregation, whom he allowed to share the work on account of his virtues.

Lastly, his humility induced him to perform the despised and abhorred work of grave-digger. On the death of Francesco Lambertelli, a gentleman of great integrity of life, whose body was to be buried in the church of St. Mercuriale, Fabrizio desired with his own hands to place it in his tomb, and for this purpose himself went down into the grave. In church he not only served several Masses every morning, according to the praiseworthy custom of the fathers of the Oratory, but moreover took upon himself the task of sweeping it out and cleaning it. Stimulated no less by his devotion than his humility, he did not confine his labours within the walls of the church, but would go out broom in hand to sweep that part of the street opposite the house of God. Hence many persons who used to see him so often with this menial implement in his hand, used to say that Father Fabrizio ought to be painted with a broom in his hand, and his own brothers used pleasantly to say, "Our brother is good for nothing but to sweep," which words pleased him not a little when re-

ported to him, and made him reply, "What they say is the truth; would that I were good even for this!" But he was not content with thus sweeping the floor of the church and the Oratory; but often feigning to kiss the ground, when he saw it defiled by the spitting of the persons assembled, he would actually clean it with his own tongue.

In many other ways did the servant of God exercise himself in acts of humility. If ever he saw the clerics not willing to take the part of Acolytes at the high Mass, he would with the greatest eagerness take their place in the public church, although he was the father and founder of the Congregation, his humility making him forget his dignity. Hence he would often humble himself before his own subjects, even at the time when he was exercising the office of Superior. One of the fathers of the Congregation fell often into some slight fault, so that he considered it his duty to correct him for it. Accordingly, he went to his room, and throwing himself at the feet of the offender, besought him with the tenderest affection, and entreated him with paternal zeal, to amend this defect. At this sight the father was at once overcome with admiration and compunction, and yielding to his humility, at once promised to improve, and faithfully kept his engagement. Another time when he had corrected one of the fathers for neglecting to be present at the election of the officers of the Oratory, of which he was prefect, as had been the custom hitherto,

and he excused himself by saying that it was not the practice of the Congregation of Rome, Fabrizio made inquiry of the Fathers of the Chiesa Nuova, and having found that what he said was true, immediately went to the room of this father, and humbly begged pardon for his presumption, although his meek correction had no other source than his zeal for holy observance.

When the three years of his office as Superior were drawing to a close, he went to the kitchen, and with profound humility kneeling at the feet of the cook, asked his forgiveness, if he had ever offended him or scandalized him by his bad example; and then availing himself of his own authority for his greater humiliation, he insisted on kissing his feet. At this sight the cook was not a little mortified and moved to tears, and ran immediately to the father-confessor to tell him all, unable meanwhile to restrain the tears, which fell in showers from his eyes. As he lived in the constant practice of what he taught his spiritual children, namely, that they ought to practise humility on every occasion, that by the frequency of such acts they might more easily acquire a true habit of humility, it is impossible to describe what a degree of this virtue he attained. It is no wonder, therefore, that praises and honours were so distasteful and offensive to him. So early as the time he lived at San Carlo, he consigned to the flames his diploma of the doctor's degree, not wishing to keep about him even a memorial of that which is

so honourable in the world. We have already related the annoyance he felt, when he heard that his brother Antonio had determined to procure for him a canonry in the cathedral of Forli, on which occasion he positively declared that he would never accept such dignities. After he had with so much labour planted the Congregation in his country, he never would consent or in any way allow himself to be called its founder; saying, that he was not its founder, but its reproach; and that not he but God, and his holy Father Philip, had founded it.

One of the fathers desiring for his own consolation to have a portrait of him, begged that he would allow him to send for a painter for this purpose. His humility was not a little wounded at such a request, but by a holy artifice, without seeming to understand that he had spoken in earnest, he answered with a joke, that he would certainly look very well painted upon crockery. If at any time any of his spiritual children happened incautiously to mention any virtuous action which he or his companions had done, he would at once become a rigid censor of it, and endeavour to make it appear worthless by the circumstances, or else to show that he made no account of it, he would say, "*Quid hæc ad æternitatem?*—What is this to eternity?" Whenever he received the thanks of any one for any favour he had conferred, or when he was praised on any occasion, however just and well known it might be, he would not endure it, desiring that all praise and gratitude should be given to God.

On the contrary, he experienced the greatest contentment of spirit, whenever he had been censured by any one, and most earnestly desired that every action of his should be blamed by all, that is, provided they committed no fault therein, as he expressed in the following words: "*Utinam haberem diligentissimos inquisitores et scrutinatores mearum operationum, qui eas etiam injuste absque tamen eorum culpa, reprehenderent, damnarent, atque vituperarent—I would desire to have most rigorous scrutinizers on all my actions, to reprove, condemn, and blame them even unjustly, provided it be without fault on their part.*"

In private and familiar conversation, he would never open his lips to speak of himself, of his noble family, or of anything which belonged to him, and he imposed the same silence on those who wished to speak of them, and if he could not avoid sometimes mentioning himself, he would give himself some vile and contemptuous title, calling himself a great sinner and the reproach of mankind. In what is called the Congregation of Faults, which according to the constitutions, is held by the fathers of the Oratory every fortnight, although from his holy and most virtuous life he had nothing to accuse himself of, nevertheless his humility made any little trifling thing appear to him great, although strictly speaking, it would not be called even a defect, and he would accuse himself with such humility and compunction, that the other fathers were filled with astonishment, and encouraged to

confess their own failings. His humility inspired him with the desire to hide from the eyes of men all the good he possessed. Thus though he was thoroughly versed in human learning, he would often purposely give utterance to some barbarism, not only in private conversation, but also in public sermons, or would use absurd expressions to make himself thought a foolish and ignorant person. This artifice of his he would endeavour to inculcate on the members of his Congregation, saying, "We must study and strive to be wise, and then to appear not to be wise." He sought to abuse and afflict his body in the most secret manner possible: hence he often entreated his own confessor, to allow him to sprinkle all his food with ashes, that he might, by this secret artifice of his, mortify his taste, although he could never obtain this permission from this discreet director, lest he should shorten a life which was so necessary to the good success of the Congregation, as has been already related. He used to teach his penitents to give themselves the discipline, so to speak, without noise, and without being observed; for instance, by plucking the hairs from their hands, or by pinching themselves, or by putting their hands under their knees, when they prostrated themselves on the ground.

Nevertheless these holy artifices of his availed but little; for his virtues and talents were so well known to the whole city, that he was held in the highest credit and esteem, although he made use of a thousand devices, borrowed from

his holy father, to make himself be thought a foolish person and of weak understanding. Once when he was returning from the country in company with another father, he gathered from a field a large bunch of wild flowers, and as if it had been a bouquet of sweet-scented and choice flowers, carried it in his hand through the public streets to the house of the Congregation. Another time also, after having been in the country, he brought home a bundle of grass, under pretext of giving it to some little lambs which the fathers kept in their house; but in reality, because he desired by this act to satisfy his humility, ever desirous of abasement and contempt.

Many times also when he was returning from the country or from the church of the Madonna del popolo, on entering the city he would walk through the streets with a bottle in his hand, exposed to view so as to be seen by every one. During the Carnival, having invited to supper in the refectory some gentlemen who were most attached and devoted to the Congregation, when they afterwards retired to the recreation room, he not only required some of his subjects to dance about in their presence, but having put a handkerchief over his own head, himself began to dance about with them. On another occasion, when a table belonging to the Congregation was out of repair, he carried it himself, with the help of another father, to the carpenter's shop, although he had to pass through the most frequented parts of the city, as he lived in the public square. And as he desired only to be

laughed at and despised, he chose for this ceremony the time when the sun was shining brightest; and that he might be better recognised, went without cloak or hat, and with only his berretta on his head.

Father Fabrizio being thus perfectly versed in the virtue of humility, so necessary for every one who desires to walk in the way of perfection, gave his spiritual children many maxims besides those already mentioned, of which I will here give a few.

In the first place he taught, that he who wishes to begin to serve God and attain true perfection, must necessarily lay a deep foundation of humility, adding these words, "A man must be humble, esteem himself as nothing, and really think meanly of himself: let us humble ourselves, let us humble ourselves." He declared that it is humility which preserves a man from the craft of the infernal enemy. The devil, he said, is cunning, and therefore we must live cautiously and in fear; and those who are humble and rely not upon themselves will escape best. It is a sign of great pride when any one becomes sad, when any action of his turns out unsuccessfully, or when he falls into any error. On the contrary he ought to confess it, and always acknowledging his own misery, say, "If I had been humble, I should not have fallen." We ought not to excuse ourselves by reason after reason to prove ourselves innocent; but it is enough to say once and calmly, "The case stands thus, or does not stand thus;" for often

under excuses, although true, there lurks self-love and pride.

The second basis upon which the holy Founder St. Philip rested his Congregation, was holy mortification, in which, by means of the most artful contrivances, he constantly exercised himself no less than his spiritual children. Thus as the Congregation of the Oratory was, as we may say, nourished and strengthened with this milk, Father Fabrizio deemed it an indispensable duty to endeavour to acquire it by the practice of frequent acts of it. He therefore mortified his own will, especially in those things for which he felt the greatest inclination, or towards which he was drawn by natural curiosity, which had become most odious to him, and which he called the origin of all vices; so that among the maxims which he bequeathed to the Fathers of his Congregation, that most often inculcated was this, "That it is necessary most cautiously to avoid curiosity, as a thing most pernicious to spirituality."

When a chapel, in the Church of the Congregation built by him, and dedicated to the holy Father, was completed and sumptuously adorned at the expense of the noble family of the Corbici, a noble painting, the work of the two most skilful artists of Bologna, Agostino Metelli, and Angelo Michele Colonna, was exposed to view on the wall, and was the admiration of all who beheld it, as well for its beauty as the skill displayed by the painters; and the more they examined this noble performance, the greater

was their applause. Accordingly Father Fabrizio had the greatest longing, and felt himself especially drawn to gaze upon and admire it. To this natural inclination was added the inducement of devotion, inasmuch as on the roof of the same chapel, the triumphal Assumption to Heaven of the Empress of Paradise, had been depicted by the same Colonna, a mystery for which the servant of God had an especial devotion, and the feast of which he kept with especial solemnity. Nevertheless, this virtuous priest would not allow himself to comply with his own wishes, though lawful, so that this inclination of his served to procure him abundant merit; for as he went down to the church morning and evening, and remained there many hours in the confessional, or when engaged in other ecclesiastical functions, and although he often occupied himself in prayer in the same chapel, and celebrated the divine Sacrifice in it, notwithstanding all this, for many months he refrained from looking at this beautiful and devotional picture, without even raising his eyes by stealth towards the holy picture of the Assumption, until he was required to do so by express command of his director, who did not think fit that his devotion should remain longer defrauded. But longer still and more meritorious was the privation to which he condemned himself, by never raising his eyes when he entered the church of the Madonna of the Fire, and set himself to pray there. The cupola of this sacred temple, dedicated to their most holy and

special patroness Mary, had been adorned by the bountiful piety of the people of Forli, with wonderful architectural beauty, and decorated with paintings by excellent artists, as Albani, Sacchi, Cagnaccio, and others. Moreover, the tribune of this church had been lately opened to the universal joy of the whole city, who by this magnificent and beautiful work of art endeavoured to increase yet more the veneration towards this adorable Queen. Fabrizio went frequently to worship before that sacred and miraculous picture, towards which he had the greatest devotion; but although nature has implanted in the heart of every one a certain impatient desire to behold the happy completion of the public works of his native place, nevertheless three years had passed, and the servant of God had so curbed his natural inclination with the rein of mortification, that he had never allowed his eyes to behold this work, which attracted the gaze of every one; and his whole life would have passed without his ever turning a look towards it, had he not one day been asked in conversation by his pastor, Mgr. Archbishop Teodoli, whether he was pleased with it. Being then unable to conceal the truth, he was obliged to say, that he had never seen it. The prelate was not a little amazed at this reply, and ordered him to go without delay to look at it. Being thus obliged by command of his Superior, he at length allowed himself to admire it. When by the express command of Cardinal Donghi, Legate of Romagna, he was obliged to be present with his Eminence

on a platform at the tournament, which was held in honour of San Mercurale, first bishop and protector of Forli, that, as has been elsewhere related, he might by his influence check at the out-break any attempt to interrupt the general cheerfulness, during the whole time the tournament lasted, neither was the glittering show, nor the valour of the cavaliers, nor the magnificence of the preparations, nor the many other curiosities of those knightly feats, enough to induce him to cast a single glance upon what was so eagerly gazed at and admired by all. But this is not to be wondered at; for as he spent all that time in prayer, compared with the contemplation of heavenly things, he did not consider anything belonging to this world worthy of a single glance.

But he was accustomed to mortify his own judgment no less than the inclinations of his will. It was a maxim which he was often accustomed to impress on the minds of his spiritual children, that it is necessary to mortify and submit our own judgment and opinion to that of others, even though it be entirely contrary. What he taught others he observed himself with the greatest fidelity; for although he was endowed with such prudence as to be considered quite an oracle in his own country, nevertheless, in all the resolutions which had to be taken in the Congregation, he desired to hear the opinion of the other fathers, and always inclined rather to the judgment of others than his own. He desired that all his spiritual children should

be as docile and ready to yield to the views of others as he was himself, and by the gentlest means endeavoured to make them so. Thus, in the common recreation or any other meeting, when he saw any of his own subjects at all obstinate in defending his own views, he would with the greatest skill correct him and make him see how degrading a fault obstinacy is; and on such occasions he often used to say, "He who loses it conquers it." If ever what he proposed to the fathers was not accepted by them, instead of being annoyed by it, he rejoiced that the thing had not turned out according to his intention; and we may add, that he had voluntarily and by an express engagement with his confessor, obliged himself, never to take much pains to explain to the fathers the reasons which induced him to entertain the view he proposed to them, when they seemed preferable to him; that thus his will and private judgment might remain mortified. For if he had openly declared it, they would without doubt have acceded to his proposal from the great reverence they bore him.

In addition to what has already been said of his abstinences and the penitential artifices with which he mortified and afflicted his senses and his body, which he called the ass; it may here be said, that he did indeed treat it as a vile beast of burden. For not only did he supply it scantily with food, but wounded it with hair-shirts made with very sharp points of iron, with which he tightly girded his sides on the bare flesh three days a week, and for eight days

without interruption before the most solemn feasts of the Catholic Church. He also scourged it with the discipline not only three days a week in the common Oratory, but also frequently in his room, using rough cords knotted and waxed, that they might be more severely felt; and so rigorously and unsparingly did he apply them to his innocent body, that he made the blood flow, as was proved after his death by the scars and wounds observed on it.

Moreover, he wearied himself with labours, never allowing himself to be a moment idle, in-somuch that his life was a constant series of works for the glory of God and the good of his neighbour, afflicting his body without allowing it any indulgence. Accordingly, when he went to his benefice, which was four miles from Forli, and when he returned from Cervia to Forli, having been sent for by the bishop, he always went on foot, and exposed to the burning rays of the summer suns, without the convenience of carriage or horse, although his brother's establishment was well provided with both, solely with the view of mortifying and afflicting his body.

Thus it may safely be asserted, that this worthy son of our holy father made the most of every opportunity, and was most diligent in mortifying as well the internal powers of his soul as his body and external senses, though he justly prized the former kind of mortification above the latter. Hence he was not willing to consent to the excessive exterior mortifications which novices in their first fervour often desire to embrace.

Particularly, he did not approve, that on the days appointed for recreation, in order to refresh the mind as well as the body after continual fatigues and application, any of them should ask permission of their master to stay at home to attend to prayer or any other spiritual exercise; for being a determined enemy of singularity, he said that they gained enough by doing as others did. This severity of penances and mortifications Fabrizio used towards himself alone; for after the example of many saints, he was all gentleness and cheerfulness. Thus he willingly allowed them to take any honest recreation, provided that by refreshing the body, they did not weaken the spirit; and in order to test this, he said, "That when after recreation we feel ourselves more prompt and ready for the service of God, it is a sign that our amusement has been taken in a holy manner; but when we find it difficult to recollect ourselves in God, it is a sign that we have exceeded the bounds of moderation." He took such pleasure in the harmless amusements of others, that he contributed to them as much as he could. Accordingly, he deemed it not a slight fault for any one to absent himself without a just cause from the common recreation after dinner and supper, at which all ought to meet according to the order of the holy father. He also, to contribute to the amusement of his beloved fathers, had agreed with one of them, with whom he was most intimate, that he should joke very freely with him.

CHAPTER IX.

OF THE OTHER VIRTUES WITH WHICH FATHER FABRIZIO
DALL' ASTE WAS ADORNED.

OUR Fabrizio was often accustomed to give one great maxim to his spiritual children, which is certainly a saying of the greatest advantage for the attainment of perfection. "In order to walk faithfully," he said, "in the way of salvation, we ought to do as the bee, which from every little flower sucks some juice, of which to make her honey, and lingers longest in those wherein she finds the food most suited to her work ; so we, from the blooming virtues of every good man, and from reading the Lives of the Saints, ought always to derive some profit for ourselves, and to make the greatest study of those virtues in which we know ourselves to be most deficient." He was, moreover, faithful in performing what he recommended to others ; so that his soul, by the aid of Divine grace, became richly adorned with the most noble virtues ; and in order that his virtuous deeds might be truly such, without any defect, which might make them decline to the right or left, it being most true that the moral virtues consist in a mean, he had chosen obedience for his guide, which, though its perfection be to be blind, shows, nevertheless, the safe road not to err.

Among all the things which are practised

in the Congregation of the Oratory, by command of the holy patriarch St. Philip, and all its obligations, he met with nothing so displeasing to him, as the steady and firm resolution of the fathers to have him always for Superior or Provost as long as he lived; because it seemed to him that he could not exercise himself in the virtue of obedience as he desired. But this very thing made his obedience of a higher stamp; inasmuch as though he had never been a subject in the Congregation, he nevertheless knew so well how to exercise himself in obeying.

His interior vision was so keen, that he traced in every one of his subjects some feature of superiority; and hence, he with such humility submitted himself to every one, as to appear rather a subject than a superior. This example was a most powerful means of constraining by a gentle violence the fathers of the Congregation to depend entirely on his least hints, and to obey the other subaltern superiors in the same way as he did himself. If the sacristan called him to say Mass, or to assist at the confessional, or to administer communion, to serve Mass, or, in a word, to exercise any ecclesiastical function in church, he immediately obeyed, a mere sign without a word spoken being enough to make him at once break off any other employment which he had in hand, although it were for the service of God, at such times following the maxim of his Father St. Philip, that we must leave God for God. Desiring to be treated

as a subject by his own subjects, he wished them to assume a tone of command with him in all that regarded their offices. Thus, on one occasion, when the sacristan called him to come down to say Mass, and addressed him in this respectful manner, "Father, will you be pleased to come down and say Mass?" he answered, "I am most ready; but for the future, do not trouble yourself to use such formality in calling me, but simply say, 'Come to say Mass.'"

He also showed no less alacrity when he heard the voice of the porter, or the sound of the bell; for considering it to be the voice of God, he said, "God calls me," and obeyed without hesitation, leaving unfinished whatever he was doing. Thus if he was called, when he was saying office, or when he was praying or writing, he immediately went down, although it might cost him the trouble of beginning his office again, considering this prompt and perfect obedience of much greater consequence than the labour of repeating those sacred prayers. Once when he had received a visit from some of the principal persons of the city, when he was about to accompany them, he heard the bell, which called the fathers to table, and at once, without performing this act of politeness, he made them a bow, and without further excuse or compliment went immediately whither obedience summoned him. These gentlemen were not offended, but, on the contrary, greatly edified by this act, which to the world would seem wanting in civility, for they well knew how exact Father Fabrizio was in

obedience. In like manner he showed the most prompt obedience to those who were successively prefects of the Oratory.

Thus, as well in preaching in the Oratory, as in reciting the holy prayers, which the fathers are accustomed to say for a week in turn after the mental prayer, according to the rules established by the holy father, he was not only attentive to his obligation, when it fell to his turn, but was generally chosen to supply the place of others, as he was always the most prompt in exercising this sacred duty. When the bell gave the signal for prayer in common, at the first stroke he hastened to the Oratory, and if ever he happened to be out when the time drew near, he would quicken his pace with the greatest eagerness, in order to be there in time, as there was nothing which interested him so much as obedience in matters so essential.

Once when he was returning from the country with some of his spiritual children, on the road he heard the usual signal for prayer, and knowing that he could not arrive in time, said to them, "Since we cannot be there in time, let us at once begin to join the prayers of our fathers;" and having said this, and put an end to all conversation, he applied himself to mental prayer until he reached the Oratory.

By his exhortations as well as his example, he endeavoured to make his subjects resemble him in promptly obeying those who exercised any office, often saying that the calls of those in office are to be esteemed the voice of God,

and therefore to be obeyed without hesitation. "We must," he said, "obey promptly and without delay, and say, 'Christ calls me.'" He submitted not only to those, who by reason of their office had any kind of authority, but to all, even the cook; so that he seemed to be Superior only in name, while he was in fact the most obedient subject of all.

Moreover, he desired to act under obedience in things purely indifferent. Towards the close of his life, when he found himself suffering from great weakness of the head, and had been advised by many friends, and even by his physicians, to wear his hat in the refectory, as a protection against the cold, he would never be induced to do so until he had received not only the permission of the fathers, but their formal leave in Congregation, which was recorded among their other decrees. Nor did he avail himself of this favour longer than the necessity lasted.

The servant of God had originally with great satisfaction to himself introduced the custom, that the fathers should not go out of the house alone; but some of them having learned that in Rome the fathers of the Chiesa Nuova after the three years' noviciate go out alone, entreated him to propose in public Congregation to the fathers, whether they preferred to conform themselves with the practice of the fathers in Rome, or to follow the custom introduced by him.

The servant of God did not approve of this innovation, nevertheless, not to afflict his children, he proposed the important affair in the

Congregation; and when they had resolved to follow the practice of the Roman Oratory, he knew not how to bring himself to go out without a companion. Accordingly the first time he was induced to do so, on the ground of not appearing singular, he determined to have the merit of obedience; he went, therefore, to the room of one of the fathers, and melted in tears threw himself at his feet, and begged him to give him the benediction, before he executed this decree in his own person. This father was not a little edified by this action of his, and that he might not make him lose the merit of obedience, complied with his request, and gave him the benediction he sought. This is related by Petrigiani in his compendium of his Life in these words: "Fabrizio had introduced with great satisfaction to himself the custom, that none of the fathers should go out without a companion. But they having heard that the fathers of the Congregation of Rome did not observe this, but sometimes went out alone, except the novices; to comply with their wish, though contrary to his own desire, he proposed the question. The consequence of this was a decree, that they should observe only what was practised by the Congregation of Rome. Fabrizio felt the greatest repugnance to this; and the first time, that, to mortify his own will and avoid singularity, he had an opportunity of going out alone to hear a sermon at the Duomo, he first went to the room of one of the fathers, and humbly kneeling before him, besought him with tears of devotion to give him the benedic-

tion, before he began to practise the new decree. This father, filled with emotion by an act of such humility, that he might gratify him and not deprive him of the merit of obedience, gave it as he asked. Nevertheless afterwards, when he would do so without inconvenience to others, he always observed his old custom of walking with a companion."

Not less remarkable was the obedience of Fabrizio towards his confessor, whom he looked upon as a guide given him by God, and not as one chosen by himself, as he was always the confessor of the house, who is elected according to the constitutions of the Oratory by the whole Congregation. To him, accordingly, he submitted in everything, and always, not only his will, but also his judgment and affection for things, even spiritual; not wishing even to breathe, so to say, without his permission, and recognising him, not only as the director of his soul, given him by God, but also as the faithful interpreter of the divine will. Not content with throwing himself at his feet three times a week to confess his faults, according to the rules of the holy father, every Saturday he would give him the most minute account of all he had done in the week, and conclude by humbly begging his blessing. When he first gave the reins of his will into his hands, he protested that he should give him the most exact account of all his actions, and addressed him in these words, "Father, I would save my soul, and I confide in your direction. See, I trust you with a precious thing, for I

entrust my soul to your care." As he was so diligent in rendering an account of all that he did to his guide, so he was no less anxious to have his approval in all his undertakings. If ever he had to go out for the service of his neighbour, or for recreation, or if he was sent for by the Cardinal legate or the Bishop, or the Governor, or any other personage, he would first go to the apartment of his confessor, and ask his leave and the benediction, conferring with him on the notice he had had of the business about which he was to be consulted. He never would write a letter to any one without showing it to him before he closed it, and beseeching him to tell him sincerely whether there was anything in it which ought to be left out, or anything to be added. Those also which he received from others, he wished to be seen first by his director, that he might fully and entirely understand everything about which he was concerned, and that he might dispose absolutely of his free will. As if he were a mere novice he dared not put on new clothes of any kind, even a hat or shoes, until they had first been examined by him, and he had received his permission to use them.

Much more in spiritual things before doing anything, he desired entirely to depend on his pleasure. He took the greatest delight in reading holy and devout books, but notwithstanding this, he never took up one for his own gratification, without the express leave of his director, and he even desired that he should choose books

of devotion for him, and fix for him what he was to read in them.

He once wrote on a sheet of paper various acts of devotion and mortification which he desired to perform, as he said, for the reformation of his life, and gave it to his confessor that he might examine it. And in this instance he gave a clear proof of his great virtue, and showed himself detached from his own opinion even in spiritual matters. Some of these acts appeared to his discreet guide too rigid, so that he would not consent that he should practise them; and the truly obedient disciple cheerfully and promptly executed those which were allowed him, and with equal promptness refrained from the others, thus meriting, not only by the good acts which he did, but also by those which he omitted to do in obedience to his confessor. To this effect he was accustomed to say, that we must serve God as God wills, esteeming the will of our confessor to be the will of God Himself.

He would have been well pleased to meet with austere and indiscreet persons, who would have enjoined him to perform severe and difficult things, and whom he would have been bound to obey with readiness, as he has himself declared in these words, "*Utinam essem sub arctissima cura hominis admodum rigidi atque indiscreti, cui in omnibus et per omnia adstrictus essem parere atque obedire*—Would that I were under the severe discipline of a man of great severity and little discretion, to whom in all things and

for all things I should be bound to submit and obey." But as his director was always a person of discretion, he had, on this very account, as we may say, still greater opportunity of afflicting and mortifying the superior part of his soul, as will be seen from the following fact. One of the latter years of his life, there happened to be a winter of more than usual severity, with long frosts and snows, and the servant of God was already so weakened by his abstinences, and his constitution so crushed by the continual and insupportable fatigues which he endured, that his confessor out of compassion ordered him in virtue of holy obedience to have his bed warmed before he lay down. What he considered so excessive a luxury was not a little afflicting to this lover of suffering; nevertheless, suppressing his own inclination, he promptly obeyed, though he did not neglect again and again to ask leave to discontinue this indulgence. His confessor, however, was steady in the resolution he had taken, and after refusing him many times, at length said to him, "Continue to have your bed warmed, and do not speak to me again about the matter; when it seems to me time for you to leave it off, I will let you know, without your asking me." The obedient priest immediately bowed in submission, and continued to obey the hard command without remonstrance; and in fact, had not the order been at length revoked in order to console him, he would have continued to have his bed warmed even in the hottest days of August. In a word,

he so entirely depended on the word of his director, that he not only obeyed his express orders, but set himself to make out and, so to say, divine the meaning of his very signs and his intention, in order to obey promptly. His confessor said to him one day, as if in joke, "Father Fabrizio, you have a beard like a hermit." From these words, said as in joke, he inferred that he intended him to have his beard shortened, and immediately he had it cut shorter, though against his will.

As he was so exact in his obedience to those to whom he voluntarily subjected himself, so was he still more zealous in obeying faithfully those who were his Superiors. Accordingly he was most obedient to his own Bishop, and executed every order of his with the greatest punctuality. Thus on one occasion when he had published an edict, in which he withdrew from confessors the faculties for giving absolution in certain cases reserved to himself, although the Superiors of the Congregation of the Oratory of Forli had special authority in such cases, so that being Superior of that house he could not be included in that edict unless expressly named in it, he, nevertheless, went immediately to the Bishop to ask whether it was his intention to include him in that order, saying that he would immediately obey. The Bishop, however, having replied that he did not intend the prohibition to apply to him, he bowed to his will, and continued to assist in the confessional with increased zeal. Nor is it to be wondered at, that he was so

obedient to his own pastor, for it was a saying of his, that Providence gives to Superiors the guardianship of two angels, one to protect their persons, and the other for the direction of their government; and, therefore, when they command anything which to us appears hard or unreasonable, we ought, nevertheless, to obey without for a moment debating about it. Lastly, he gave this most useful maxim about the virtue of obedience, in order to walk with safety in the way of perfection—"We ought not to do anything without the consent of our spiritual father, and to him we ought to expose every act, thought, and temptation."

If Fabrizio, without any obligation of a vow, professed an obedience so strict, that he was not inferior to religious themselves in this respect, so he was not the least behind them in voluntary poverty. His clothes were poor, his room was poor, and all that belonged to his person breathed the odour of poverty. He dressed in coarse stuff in imitation of the holy Father; and although his dress was often torn, he did not, therefore, at once lay it aside, but patched and mended it with his own hands; and once, not having any other at hand, he used white thread to sew his zimarra, and was delighted to go down to church in this way, to be laughed at and mocked. His hat also, which was usually old and falling to pieces, was often held together by pieces of white thread, which would have brought contempt and ridicule upon any one else; but he was so highly esteemed

for his known goodness, that it brought him only reverence.

He kept only one habit and one pair of breeches of wool or leather; and when he was obliged by necessity to renew them, he gave them to the poor. Having once observed that some little pieces of cloth had been thrown by one of the fathers into the heap of rubbish, though they seemed to be but the vilest rags, yet he diligently collected them to make himself a little cap for his head. He disguised the love he had for this poverty of dress under the pretext, that he was thus more fit to employ himself in any work however vile, saying, that a mean and common dress does not oblige us to be so careful of ourselves when doing any work, since a man is far more at liberty in a poor habit. His apartment seemed to be the very dwelling of holy poverty; for there was no furniture to be seen in it, but a little bed so full of bugs, that it served rather to keep him awake than to afford him repose, and on it so hard a mattress, and sheets so coarse and tattered, that those who saw it declared that the poorest man in the world would not be willing to sleep on it, a rude chest of fir wood without a key, a plain table, a seat rudely covered with cord, and a three-legged wash-hand-stand. This latter piece of furniture, still more shows how much this love of poverty abhorred anything superfluous, for he had a sort of common cornice which was on it taken off, as it made it appear to him too costly. His religious poverty was still more conspicuous

in things which relate to devotion ; as he was content with a few devotional books and a picture of his holy father. A little image of the Infant Christ had been given him by the auditor Mercuriale Merlini, before which he delighted to pray, and exercised frequent and most tender acts of love ; and though it was delicate and beautiful, and required to be protected from the dust, it was not until he had been recommended to do so by his confessor, that he would consent to place it in a little case of the commonest workmanship, as he feared lest it might be contrary to true religious poverty.

Though his room was poor, yet it was so clean, that many confessed that to go into it seemed like entering Paradise. Moreover, as the chamber of a poor man, it had no fastening of any kind, so that at any time and at any hour there was free entrance to it. In order that poverty might reign in the Congregation which he had founded, and that it might not be excluded from the houses of his secular children, he used often to repeat these most useful maxims, "Make use of things necessary, and avoid superfluities beyond what is needful. We must have an affection for poverty, and practise it as much as the state of each one permits."

The affection which he bore for poverty certainly did not spring from a narrow or covetous mind, for he was on the contrary great minded and generous, and born of a very rich and liberal house ; so that although he was parsimonious in supplying himself with clothes and his

room with furniture, yet he was most bountiful in enriching the sacristy of his Congregation with most costly sacred furniture. Moreover, he willingly spent large sums in solemnizing with devout pomp and great veneration numerous festivals. Nor was he thus profuse and liberal in the service of his own church alone, but with a bountiful hand he supplied considerable aid to many religious of the city and to other churches, to enable them to celebrate the festivals with solemnity, or to expose with becoming decency the Divine Sacrament to the adoration of the faithful. He also willingly contributed his pious aid for the building of new churches or the repairing of old ones. One, who so greatly loved poverty, and so willingly distributed his own income to others, could not be otherwise than far from every desire of acquiring earthly goods.

He was one day sent for in great haste to go to the house of a sick lady who was well provided with the goods of fortune, and who had no near relations; and the servant maid told him to make haste and go to the house of her mistress, as she wished to make a will before she died and leave him all her property. But when he heard news so displeasing to his love of poverty, he remained immoveable, and plainly declared that he would not go, and that she might provide herself with another heir.

His Congregation was entirely without revenues, the fathers maintaining not only themselves, but the church also, by their contributions; nevertheless, when certain legacies and

inheritances were offered to Father Fabrizio, he generously refused them. A rich lady of the city, who had a great devotion towards the institute of the Oratory, had made a will in which she bequeathed a farm to the Congregation, that with the income arising from it, the maintenance of the Congregation might be in part provided for.

For the space of eight years after she had made this will, her intention remained unchanged, but being at length wearied by a relation of hers, who was to have part of her inheritance, but complained that he had equal claim with another relation, and that she had not made a just division, the poor testatrix, who knew not how to escape his importunate entreaties, had recourse to Father Fabrizio for advice, as she had the highest possible opinion of him; and having told him the difficulties in which she was placed, asked him to give her his opinion about this important matter. The servant of God advised her to revoke the bequest made to the Congregation, and to leave the farm to this dissatisfied relative, who considered himself to be wronged by her division of her estate; and she acted accordingly, under the influence of his persuasions. It is true that Father Fabrizio and his Congregation lost the farm, but he gained that glory which is acquired by being entirely free from interested motives, and an enemy to the pursuit of wealth.

Another time he refused not only a legacy, but an entire inheritance for his Congregation.

A rich widow, who had no relations to whom she was under any obligation of leaving her property, determined to make a will and institute the Congregation of the Oratory of Forli her heir. Accordingly, she went to the church of St. Philip, and having sent for Father Fabrizio, spoke to him of her intention, which she intended to put into immediate execution by making her will. The servant of God heard what she had to say, and then thanking her for the affection she bore towards the Congregation, exhorted her to find another heir, not wishing to accept this voluntary offering, and left her, still refusing, though the good widow often repeated her entreaties.

He was so jealous on this subject, that he often, with the greatest earnestness, gave the fathers these excellent rules, most truly in accordance with the spirit of the institute of the Oratory, that they should never talk of the interests or wants of the Congregation with their penitents, and that they should avoid all places where they treated of will-making.

The only virtue which the fathers of the Oratory observe under the obligation of a vow is chastity; since this is attached to the sacred order of the subdiaconate. How spotless was the purity of Father Fabrizio is shown in no small degree, by the prudent devices and the seasonable precaution which he used to preserve it. As he was sometimes necessarily obliged to converse with women, he never would speak to them unless in the presence of a third person,

nor did he ever raise his eyes to give them even a passing glance, but the whole time he was with them he kept his looks steadily fixed on the ground, a rule to which neither age nor relationship made any exception; for though he often had to converse with those who were his relations, or advanced in years, of whom there could be no suspicion, he nevertheless always kept his eyes on the ground. When he heard their confessions, he kept his eyes so guarded that he seemed to have them shut; and his composure and modesty were so perfect, that he resembled an immoveable statue. He avoided all intimacy with persons of the other sex, however spiritual and devout; and in the salutations which he had to make to them, he thought it better to be rather rustic and ill-mannered than too courteous, as may be gathered from these maxims of his. In saluting women, he said, "It is better to be sparing of politeness, and even to seem rude, for the craft of the devil sometimes makes use of courtesy to bring in evil expressions contrary to virtue. We must not be familiar with women, even under the pretext of spirituality, for the senses are worse than fire." He never permitted any one to kiss or even touch his hand, although they might have the honour of being his spiritual daughters by going to confession to him. He often gave his spiritual children this maxim, that they ought to avoid women as the plague, and never to trust them. And as if they were truly infected with the plague, he would not keep near him even the things used by them.

He was once asked by a poor woman, a penitent of his, to keep for her a dress of hers, which for some reason or other, had it been seen by her husband, would have brought her life into imminent danger. The heart of Father Fabrizio was moved to compassion at this recital, so that he desired to comply with her request; but feeling reluctant to keep in his room these ornaments of a woman, and not to violate his strict rules of purity, and at the same time to show his great charity toward this afflicted woman, he at length entreated the father-minister to keep the dress in some remote and unseen spot. So cautious was he in not letting any part of his body be seen, that once a tumour having risen on his arm, he kept it concealed for many days, although it caused him very great pain, until at length with great difficulty and modest reluctance he allowed it to be seen by his confessor.

The injuries, reproaches, and abuse which were directed against him, offended him not; on the contrary, he heard them with pleasure and goodwill; but if any one in his presence uttered an indecent word, his chaste ears were most sensibly pained, and his pure heart pierced with sorrow. Thus in reproving this vice he seemed rather to thunder than to speak; nor did he pay regard to any one, using the same Christian liberty in correcting the rich as the poor, and the powerful as the mean and abject.

An instance of this happened while they were building the house of the Congregation; for one of the fathers who had been brought up in his

school of purity, and was imbued with his most chaste maxims, hearing that some workmen spoke in an indecent manner, moved with zeal to put a stop to such conversation, struck him with a stick. Afterwards reflecting on what he had done, and suspecting that his zeal had degenerated into anger, he went at once to the feet of the servant of God to accuse himself of it as a fault, and to ask for a penance ; but this most chaste and zealous priest having heard the story of the innocent culprit, answered him in these words, "If that was the only reason for which you struck him, you have but sanctified your hands."

From the pulpit of the Oratory he never spoke with greater energy, than when he reproved the vanities of women, and especially the intolerable abuse of wearing the breast uncovered, to the great scandal of youth, who by such incentives are easily led astray, and plunged into the filth of impurity. Nor were these powerful exhortations thrown away ; for many women under the influence of them with a laudable desire to amend, altered their dresses according to the rules of modesty. Nor could he bear to see the poor women in church go in any way uncovered, and severely reprimanded them for doing so ; and because some of them excused themselves on the ground of their poverty, not having veils to cover themselves with, or laces to fasten their dresses, he laid in a large stock of these things, and readily supplied them with them, thus coming to the aid of their poverty, no less than their modesty.

As the caution of Father Fabrizio was so great in preserving unsullied the precious jewel of purity; so were the methods most efficacious by which he strove to preserve his body in innocence. In the first place, he avoided idleness as the root of all vices, and especially the parent of impurity. Availing himself of the seasonable advice of the servant of God, "*Nunquam diabolus te non occupatum inveniat*—Let the devil never find you unoccupied," which words he often repeated, he was continually occupied in holy employments and engaged in fruitful labours. Being well convinced that through the gates of the senses the thief enters to carry away the treasure of virtue, he guarded them with the most anxious care, and to curb their liberty, bound them with the chains of a voluntary obedience to the holy counsels of the Gospel. As, according to the teaching of the saints, the salt to preserve our flesh from corruption, is the mortification of our own bodies, this chaste priest, in so many different ways afflicted his own body with fastings, tormented it with disciplines, and pierced it with the sharpest points of iron, and treated it with so implacable a hatred, that it might have seemed to be his mortal enemy, as has been elsewhere related. As it is true that it is not only by external enemies, but by internal also, that the virtue of purity is attacked, (since the imagination, defiled with impure images, wages a warfare with this fair but delicate virtue, the more cruel because intestine,) Father Fabrizio, to defend himself from

these domestic assaults, laboured to impress his own imagination with the most chaste maxims, taken particularly from the little book on chastity, written by Father Giustinelli, of the Company of Jesus, which he had often in his hand, and always carried about with him, that thus his mind might be filled with pure thoughts, and his imagination freed from all defilement. Lastly, as every human effort without the help of Heaven is insufficient to preserve purity, he constantly had recourse to the Queen of Virgins, to obtain it for him from her Divine and spotless Son; and thus, with a tender and filial confidence in the great Mother of God, of which we shall speak in another place, he strove to preserve his purity unsullied under her virginal mantle.

If it be true, according to the opinion of the saints, that the test of goodness is the virtue of patience; it follows, that he who meets the heavy blows of adversity without rebelling against them, gives a clear proof of a solid and robust virtue. In this manner a genuine proof of the eminent virtue of Father Fabrizio was given by his invincible patience. In the first place, God was pleased to try his virtue in the crucible of many severe sicknesses. When he was living at the church of St. Carlo, the first cradle of the Congregation which he had founded, he was seized with a severe and dangerous sickness, which made it necessary to apply cupping-instruments. Now it happened that when the bands which fastened one of these were loosened, it slipped to another place, and inflicted a wound of

the size of a hand's breadth, which when it was dressed caused him the most severe pain ; nevertheless, all this was not enough to draw from him a single complaint, as he only opened his lips to utter devout and fervent aspirations to God. His friends seeing that he did not give the least sign of suffering, asked him whether he felt any great pain, upon which he sincerely confessed the truth, and told them that he suffered very severe pain, but that it was necessary to have patience and submit to the will of God. The just, therefore, and the friends of God are not insensible to suffering, as many, to excuse their own impatience, pretend ; but by their virtue overcome the pains and afflictions which they endure, and rejoice that the Divine good pleasure is fulfilled in them, even at the cost of their own sufferings. It was, therefore, because he was habitually disposed to do the will of God, that Fabrizio remained so unmoved in the midst of these sufferings. Hence too, whenever he suffered from sickness, he used to say, "Our will ought always to be conformed with that of God—we must will only what God wills, and in the manner he pleases—let the will of God be done."

Another opportunity of exercising his patience was provided for the holy priest in this same sickness ; for, as he was seized with a great drowsiness, his physicians feared lest it might end in a lethargy, and ordered that his fingers should be twisted and his body severely pinched, that he might be kept awake. Thus he was

with affectionate cruelty grievously tormented by his dearest friends ; for the more desirous they were of his recovery, so much the more did they strive to give him pain. And, in fact, what he suffered in this way was most severe ; nevertheless, his invincible patience made him appear insensible to it, insomuch, that after he had recovered, being asked by these same loving tormentors, whether he had felt the pain, he gave them the same answer as on a former occasion.

He was frequently liable to troublesome and acute attacks of sciatica, which he not only patiently supported without complaint, but did not even allow them to prevent his ascending the pulpit of the Oratory to preach, or taking part in other functions in church ; for, however severely he suffered, he would go about leaning on his staff, or, rather, drag himself along wherever charity or devotion called him. The same thing he often did, when actually suffering from the inflammation of erysipelas in the head ; for, making himself superior to his malady, he would employ himself in his accustomed duties. The narrow bed of this servant of God was often a stage on which his patience was called to act the principal part ; for, though he was often compelled by his frequent illnesses to lie on this hard mattress, he always supported it with invincible patience. On one of these occasions, the confidence which this worthy son bore towards the holy Father was remarkably proved, as also the love which he bore him in return, and the seasonable succour which his benignant protec-

tion afforded him. He was suffering from an acute fever, which had reduced him to a state of great danger, and to the burning heats of which was added the very severe pain caused by a parotitis, with which he was afflicted. The malady continued a long time, and the physician, who knew what pain the sick man suffered, was amazed that he did not break out into the most violent cries; but, on the contrary, he endured all with invincible patience, and only entreated the fathers to bring him a relic of St. Philip, which had been given to him by the fathers of Rome, with whom he had the closest correspondence; and when they had complied with his request, he devoutly stretched out his arms, and fixing his eyes on heaven, began tenderly and affectionately to weep, and then reverently kissing this relic of his great Father, he declared to all the great confidence he had in him.

In the meantime, this painful swelling grew rather worse than better, and tortured him without any prospect of its bursting; when he, feeling still greater confidence, asked them to give him a picture of the Saint on paper; and, wonderful to relate! no sooner had he applied it with devout reverence to the place of this obstinate malady, than he immediately began to repose, and a sweet sleep closed his eyes. In a short time, however, he awoke, and found that the tumour had burst; and, accordingly, he soon recovered. It was commonly considered miraculous that the tumour should have burst at

that time, inasmuch as it could not naturally have been cured without the knife. Accordingly, he offered the most tender thanks to his great Father, and always preserved this picture with great veneration, calling it the miraculous picture.

He frequently had on his lips this devout saying, "That we ought willingly to carry the cross, and to suffer what God wills, how, when, and as much as it pleases Him, asking of the Divine Majesty simply to suffer," which he perfectly carried out in practice. For knowing that in the time of sickness God wished to try his patience, he did not seek any alleviation of his pains; hence, as it is a kind of comfort to the sick to speak of their pains, and as he desired to fulfil the Divine will by simply suffering, when any one visited him during his illness, he would not allow them to speak of it, but wished them rather to speak of God; so that when any one began such a conversation, he would answer by a gentle smile. He entreated the fathers, when they entered his room, while he was sick, to recite the prayer of St. Philip; and then he would begin a conversation on spiritual subjects. He derived from his frequent illnesses not only the practice of patience, but motives of humility; and he used to say with great feeling, "God deigns in His mercy to rub off the rust from the iron of my heart; my duty it is not to flinch under the process, but submit to the blows of the Divine Hand."

With the same patience did he receive from

the hand of God all the troubles and adversities which come immediately from Him ; and with no less meekness did he support the offences and injuries he received from men. Thus, as he often had to do with the poor, who however bountifully they may be at times assisted, are nevertheless very hard to satisfy, with tranquil mien he supported all their impatience, and even the arrogant boldness which some of them showed at times, without even treating them with the least severity.

He loved with the tenderness of a father the Congregation which he had founded, and regarded his subjects as his dear children ; nevertheless, when any of them, deceived by the suggestions of the common enemy, abandoned like a deserter the standard of the holy father, under which he had enrolled himself, even if he were a person of great promise, and his companions were grieved and bewailed his loss, he was not the least disturbed ; but on such occasions would say, "God will provide ; let God have His way ; God has no need of men."

His breast was so habitually protected with the breastplate of patience, that anger and rage had no words bitter and sharp enough to pierce it. Accordingly, when he was ill-treated and reproached, he seemed speechless and immovable. He was once sitting in the confessional surrounded by a great number of persons, who were crowding around in order to present themselves for the sacrament of penance, when a countrywoman, full of pride and violence, en-

deavoured to take precedence of all the rest, and rudely made her way through all this crowd of persons who were waiting for confession. At length, seizing another woman who was kneeling on one side of the confessional by the arm, she violently drove her away. This act of pride and violence ill became one who was on the very point of accusing herself, and bewailing her sins, and Fabrizio, who had observed it, wished by a tacit reproof to make her sensible of her fault, and deferred hearing her confession by turning to another poor woman on the other side, instead of attending immediately to her. The proud and rude woman became furious, and inflamed with resentment started up, and raising her voice to a high pitch, poured forth a torrent of injurious and reproachful words against the servant of God. The bystanders were not a little scandalized by such a display of insolence, seeing how shamefully she was excited without any cause; but on the other hand, they were not a little edified and filled with admiration at the great goodness of Fabrizio, who, as if he had been deaf and dumb, did not answer a word to the unreasonable abuse of this violent woman, but continued in peace and tranquillity to hear the confessions of the rest. When one of the fathers afterwards spoke to him of this event, he only replied, "I thank God that I did not delay the confession of this countrywoman, to hear the confession of a lady, but of a woman of still poorer condition."

But it often happens that the pen wounds

more acutely than words ; inasmuch as it takes its aim against the honour of another with greater deliberation, and so makes a deeper wound. There were not wanting persons to write with bitterness against Fabrizio and his Congregation, while they were building the house of the Oratory, and a song was written about some windows which looked into the street, so severe and satirical, that it became a well-known and open libel. Information of the abusive composition and the satirical author reached the ears of this most patient priest ; but with his usual meekness he not only did not seek to avenge himself, but his peace of mind was not in the least disturbed. Indeed, if he felt any resentment, it was not against the author, but against those who offered to take his part, and that of the Congregation ; for when a person of good abilities showed himself willing to take up his pen to answer this satire, he was filled with a holy confusion, and resenting the courteous offer more than the outrage he had received, replied, that he would not on any account have it answered, nor would he hear of the least revenge against the author, to whom he professed himself rather bound to offer his thanks, than to complain of what he had done. It often happens that the virtue of any one is best discovered in unexpected circumstances ; and thus on an unexpected occasion it was seen how steady, and, so to say, immutable was the patience and meekness in our Fabrizio. He was naturally a lover of cleanliness, and dirt and filth were

most offensive to him ; so that he often repeated the words of St. Bernard, which St. Philip also used to quote, "*Paupertas mihi semper placuit, sordes vero nunquam*—Poverty has always pleased me, but never filth."

Once it happened, that a tailor after keeping a habit of his for many months in his shop, at length sent it back all covered with spots. When the good priest unfolded the habit, he at once saw what treatment it had received ; but he gave no sign of resentment, but a gentle smile, practising on this occasion as well as on others which occurred during the course of his life, what he had obliged himself to observe by a protest written with his own hand, which was found after his death, and contained, besides many other virtuous acts which have been already quoted, these words, "*Nunquam de aliquo conquerar, nunquam reddam pro malo malum, sed pro malo bonum*—I will never complain of any one, I will never return evil for evil, but good for evil." He was not content to arm himself with the shield of patience by making this protest once for all, but as often as he went out of the house, he prepared himself to receive any reproach or insult ; accordingly turning to his companions, as they stepped beyond the door of the Congregation, he used to say, "If, while we are walking in the street, any one should come up to us, and without any cause load us with injuries, or give us a blow, what ought we to do ? We ought to thank God for this good opportunity of turning him the other cheek, to

be treated in the same manner, without returning any answer to his reproachful words."

It must not, however, be thought, that because he was so meek as to feel no resentment for any injury or affront which he received, that he was, therefore, naturally insensible to them; for, on the contrary, he was by nature sanguine and choleric, and so inclined to be readily provoked to anger. Accordingly to check this natural impetuosity he gave himself this salutary maxim, which, that he might keep it always before his eyes, he kept fixed in his own room, "Fabrizio, let not yourself be overcome with anger."

Thus the servants of God, cooperating with the helps of grace, by their holy efforts overcame the inclinations of nature in so complete a manner, that it seems as though their virtues were natural to them, as is clearly seen in Fabrizio, who, though naturally choleric and bilious, came to forget what anger and resentment were. Only when he had to show his zeal for the honour of God and His saints, was he seen to be moved with a holy anger; and even on those occasions he knew so well how to temper it with discretion and composure of mind, that he made it clearly appear that his indignation was directed against the vice, and not against the person who was guilty of it, whom he loved as his neighbour in God and for God.

Our Father Fabrizio crowned all his virtues with perseverance, for he continued to the end of his days in the exercise of virtues, and in the

employment of holy works ; and so he strove to be ever improving and advancing in the service of God. To incite himself to steadiness and perseverance in the service of God, in the place where he usually prayed, he fixed a piece of paper, on which he had written the following words : "Non te ventiles ad omnem ventum, sed sta fixus in opere Dei—Do not be turned by every wind, but remain steadfast in the work of God." Moreover, he was not content with persevering merely in the degree of perfection which he had already attained, as has been before remarked ; for he knew well, that even to stand still in the way of God is to turn back ; and, therefore, he strove to be ever advancing in the way of perfection, and to aim more and more at attaining habits of the different virtues, by the diligent practice of them. Accordingly, he let no opportunity pass, from which he could draw good for his soul, without eagerly taking advantage of it. Lastly, he said, and what he said he practised with the greatest diligence, that to obtain perseverance, it is necessary to renew frequently the resolution we have made to serve God, frequently to make acts of the love of God, to inflame ourselves with ejaculatory prayers, and before everything we do to place our mind in the presence of God.

CHAPTER X.

OF THE PRAYER AND DEVOTION OF FATHER FABRIZIO,
AND OF THE GIFT OF TEARS.

THIS great servant of God, when conversing with the other fathers, often used to say to them, "Why do you think we are called Fathers of the Oratory? Because we ought continually to devote ourselves to prayer." And most exactly did he himself fulfil this obligation which was imposed on him, not only by the name of Father of the Oratory, but also by that of Founder of the Oratory of Forli; for he attained to such a sublime degree of prayer as to remain always united with God. At first he used to spend one hour in the morning and another in the evening in mental prayer; but, afterwards, as he advanced in years, he made greater progress in this favourite exercise, and devoted another hour to it after dinner. And, at length, in the last years of his life he advanced so far in tender union with God, that omitting many vocal prayers, which he used to say out of devotion, as we shall presently relate, he spent all the time that he was not occupied in church or in the service of his neighbour in continual and most fervent mental prayer. He thus arrived at such a point as to be always united with God; whether he walked in the street, or remained in his room, or lay down to rest, or in whatever other place

he might be, or at whatever other time, he was always mentally engaged with God, as was testified by a person, of whom Petriguani affirms, that his evidence could not be doubted, in the following words: "Father Fabrizio in the last years of his life lived in continual mental prayer, spiritual meditations, and union with God." So incessant was his application, and so great the fervour of his prayers, that, according to the opinion of his physicians, this was the cause of the frequent and violent attacks of erysipelas in the head which he suffered; insomuch, that seeing his zealous devotion to this holy exercise, when he was attacked with sickness, they absolutely forbade him to practise it. His countenance, or rather his whole body, gave evident proof of the height to which he attained in prayer; for while he prayed, he was seen at one time all pale, and again, all inflamed and lighted up, so that he seemed a burning brand of living fire, changing his looks according to the different affections of his heart. Very often, while he was in prayer, his face appeared so full of tenderness and joy, that it might be easily understood from his looks, that inwardly he was speaking with God. His body often remained without the use of its senses, and, as it were, in ecstasy. One day in particular, when he had gone to the chapel of the most holy Annunciation, to contemplate the triumphal Assumption of the Queen of Paradise, to which glorious mystery he had an extraordinary devotion, he was so completely engrossed in the contemplation of

heavenly things, that he seemed to be carried out of himself; insomuch, that a gentleman, who went up to speak to him, seeing him so abstracted from sensible objects, called him by name, but could get no answer or sign of recognition, so that he was obliged to raise his voice and pull him by his habit, in order to rouse him from the profound contemplation in which his whole spirit was absorbed. When he went down from his room to the sacristy to prepare to approach the altar, and to unite himself sacramentally with his Lord; and when, after the divine Sacrifice, he was returning to his room, he was so united with God, that he seemed in an ecstasy, and did not pay any regard or even observe, when he was either spoken to or saluted by those who met him.

Although this sublime degree of prayer and contemplation be the gift of God, which He imparts according to His divine good pleasure, to whom He wills, and as He wills; nevertheless, ordinarily, the Divine Majesty is not pleased to bestow it, unless upon those who have been for a long time prepared to receive these singular communications by innocence of life and the prolonged exercise of holy meditation.

It is not, then, a matter of surprise, that Father Fabrizio arrived at so sublime an union with God, since he had been so well prepared on his part by a virtuous life and frequent meditation on heavenly things, and by other exercises which I shall here gladly relate in detail for the benefit and instruction of those who read

these pages. In the first place, then, he was in the highest degree a lover of retirement, which is one of the remote preparations to pray well. Accordingly, he very seldom went beyond the church, and delighted to live in solitude in his room or in church. The service of God and the benefit of his neighbour were the only motives which could induce him to step beyond the doors of the Congregation; and when he did so, he took care to avoid the more frequented places, and not to go far along the public streets, that he might escape from the tumult of creatures. Moreover, all conversation was offensive to him, which did not relate to God or spiritual subjects, because, as he declared, it is an impediment to union with God. Accordingly, he used often to give this important advice to his spiritual children: "Avoid all conversations in which there is jesting, and merriment, and laughter, because spirituality is lost in them; and it is difficult, nay, almost impossible, to recover it, and to become again united with God." According to this important maxim, he seldom allowed his tongue much liberty in speaking, unless necessity required it; and whenever he spoke, he laid down four indispensable conditions: "Necessitate, parce, benignè, et modestè, loquar—I will speak only from necessity, sparingly, kindly, and modestly." Another preparation equally necessary, which he used, was frequent spiritual reading, by means of which God speaks to the soul, and the mind becomes fertilized with holy thoughts, which afford a seasonable supply in

prayer and at other times. He read such devotional books with the greatest diligence, and paused over them, as the bee rests on those flowers from which she draws the most abundant juices ; and he used to say, that in spiritual reading, the mind ought to rest where it finds a favourable spot for the spirit, and not to read, as it were, by glances or from curiosity. The books he most frequently read, were the "Collations of Cassian," "Thomas a Kempis," "The Meditations of St. Buonaventura," "The Life of his holy Father St. Philip," that of Cardinal Baronio, and the Chronicles of the Friars Minor.

He used, moreover, to have recourse to his confessor very frequently, to ask him to assign him the points on which he ought to make his meditations ; and this he continued to do, even after having obtained from God the more perfect kind of prayer, of which we have just spoken, in order to keep his spirit low and in subjection to holy humility. When he was told by his confessor to occupy himself in any meditation relating to the Divine love, or the passion of our Redeemer, he would ask him to allow him to continue to meditate on these points so dear and delightful to him for several days.

Once he gave him, as the subject of his meditations for a week, these sweet words : "*Ibi nostra fixa sint corda, ubi vera sunt gaudia*—Let our hearts be there fixed, where there are true joys," and his soul, enamoured of God, found therein such abundant spiritual nourishment, in considering the joys which belong to the bless-

ed inhabitants of Paradise from the vision of God, and the possession of His glory, that he earnestly besought him to allow him for at least a whole month to continue to feed on these heavenly delights.

Another time the same confessor wished him to reflect attentively on the answer given by the holy Count Eleazaro to his wife Delfina, that if she wished to find him, she should seek him in the wounded side of his Redeemer; and he, penetrating this cavern of love like an innocent dove, dwelt there in thought for the space of many weeks with the greatest delight and spiritual contentment, never being at a loss during the whole of this time for new subjects of contemplation. Indeed great was the sweetness he experienced, as he plainly showed to his confessor, for whenever he met him during this interval, as if all melted with love, he would say to him, "It is good, my father, to be where that Count dwelt." So fruitful was his mind in meditation and contemplation, that a single word, so to say, sufficed to supply him with abundant matter for consideration for any length of time. Having reflected on the no less prudent than virtuous answer given by the angelical doctor St. Thomas to his crucified Redeemer, when, after approving no less his doctrine than the zeal with which he had written to manifest His glory, he asked him what reward he desired for his service, and he answered, "*Non aliam nisi te, Domine*—No other than thyself, O Lord," he was provided in these few words with matter to satisfy all

his mind and all his affection for a long time. And as he always drew from them the most touching reflections, that the sweetness he experienced during these days might be prolonged, he requested that the divine and merciful offer of the Redeemer, and the angelical reply of the holy doctor, might be set to music in a motetto; and afterwards whenever he heard it sung, the delight he had first experienced was renewed. Not content with receiving the points of meditation from his director, on Saturday he would give him an exact account of the fruit he had gathered from them, confessing with gratitude the gift of so many graces from the Giver of all good. Thus he would often say, "Father, this week our Lord on His part has done much—we see that the divine goodness is not wanting, and that He does to me far more than I deserve—all the evil comes from my own bad nature and pride." After he had given this account, he would entreat his confessor to fix for him the virtue in which he was especially to exercise himself the next week, and to oblige himself to a certain number of acts of this virtue; and if he ever failed to complete the number prescribed, he would ask him for a penance.

Besides these points, which, like a scholar, though in reality well grounded and even a master in prayer, he wished to take from his director, he gathered many from the sacred books which he used to take up for this purpose before beginning his prayer; and many more were supplied

by his own devotion. Some of these last were found after his death in his own hand-writing, and contain, as we may say, the essence of spirituality, and are most fruitful, because they so admirably penetrate the eternal truths. I shall not, however, record them here, as any one who is desirous to read them, may see them in the compendium of his Life by Petrigiani, in which will be found some for spending profitably all the days of the week, some in preparation for a good and holy death, some for renewing the holy purpose of living according to the state to which each one is called by God, and, lastly, others to make us enamoured of the fair land of Paradise while in this miserable exile.

Of all subjects of meditation, however, the most dear to him were those on Divine love, or the Passion of Jesus Christ, and the reason he gave was this, that in meditating well on the Passion of Christ we come to know clearly our own misery, seeing that a God has suffered so much for us, while we desire only our own convenience. After these preparatory acts, as well remote as proximate, when actually engaged in meditation, he used all diligence to occupy himself in this important work with all the external composure possible.

It was one of his maxims which he used to teach his spiritual children, that external deportment helps not a little to unite us with God, and that with the aid of it internal composure is the more easily attained, a thing which ought to be borne in mind by those, who, during the

short time they occupy themselves in prayer to God, endeavour to find the place and posture most convenient for the body, and allow their external senses every liberty to wander where they will; so that it becomes impossible that the mind should not be distracted by creatures. As for himself, he would take his place with such modesty and external composure, as excited devotion in all who beheld him, as they, hence, inferred the inward union of his soul with God. Nor was their judgment mistaken; for, besides what we have already said on this matter, Petrigiani affirms, that he was wonderfully favoured by God with a rich abundance of spirituality without any distraction. Lastly, he used to give salutary maxims for the time which followed that of prayer; for he said that after prayer we ought again to return in order to think it over and digest it well. Thus this servant of the Lord by his holy and zealous devices co-operated with the grace which God communicated, and with the light which He shed over his mind; and thus at length he reached the sublime degree of prayer of which we have spoken.

As man has received his body no less than his soul from God, it is just that both one and the other should be employed in praising and blessing their Creator, and beseeching Him to bestow His graces. Accordingly, as Fabrizio employed his mind in these holy exercises, so he did not let his tongue remain idle, but engaged it likewise in devout prayers and offerings. Every day at the appointed times he offered the tribute

of the canonical hours, remaining the whole time on his knees in his own room, or in the church before the altar of the most holy Sacrament, and with the greatest piety united a most exemplary modesty and composure of deportment with the most devout mental application to the divine words.

Besides this obligation, which, by reason of his sacred character, he was bound to satisfy, he recited several times a day with equal devotion the corona of our Lord, a third part of the most holy rosary, the corona of St. Philip, and other prayers to the Angels, and to Saints towards whom he had a devotion, and his patrons. In honour of his great Father, and to invoke his most powerful aid, he used to recite a corona invented by his own filial devotion, which was composed of the following words, "Sancte Philippe, ora pro nobis—St. Philip, pray for us," which he repeated eighty times in honour of the eighty years spent by the Saint with such holiness and virtue in this world, with the following prayer after each decade, "Sub tuum præsidium confuginus, Sancte Pater Philippe, ora pro nobis, defende nos, intercede pro nobis—We have recourse to thy protection, holy Father Philip, pray for us, defend us, intercede for us." He also composed another, which he called the corona of conformity with the Will of God; and as this Divine Will was the polar star, towards which all his thoughts, words, and deeds turned, he recited it without fail every day. It was composed of these few but divine words, "Non mea, sed

tua voluntas fiat—Not my will but Thine be done," which he repeated thirty times ; and that he might be the better able to accomplish it, after each decade he implored the divine aid in these words, "*Deus in adiutorium meum intende, Domine ad adjuvandum me festina*—O God, incline to my aid ; O Lord, make haste to help me." But it seemed to the servant of God too little to employ his tongue and his mind once a day in reciting these prayers ; so that he would often open his lips to give utterance to the ardent ejaculations of his loving heart. Those which he most frequently used were the following, recorded by Petrigiani: "O Lord, when will the time come, when I shall go to enjoy Thee ? Thy judgments are great, O my God, nevertheless, in Thy mercy I hope to save my soul. O *æternitas, æternitas* ! We must not remain with our hands in our girdle. O my sweet Jesus ! What a precious thing to live in the side of Jesus ! O Infant Jesus ! *Cor mundum crea in me, Deus*—Create a clean heart in me, O God. *Benedictus Deus in æternum*—Blessed be God for ever. One soul, and if this be not saved, all is lost. May Thy Will be ever done, O my God !"

And, lastly, as his loving heart bore no slight resemblance to that of his holy father, he would often repeat with great tenderness those verses of St. Philip :

"Vorrei saper da voi com' ella è fatta,
Quella rete d'amor, che tanti a preso,"

"I would learn of you, how that net of love is made which has caught so many."

He would also often utter the most beloved Name of Jesus ; and then his heart would almost melt through the great sweetness he felt. Indeed so devoted was he to this holy Name, that in all his necessities and dangers he had recourse to the invocation of it ; and also urged others to utter it with confidence in their necessities, saying that there is no danger of evil when this most holy Name is invoked. Once it happened, that one of the fathers of the Congregation having gone out of the city, accidentally fell from a high bank, without receiving any injury from so dangerous a fall ; and when he returned to the house, and told Father Fabrizio of this dangerous adventure, he asked whether when falling he had uttered the most holy Name of Jesus, and when he told him that he had done so, he answered, " I am not then surprised, since you had on your lips so good a guard and so secure a defence." In his own person, moreover, he experienced the virtue of this great Name ; for as he was walking through the city in company with another father, and was near the church of the most holy Virgin della Grada, which was situated on the walls of the city, at a part of the rampart in which there was a deep hole, Fabrizio carelessly slipped with both feet, and fell to the bottom of the precipice. It was so high that his companion feared lest he must have received some great injury ; but his fear was soon changed into astonishment, for he saw him rise up of his own accord, without having received the least injury. Then congratulating

him on having escaped so manifest a danger, he affirmed that it had been a great miracle, and was answered by the servant of God in these words, "There was no danger of evil, because I invoked Jesus to my aid." So great was the confidence he had in this most powerful Name, that he thought there could be no peril when he had invoked it.

Great also was the devotion and confidence which he had in that great instrument by which the Son of God accomplished the redemption of the human race. Before beginning anything he had to do, he signed himself with the holy cross, and with this powerful weapon, the same which had destroyed hell, he protected himself in all his needs, and the dangers which are so constantly met in this vale of miseries. If ever it happened that he was attacked by savage dogs when in the country, he would turn towards them with the greatest composure and tranquillity, and say to them, "Away, away! be quiet, and go home!" and, as though they had lost their strength and spirit, they would at once quietly leave him. Singular, too, was his devotion to the holy sacrifice of the Mass, and it even appeared externally, as all the bystanders unanimously confessed, that when they saw his devotion, they always felt a peculiar spiritual consolation. Before approaching the altar he prepared himself by a lengthened prayer, and at the close of the great action he also spent a long time in thanksgiving to God.

The devotion he had for the Mother of God

and the holy Father Philip, was that of a son. The proofs of the former were the devout tributes which he daily paid her, and, moreover, the tender affection with which he often employed his tongue in singing her praises, and exalting her merits, expressing by his words his interior and ardent love : and, in fact, so sweetly did he reason on the prerogatives and greatness of this great Queen, that his words most touchingly penetrated the hearts of the hearers, and filled them with emotion. A clear argument of the trust and confidence he reposed on her most powerful protection, were the instructions he gave his spiritual children in order to implant the same in their breasts also. He used to say, "That for one who would walk securely in the service of God, devotion to the Most Holy Virgin is necessary, and he must confidently have recourse to her in all his necessities."

Moreover, he had frequently on his lips this saying, "We cheerfully hope in God, and in the merits of His most glorious Mother." Sincere and deep was the devotion which he bore towards his great Father ; and he would often read over the History of his Life, in order to copy in himself the actions of his father. Moreover, in his greatest difficulties he had recourse to him, as has been related in the preceding chapters, particularly when he was afflicted with the tumour. And, finally, his great devotion towards him inspired him with new modes of honouring him and invoking him, as we have just shown.

In a word, his devotion was of such a stamp, that as soon as it was seen by others it produced compunction, and transfused itself, so to say, with a happy contagion, into the hearts of others. Accordingly many persons used to contrive to stand near him when he was engaged in the holy exercise of prayer, or when he was employed in other spiritual exercises, that they might share in his devotion. Nor was it only proximity to his person, but even the very sight of him, which seemed to produce the same effect, as is observed by the author of his Life in the following words: "Some devout persons felt the greatest spiritual consolation in placing themselves near Fabrizio, or in any place where they could see him, feeling a sensible flow of devotion in their soul from merely observing his inexpressible tenderness, modesty, and the devout application with which he prayed and performed the other accustomed exercises; for from his habitual sweetness of spirit, and from continually keeping his thoughts and affections on Heaven, he contracted such a method of acting in all he did or undertook, and in all his conversation, that every action of his, although common to others by the rules of the Institute, became manifestly distinguished, though against his will, from those of others, so clear were the marks of sanctity, which were seen impressed on every action of his."

Such are the words of his biographer, who is guilty of no exaggeration in saying, that every

action of his, though common to others by the rules of the Institute, caused edification to those who witnessed it, because all were stamped with the marks of sanctity. For he performed every action, even those which are indifferent or necessary, as for instance, going to bed and getting up, dressing, or taking recreation, in the most perfect manner he was able, having for a long time studied, and faithfully practised, the spiritual exercise composed by the great Cardinal Robert Bellarmine, that most brilliant light of the Company of Jesus; insomuch that in all these and the like actions, he observed all those most holy rules and points of meditation, which are therein prescribed by the wise and virtuous Cardinal for the sanctification of indifferent actions, and those which must be daily and necessarily done, while we are on this earth.

His tears were at once the sweet fruit and a manifest proof of his devotion; for as he was naturally grave and very far from disposed to shed tears, on account of any human misfortune whatever, (insomuch that neither the death of his father, nor the loss of his brothers, nor any other calamity or trouble, was enough to draw a single tear from his eyes), nevertheless, when he contemplated the greatness of the divine love or the pains of the suffering Jesus, he was so overcome with emotion, as to shed most copious tears; so that it is evident, that they were not the effect of his natural disposition, but the gift of the Divine Grace, which

was pleased by these sweet emotions to repay even in this world his promptness and devotion in serving God.

So abundant were his tears that he could not restrain them, much as he strove to do so, when they seized him in any public place ; for fearing lest the bystanders should infer from them the interior devotion of his heart, when they saw him so richly favoured by Heaven, he tried every means to check them. Once when he was celebrating the holy Sacrifice, on the night of the Nativity, considering that it was love which had induced the infant Jesus to be born in a stable, and to have for His cradle a worthless manger, he burst into tears. In like manner when he was reading the bitter and dolorous passion of the Redeemer, when he came to the words, "*Et inclinato capite, emisit Spiritum—* And having bowed His head, He yielded up the ghost;" as though he internally beheld the Author of life, drawing His last breath, with His head bowed on the hard wood of the cross, he could not check the streams which flowed from his eyes. He had this gift of tears in an especial manner on the feast of the great patriarch St. Joseph, towards whom he had a peculiar devotion.

How copious and how frequent were his tears, when he passed so long a time in his own room in holy prayers and the contemplation of things divine, conversing with God alone, must remain unknown to us ; as the walls of his chamber concealed from the eyes of men, not only the

sweet tears which fell from his eyes, but also the tender sighs which breathed from his loving heart. Yet, notwithstanding this, his children had a clear proof that he often enjoyed this most sweet gift of God in his own room, whilst he was thus engaged in prayer; for often when they knocked at the door to speak to him, either about their own spiritual matters, or the common affairs of the Congregation, when the servant of God opened the door to these sudden calls, he could not so completely hide the Divine favour he enjoyed, as to appear on such occasions with dry eyes, his cheeks also being wet with falling tears, as they have affirmed. Thus, the gift of tears was not a rare thing with Father Fabrizio, or one granted him by God only on the greater solemnities, but frequent and familiar, as he so often enjoyed it in his own room.

He was also favoured by the Lord with many other gifts; but the narration of these must be left to some other pen, for the reasons I have already stated.

I shall conclude the Life of this servant of God in the words of Ottaviano Petrigiani, so often quoted, from which may be seen in conclusion the high character and reputation which he enjoyed, not only during his life, but after death, in his own country; and not only he, but the Congregation which he founded. These are his words: "Throughout successive ages the memory of this great man will remain indelible, and especially in the city of Forli;

since the fruit of his most ardent zeal is daily experienced in the innumerable spiritual benefits derived from the labours of his children and successors, whose goodness and rare example I pass over in silence, lest I should offend their modesty, a consideration, which in the course of the work has made me conceal their most illustrious names. Meanwhile, to Fabrizio my country owes its increase of devotion towards the glorious St. Philip Neri, whom she has chosen for her protector—and to Fabrizio also a most brilliant example and most effectual aid in a perfect and truly Christian reformation of manners. I have myself the sweet recollection of having been, although in my most tender years, in some degree an admirer of his most perfect virtues, to describe which I have not written a word, without having had the most trustworthy information from persons most worthy of credit, and well experienced in the goodness of Fabrizio.”

**POINTS OF MEDITATION FOR EVERY
DAY OF THE WEEK,**

WITH OTHER BRIEF CONSIDERATIONS,

BY THE VEN. FATHER FABRIZIO DALL' ASTE.

MONDAY.

What is God?
What am I?
What need have I of Him?
How then ought I to serve Him?

TUESDAY.

What has God given me?
Why has He given it me?
How do I make use of it?
How must I make use of it for the future?

WEDNESDAY.

What debts have I with God?
What must I do to pay them?
What have I done hitherto?
What do I resolve to do for the future?

THURSDAY.

What inspirations does God give me?
What occasions of profiting myself?
How do I make use of them?
How must I make use of them henceforth?

FRIDAY.

What has Christ done for me?
What ought I to do for Him?
What is the little I have done?
What ought I to do henceforth?

SATURDAY.

What did I desire to do at such a time?
What have I done?
What remains for me to do?
How ought I to do what I have not done?

SUNDAY.

I have to destroy the old man entirely.
I have to make a new one.
For the first, self-denial and mortification will suffice.
For the second, the perfect imitation of Christ.

ON PARADISE.

What is Paradise?
What must be done to obtain it?
What have I done?
What am I now doing?
What do I resolve to do?

TO PREPARE FOR A HOLY DEATH.

What pain shall I feel at that time for having offended my God?

What grief for not having served and loved Him?

What fear of having Him my enemy, and for not having done what I ought?

What kind of penance shall I then desire to do, if He would grant me time for it?

Now that by the grace of God I have time, what am I prepared to do?

TO SANCTIFY ONESELF IN ONE'S OWN STATE.

For what reason am I in this state? To serve God.

What things can hinder me from doing this?

What things make it easy for me?

I resolve to free myself from these hindrances, and to embrace whatever can facilitate it.

THE LIFE
OF THE
VENERABLE SERVANT OF GOD,
FATHER MARIANO SOZZINI,
PRIEST OF THE CONGREGATION OF THE ORATORY OF ROME.

BOOK I.

CHAPTER I.

THE BIRTH OF MARIANO. HIS EARLY PIETY AND
STUDIES.

MARIANO was born at Siena, an illustrious city of Tuscany, July 5th, 1613. His father Alexander, a gentleman of singular prudence and blameless life, belonged to the family of the Sozzini, one of the most ancient and distinguished in that city. His mother, Porzia, of the family of the counts of Elci of Siena, was not inferior to her husband, either in noble birth or in piety and Christian virtue.

She had a numerous offspring, seven daughters and as many sons, of whom Mariano was the youngest, although the first in virtue and merit. Mariano lost his father at the age of twelve, and the care of his education fell upon the Countess Porzia, who endeavoured to instil into the

tender mind of her son lessons of Christian piety, and to apply him to the studies which suited his age and condition. Mariano corresponded to the diligence and care of his good mother, by the innocence of his life, the steadiness of his application to study, and, above all, by the perfect obedience and respect which he paid her, endeavouring to please her in everything that he did. On one occasion he had, without her knowledge, caused a small gold ornament to be attached to his dress; but no sooner did he perceive that it was not agreeable to his mother, than he removed it, and never would wear it again. He was endowed with a maturity of mind beyond his years, and he was distinguished among others for the modesty and circumspection which reigned in all his actions, particularly in speaking, so that he used to be called "the circumspect" by his mother and his companions; and it was by this name that he was admitted into the college of the *Philomati* of his country, which afterwards passed into the celebrated academy of the *Intronati*.

The piety and devotion of the youth were greatly nourished by his continual intercourse with the fathers of St. George, of the Congregation which bore the name of the Nail at Siena. This appellation originated in the circumstance, that the Congregation took its rise in a chapel of the church belonging to the great hospital of Santa Maria della Scala, in which, according to ancient tradition, was contained one of the nails with which Christ was crucified. This Congre-

gregation was instituted by the Venerable Matteo Guerra, a Sienese, commonly called Teo of Siena, who was so dear to St. Philip Neri, that the Saint wished him to stay with him at the Vallicella whenever he came to Rome; and after St. Philip's death, the very night he went up to heaven, he appeared to Matteo Guerra, to tell him that he was going to the glory of Paradise.

But to return to Mariano: by an unceasing attention to the devout exercises given by the exemplary priests of this Congregation, (which was afterwards suppressed by Alexander VII.) and by frequenting the holy Sacraments, Mariano laid the foundation of that sublime perfection which, as we shall see, he afterwards attained.

When he had completed the study of polite literature and philosophy, he gave himself to that of canon and civil law, following in this the example of his forefathers, who had in different ages much distinguished themselves in these branches, especially the elder and the younger Mariano, and also Bartolomeo Sozzini, who were celebrated lawyers in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, as is evidenced by their printed writings. Mariano made great progress in these pursuits, and on the 1st of October, 1635, he received the degree of doctor in the university of Siena, on which occasion he gave such a proof of his abilities and knowledge in the private and public examinations which precede the degree, that he was thought worthy to be aggregated to the college of doctors and jurisconsults in that university.

But to know the character which he bore in his youth, whilst he lived at his native place Siena, we have only to listen to the unbiassed testimony of his countryman, Cardinal Flaminio Taja: "Father Mariano Sozzini," he says, "the renowned and admirable priest of the Congregation of the Oratory of St. Philip Neri at Rome, according to the adage, that children take after their father, was born at Siena of a noble and accomplished father, Signor Alexander, who was an ornament to his country in every position that he held, and died rector of the academy, a worthy successor of his ancestors, who were so eminent in canon and civil law. Moreover, seeing that children for the most part resemble the mother, he possessed a no less excellent mother, the Countess Porzia, of the family of the Counts of Elci, the worthy sister of Count Orso, who was tutor to the Grand Duke Ferdinand II., of Tuscany, father of Cardinal Scipio d' Elci, and grandfather of Monsignor Francesco, the present admirable Archbishop of Pisa. The life which Father Mariano led was in the highest degree virginal and chaste, for not only did he never speak when in the company of his youthful companions of impure or even earthly love, but no one else ever ventured to allude to the subject in his presence: and as we read of St. Bernardino, his fellow countryman, that whenever he came, people dropped all conversation about love, and much more about impurity, saying, 'Bernardino is here,' so was it with Father Mariano.'"

This is what has been written about Mariano by Cardinal Taja.

CHAPTER II.

HE COMES TO ROME, AND HIS CONDUCT IN THE
SECULAR STATE.

AFTER receiving the degree of doctor of canon and civil law, Mariano thought, that to advance his studies, and unite theory with practice, it would be a great benefit to him to go to Rome. He took counsel about the matter with his mother, the Countess Porzia; for he still continued, though arrived at manhood, to observe her wishes with filial respect. She approved of the design, and provided her son with what was necessary for his maintenance at Rome in a style suitable to his condition. On reaching Rome the first thing Mariano did was to make a retreat at the noviciate of the Jesuits. He was, however, prevented by a slight illness, which attacked him, from remaining there the full time usually given to the Spiritual Exercises. He then began, or rather, pursued his career of legal studies, with such application and zeal, that in after times, when he had consecrated himself to God's service, he used to say that it covered him with confusion, to reflect on the earnestness he had displayed in the pursuit of earthly knowledge, compared with his indolence in striving after the science of the crucifix, for so it seemed to his humility. It was not long before the profound knowledge of Mariano, united to his

prudence, modesty, and good-nature, became known in the metropolis of the Christian world, where talent is appreciated at its true worth; and they served to win for him the love and esteem of those who were acquainted with him, so much so, that great expectations were entertained of his success at court, more especially on account of the kind assistance promised him by Monsignor Carlo Bichi, a celebrated auditor of the Rota, and the patronage and stimulus given to his studies by the Cardinals Gaetani and Pietro Maria Borghese.

These well-grounded hopes, together with his near relationship to the first minister of the Grand-Duke of Tuscany, were strong allurements to Mariano to give himself up more and more to the pursuit of advancement, and the honours of the court. But God, who had destined His servant to a higher advancement and far sublimer honours, so disposed things, that an event occurred which embittered the sweetness of all his earthly hopes, and gradually incited him to the acquirement of that greatness and those possessions which do not pass away with time, but last throughout eternity.

It happened as follows: whilst he was at Siena he went out one summer's evening to take a walk with two gentlemen of his acquaintance. All of a sudden, in the midst of their conversation, which was on indifferent matters, one of them, like Potitian's friend, of whom St. Augustine speaks in his Confessions, began to discourse about the vanity of the world, saying,

“What are we doing who have elder brothers to take care of our families? It were better for us to enter on some sure way of serving God, since we are useless to the world. As for me, I am resolved to become a religious.” The other replied, “I too will do the same.” They then together invited Mariano to follow their example, and give his word to them to enter religion, which he consented to do. Shortly after, one of them, Marcello Beringucci by name, fulfilled his promise by becoming a Jerusalemite. Mariano at that time scarcely reflected upon what had taken place, and the engagement he had made, but while he was at Rome, his other friend, who had first made the proposal, and who was a member of the family of Gabrielli, sought him out, and disclosed to him his resolution of becoming a Capuchin; adding, that this laid Mariano under no obligation of acting in like manner, for he set him free, on his part, from the whole engagement; and this he repeated several times. Mariano thanked Gabrielli for his kindness, but he felt himself at the same time interiorly moved by holy envy and a desire to imitate him. Then reflecting calmly upon the promise made at Siena, the thought recurred to him continually, that though his friend might release him from the engagement so far as he was concerned, still this did not set him free from the obligation which he feared that he had contracted with God of entering religion; and that even if he did all the good in the world, this would profit him nothing, if

he was unfaithful to God in so essential a matter, on which his eternal salvation might depend.

He took counsel with several theologians, but still he never could be at peace, or throw off his strong apprehension that it would be impossible for him to please Almighty God without faithfully performing the promise which he considered that he had made, of leaving the world and embracing the religious state.

These doubts and fluctuations of mind were means which God used to detach him from the world, and to draw him sweetly and strongly to His service. Meanwhile he gave himself more than ever to the frequentation of the holy Sacraments, to spiritual reading, and to prayer, in order to learn the Divine Will; and though he did not intermit his legal studies, still worldly things had lost for him their first charm, and he even began to look upon them with contempt and abhorrence. Such was the effect of God's grace, which was working in his heart that change of life and state, which before long happily ensued.

CHAPTER III.

HE RESOLVES TO ENTER THE CONGREGATION OF THE ORATORY OF ROME.

WHILE Mariano was in this state of perplexity, it happened by accident, or rather by a disposition of Providence, that Count Tomaso Sacratì, a nephew of the Cardinal of that name, came

to Rome and took up his abode in the house in which Mariano was lodging. He was a gentleman of Ferrara of very pleasing manners, and he had lived in his own country without much restraint and with no great inclination to devotion. On the occasion of a jubilee published by Pope Urban VIII. he felt himself strongly drawn to make a general confession, and to this end made choice for a confessor of an excellent priest who lived at Ferrara, with the reputation of great wisdom and spiritual illumination. When Tomaso had finished his confession, he asked his advice concerning a more devout manner of life, which he intended to pursue for the future. Upon this, the priest, enlightened from above, said to him with great force, and with the authority which God then gave him, "Look, Count, at that picture," pointing at the same time to a portrait of St. Philip Neri which hung there, "he calls you to Rome to his Congregation." The Count, fully convinced of the truth of what the priest had told him, concerning his vocation among the sons of St. Philip, delayed not to correspond to the grace of the Holy Spirit. He no sooner returned to his house than he wrote to Rome to Father Giulio Dotallevi, of the Congregation of the Oratory, with whom he was acquainted, begging him to obtain his admission into that body. Soon afterwards, impatient of further delay, he set out for Rome without waiting for the final answer.

As, however, it is not the custom of the Congregation to admit any one, until he has for some

time frequented its spiritual exercises, and given a proof of his character and vocation, it came to pass that Tomaso, living under the same roof with Mariano, had opportunities of gaining his friendship, and making known to him the object of his coming to Rome, and at last of taking him frequently with him to the Chiesa Nuova. From the example of his friend, who was turning his back upon the world with such fervour, and from the devout exercises of the Oratory, which he began to frequent, but more than all, from the secret movements of divine grace, there grew up in Mariano a loathing and contempt for the things of the world, and especially a serious disgust of the legal profession; for it seemed to him, as he used to say, too mean and unbecoming a thing for him to devote to litigations about the property of others that life which he might spend for God and in winning heaven. He, therefore, determined in his heart to abandon the deceptive hopes of the world, and to consecrate himself wholly to the divine service by some generous resolution. To this end he went a second time to the noviciate of St. Andrea at Monte Cavallo, to perform the exercises of St. Ignatius, in order to learn more clearly the Divine Will, and under the influence of those meditations to determine on the state of life to which God might be pleased to call him. He had for director in this retreat Father Domenico Vanni of the Company of Jesus, who was then rector of the noviciate of St. Andrea, an office which he continued to hold for many years with equal piety and

prudence, and who was afterwards employed in other posts of authority in the Society. While in this retreat Mariano performed faithfully with great fervour all the meditations, prayers, and reflections prescribed by St. Ignatius, and his heart was inflamed with a great love of God, and a desire to enter one of the strictest and austere religions, especially that of the Capuchins, to which more than any other he felt drawn. But his prudent director, considering, on the one hand, the gifts of mind with which God had so abundantly enriched Mariano, and on the other, his delicacy of constitution and want of bodily strength, and taking also into account that he was then twenty-eight years old, wisely judged that it was not God's will that he should enter an order and bind himself by vows, but that he should embrace the free state of a secular ecclesiastic in the Congregation of the Oratory, which is governed and subsists by the sole bond of charity. Mariano submitted entirely his own judgment and will to Father Vanni; and recognizing the voice of God in that of His minister, he firmly resolved without any further hesitation to seek admittance among the sons of St. Philip in the Congregation of the Oratory of Rome. On coming out of retreat he took lodgings near the Chiesa Nuova. He chose for his confessor Father Virgilio Spada, at that time the Superior of the Congregation, enrolled himself among the brothers of the Oratory, and dismissing every other thought, employed himself wholly in those exercises of piety, which the bro-

thers are accustomed to practise, such as serving Mass every day, visiting the hospitals, attending the sermons which are preached every day after dinner at this church, and the usual mental and vocal prayer at the Oratory in the evening ; until at length he formally declared his desire, and with great humility entreated to be admitted into the Congregation of the Oratory.

CHAPTER IV.

HE IS ADMITTED INTO THE CONGREGATION OF THE ORATORY OF ROME. HIS MODE OF LIFE THERE DURING THE FIRST THREE YEARS.

FATHER VIRGILIO SPADA, fully satisfied with Mariano's vocation and his excellent qualities, laid before the fathers his entreaties to enter the Congregation. He was accordingly admitted and received by common consent, and approved on May the 12th, 1641, the Festival of the holy martyrs Nereus, Achilles, and Flavia Domitilla, who are venerated with special honours by the Congregation. In undertaking this new kind of life Mariano imagined to himself that he was leaving the world as the Israelites did Egypt, and that he had for a guide in his journey to a blessed eternity, like another Moses to the promised land, his holy Father St. Philip, and as representing him, Father Pietro Consolini, who then had the care and superintendence of the novices. He laid it down to himself as a fundamental maxim,

to strip himself utterly of every will of his own, and to depend wholly upon the wishes and commands of his Superiors. He had continually in his hands St. Philip's Life and the rules of the Institute, that he might study in the former the Saint's spirit and imitate his virtues, while he learned from the latter the mode of regulating his actions according to the will of God expressed in them. But above all, he regarded with singular veneration Father Pietro Consolini, a man whose sanctity is known to all, "The beloved disciple of St. Philip," as he was called, the confidant of his secrets, and the true heir of his spirit. Mariano knew how to profit by his good fortune in having such a man for his master and immediate Superior. It seemed that he could scarcely bring himself to quit the room of the venerable old man. He recited matins with him, and then the canonical hours, and then again vespers. He spent several hours with him almost every day, to learn from his mouth the lessons which he needed for his soul's profit, and to be instructed in the several acts and virtues of St. Philip. In fact, he literally put into practice what the Holy Spirit counsels in Ecclesiasticus, "If thou seest a wise man, wait diligently upon him, and let thy feet wear away the steps of his door." F. Pietro, perceiving in his disciple the happiest dispositions for attaining an eminent perfection, applied himself with all love and diligence to cultivate and increase them. In imitation of that great master of mortification, St. Philip, he conducted

Mariano by a path of secret, though most searching mortification, opposing everything which sprang from his private opinion, detaching him from those means, which his disciple judged most useful or necessary for advancing in the spiritual life, inciting him to undertake something, and then when he was in the midst of it, causing him to drop or interrupt it; and, lastly, keeping his will no less than his intellect in the continual exercise of Christian mortification.

Such was the opinion which Mariano had formed of his beloved master, and such his dependence upon him, that he never did or undertook anything without first consulting him, and then guiding himself wholly by his advice. Mariano would have desired to add to the interior mortification, which was the primary aim of F. Consolini, the exterior exercises of hair-cloths, chain-girdles, disciplines, and other instruments of penance. But F. Pietro was very reserved in permitting him the use of them, he even frequently refused them to him; and smiling at the ardour with which Mariano strove to acquire perfection, he used to say to him, "Rome was not built in a day;" meaning to signify by this, that to wish to do too much, even in things that are good, is not unfrequently a hindrance to perfection, and the fruit of self-love, or a fiery temperament rather than an impulse of a pure and holy love of God; and hence, that it is better to journey leisurely but securely, than to fly with the risk of destruction.

But while F. Pietro was so discreet and re-

served in regulating the private devotions of his disciple, he was all the more strict in obliging him to perform with diligence every duty of the community, and he accustomed him to humble his reason and understanding to it, that he might thus fit himself for receiving those great blessings which follow upon this continual subjection of self to the will of God, in executing with simplicity and perfection all community duties. Mariano, faithfully and obediently putting in practice the wise instructions of his master, adopted as a fundamental maxim, never to wish to do more than the rest, but to humble his spirit to the acts of the community. To this end he kept his eyes constantly fixed on those who were most exact and perfect in observing the requirements of the Institute. He was also especially attentive to execute carefully the smallest and minutest things, because he recognised in everything the will of God, which alone he desired to make the object of all his actions. Hence it arose, that he took a particular pleasure in those functions which apparently are the meanest, such as bearing the candlesticks, ringing the bells for the sermons, attending to the hand-bell at the time of preaching, collecting alms in Lent during the sermon, decorating and stripping the altar assigned to him, serving at table, and such-like offices, which he used to say, are in the eyes of those who know their value so many jewels and most precious treasures left by our holy Founder, as an inheritance to his children, that they may learn to

put in practice the instruction of the Gospel, "Unless ye become like little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

Although at that time the novices were but few in number, and they had much to do in the service of the church and the house, still such was the charity which reigned in all their actions, that, following the example of Mariano, who was foremost among them, each one strove with a holy rivalry to anticipate the others, and to lighten the labours of his companions. They were, moreover, so far from seeking relaxation, that Father Pietro was obliged to watch carefully that they took what was necessary to preserve their health.

This holy man, indeed, did not wish them in their relaxations to lay aside that modesty which ought to season all recreation. Hence, he severely censured all unrestrained jesting, and every word or gesture, which, passing the limits of decent mirth, might degenerate into childish buffoonery or excessive familiarity, or, lastly, into witticism, which by its pungency might tend in the slightest degree to injure mutual charity. He was also desirous that they should endeavour to find their happiness in the house ; and he used frequently to say, that St. Philip wished his sons to be stayers at home. He was likewise very strict and attentive not to suffer any defect, however small, to take root in them. Hence, on one occasion, he found fault with Mariano for being too ready to make promises ; "For this readiness," he said, "is afterwards the cause of

much harm, when the person, finding himself without either the time or opportunity to perform his promise, is forced to search for pretexts and excuses contrary to pure and simple truth, in order to hide his own failure, or else is harassed and perplexed, to the loss of his tranquillity and peace of heart." More might be added concerning the instructions and directions by which Father Pietro guided Mariano in spiritual things, and the wonderful skill with which he led him on to Christian perfection and an exact observance of the Institute. They have been omitted here, as they may be seen in *Father Pietro's Life*, written by Father Giacomo Ricci, general of the Dominicans, and printed at the end of *St. Philip's Life*, among the histories of the other companions of the Saint. It should, however, be observed, that under such a director, Mariano made wonderful progress in virtue, and was most attentive to put in practice the instructions which he received, and to imitate the examples of perfection which he beheld in his beloved master. Twenty months after Mariano entered the Congregation, it pleased the Lord to call to eternal life Father Pietro Consolini. He died on the night of January the 30th, 1643, and every one can imagine the grief of Mariano, both on account of his own loss and that of the Congregation. Shortly before his death the following incident occurred to Mariano, which is related in the above-mentioned *Life of Father Pietro*. Mariano was attending in the outer room upon Father Pietro, who lay in a state of

delirium, varied by occasional lucid intervals, when he felt himself urged by a great desire to approach his bed, and ask him in that extremity for some instruction, as an inheritance. Fearing, however, to disturb him, and also to wound his humility, he resolved to deprive himself of this consolation which he hoped for, rather than trouble Father Pietro's quiet and modesty. Scarcely had he come to this determination, when he heard Father Pietro exclaim with a loud and clear voice, "In the multitude of the believers there was one heart and one soul;" adding other things in praise of fraternal charity. Then, continuing in the same tone, he subjoined, "There are some who bend themselves with ease to the dispositions of holy community and renounce their own opinions, and the virtue of these in God's sight is beyond price. There are, on the contrary, others who make much of themselves and their own acts, and are unbending. These do not easily end well, and they make but little progress in the spiritual life." Having said this, he fell back into his usual state of delirium. Mariano received these maxims with extraordinary joy, and noted them down as a special gift of God, and an important instruction which in those last moments he had received from Heaven, by means of his dear and holy master.

When Father Pietro had passed to a better life, he was succeeded in his post of novice-master by Father Federigo Savorgnano, a man of singular gentleness, of most exalted prayer, and of angelic life. Under his direction Mariano

pursued and completed the first three years, after which he was, by common approval, enrolled according to custom, among the fathers of the Congregation, May 16th, 1644.

CHAPTER V.

HOW HE PERFECTED HIMSELF IN THE OBSERVANCE OF THE INSTITUTE.

His first three years in the Congregation being now completed, Mariano had full scope to put in practice those maxims and instructions which he had sought so diligently to learn from his directors, in order to render himself a fit instrument for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, which are the two ends of the Institute of the Oratory, as also of the priesthood, to which he had lately been raised, May 21st, 1644. That he might perfectly satisfy this his vocation, and give his whole attention to the functions of the Institute, he consigned to oblivion everything that was not God or for God; and he cut off all letter-writing, visits, and other worldly affairs. On one occasion, among others, his brother Nicolò wrote to him from Siena, begging him to attend to some very important business for him; but the servant of God, firm in his resolution, replied in the following terms: "You know already how I live entirely apart from all temporal business and affairs; and this conduct I have thought it right to adopt, even

at the risk of ostentation, in order to shield myself from very many annoyances. In accordance with this determination, I never visit any but the sick, without making any exception whatever, and as all know that this is my invariable practice, every one excuses me, and meanwhile I enjoy the quiet of my vocation." His brother, however, regarding the refusal as uncourteous, and Mariano's unpoliteness as excessive, blamed him for it in his next letter. To this Mariano made answer, "Let me entreat you, if you do not think it unreasonable, instead of finding fault with my unpoliteness in such matters, to blame me for not uniting to this way of mine those virtues and spiritual attainments by which it ought to be accompanied: for I too see clearly enough, that retirement without the other virtues is a mere love of one's own quiet; still I had rather you should urge me to acquire what I have not, than to abandon what I have."

How inflexible he was in this resolve, appeared more clearly when the same brother paid a visit to Rome from devotion, in the holy year 1650, accompanied by his wife and one of his sons, together with his sister, the widow of Pietro Beringucci. On this occasion Nicolò never could obtain from Mariano the pleasure of a visit in his own house, but was obliged, whenever he wished to see him, to go and find him at the Chiesa Nuova. Mariano did indeed frequently visit his brother from a motive of charity, when he was attacked by a dangerous illness arising from pains in the

side, to which he was subject, but scarcely had the complaint taken a good turn, when he ceased to go there any more ; and he only provided that, for the consolation and spiritual profit of the sick man, he should be frequently visited by Brother Egidio Calvelli, a lay-brother of the Congregation, who had been a disciple of St. Philip, and was eminent for his exemplary life, formed on the instructions which he had received from his holy master. This entire detachment from affection to relations, which is usually the most difficult of all, appeared on other occasions, some of which I will briefly recount, though the events occurred at different times. His brother Nicolò, being pressed by domestic difficulties, as well on account of his numerous children, as through some misfortunes which had befallen the Sozzini family, besought Mariano to come to his assistance, by obtaining at Rome some pension or ecclesiastical benefice for one of his sons, a thing which Mariano could easily have effected, owing to his great reputation with the court, the Cardinals, and the Sovereign Pontiffs themselves. He could not, however, be induced to say a word to any one for this purpose, and he protested that the only assistance which it was in his power to give, was to commend the matter fervently to God, as he had already done before the altar of our Lady and of St. Philip, adding these words, "I am certain that they will protect you and your house."

In the year 1688, again the Canon Alessandro Polini, a man celebrated for his learning, from

the great esteem and love which he bore to Mariano, whose penitent he was, offered of his own accord to obtain the coadjutorship of his canonry in the collegiate church of St. Eustachio for his nephew, Alessandro Sozzini, a young ecclesiastic of excellent character, who was then engaged in his theological studies. Mariano thanked him for this expression of his kindness, but would have nothing to do with the affair, not even so far as to give his consent, which was the only thing wanting towards obtaining the favour. The canon, therefore, in order to carry the plan into effect, was obliged to employ the influence of F. Paolo Aringhi, at that time the confessor of the Congregation, who induced Mariano with great difficulty to leave the affair to him. Mariano still continued to protest that he would take no part whatever in the business, beyond recommending it to God and to the intercession of St. Philip, in order that whatever was most expedient might take place. He expressed himself in the same terms to his nephew, who, however, without any interference whatever in the matter on his uncle's part, obtained with the greatest ease the desired coadjutorship.

In the year 1679, an abbey having fallen vacant in Tuscany under the title of St. Pietro in Moschetta, Mgr. Agostini, at that time at the head of the Dataria under Innocent XI. of holy memory, and afterwards a Cardinal, advised the above-mentioned Alessandro Sozzini to become a candidate for it, promising his good

offices with the Pope, and certain success, provided only F. Mariano would say one word in his favour. But the servant of God, almost before his nephew had finished telling him of this, raising his eyes to heaven, said, "My nephew, I ask a favour of you, and hope that you will not refuse it me so long as I live, for otherwise I protest that you will very much distress me. It is, never to speak to me again about these things. I do not, indeed, think it impossible that I might be able to facilitate your suit with the Pope, owing to some trifling services which his Holiness has been pleased to give me the opportunity of rendering him, but I am far from intending to obtain in this world a recompense which I do not merit. All I desire is to receive my reward, if I shall be found worthy of it, from the hands of Almighty God, whom alone I wish to have as my debtor, for in Him I know with whom I have to deal." These words, spoken with great fervour, made such an impression on the mind of his nephew, that he at once abandoned the affair, and abstained from asking for this or any other ecclesiastical benefice."

With a like holy liberty Mariano endeavoured to free himself from intercourse with those men who, taking small account themselves of the preciousness of time, seek to make others also waste it idly, as St. Augustine bitterly complained, "*Faciunt nobis perire tempora divinis eroganda muneribus.*" A man of this sort was in the habit of frequently coming to Mariano merely to pass

away the time. The servant of God tried dexterously to avoid these idle conversations, but seeing that the other still persisted in coming to talk with him, he adopted an amusing way of extricating himself; he asked the person to accompany him to visit the sick in the hospital, a praiseworthy office of charity, to which he was accustomed. The invitation was at first accepted, but in process of time his friend, finding this a troublesome occupation, soon gave up coming any more, and left Mariano in peace.

What his practice was in regard to intercourse with seculars, may be gathered from a letter which he wrote to a member of another Congregation, who had begged of him some instructions. "Intercourse with our neighbour," he says, "is proper to our vocation, but it should be limited to aiding their souls, facilitating to them the way to heaven, and practising purely with them the works of a disinterested charity. Beyond these bounds we ought to prefer our own retirement, in which our Lord will make us find our profit." He loved the silence and solitude of his room, so far as they were compatible with the duties of the Institute, and he abhorred wasting time in idleness, or stopping for talking sake, in any part of the house.

While waiting in the sacristy, either to serve Mass, which he did every morning, until he became a confessor, or to assist at vespers on festivals, or to administer the Communion, or for similar reasons, he used always to have with

him some little devotional book, and he spent the time that he had to wait in reading it.

Except on these occasions, he was never seen in the sacristy, and much less in the porter's room, or in any other part of the house; but he remained retired in his own room, devoting himself to prayer, reading, and study.

Notwithstanding, however, his love for retirement, whenever the observances of the community required his presence with the others, he was particularly exact and punctual in his attendance, leaving every private occupation, however good or holy it might be, so as not to miss the first table in the refectory, the recreation, the Oratory, and other community acts. In order the better to excite himself to this practice, he fixed in his mind the three following motives, fraternal charity, the exercise of obedience, and the cure of private judgment and self-will. "*Excercitium caritatis fraternæ, excercitium obedientiæ, curatio a morbo proprii judicii et propinæ voluntatis.*" He was so attentive to this, that when he was only able to come to the last few moments of community acts, he preferred doing this, to any other private employment. "This manner of life," he used to say, "comes from the Apostles, among whom 'all things were common.' Now, though thy vocation of secular priest does not admit of a life in community in what regards the exterior, such as clothes, furniture, and property, it does admit, nay, it demands of thee to live in thy interior altogether in community; that is,

thou oughtest in everything to strip thyself of thy own will, thy own opinion, thy inclinations, and thy ease, and to make them over by a perpetual renouncement, for the use and benefit of thy community. Thou shouldest then clothe thyself with the will and opinion of the community, and with the exercises and employments of the community life, according to what the Father may direct. Thus, without a material community of wardrobe, there will be the 'one heart and one soul' of the Apostles; and know for certain, that in stripping thyself of thy own will, and putting on that of the community, thou art really taking off infected rags, and art clothing thyself in brocade. Deceive not thyself by thinking, that oftentimes, by dispensing thyself from community acts, thou wilt do something better; for it is obedience alone and the love of God which make things, be they what they may, good or better."

With these maxims he endeavoured to regulate his life, so that community acts, and the offices and employments of the Institute, should occupy the first and most honourable place. If sometimes his fervour led him to undertake other devotions and exercises, the moment he perceived that they interfered in any way with those of the Institute, he sought to lay them aside, and to set himself right again. Hence, many years later, when writing to a Carthusian monk, who had been his penitent, and had requested some instructions from him, he expressed himself in the following terms: "I cannot communicate to

you my lights, for I am destitute of them ; but rather I will make known to you my regrets, which are numerous. Among them the greatest seem to be first, having put off from day to day the execution of my lights and good purposes of perfection ; and, secondly, having sought to acquire spirituality in ways foreign to the sphere of my vocation, as in devotions and spiritual exercises of my own choice. Hence, the following seem to me two good maxims ; first, not to defer good resolutions ; and, next, not to aim at a sanctity alien to the purity of your own Institute and rules, and the hereditary virtues of your own holy father. Excuse my inability to give instructions which are not drawn from my own failings."

He was always an enemy to every singularity, as became a pupil of Father Consolini, who persecuted it unremittingly, not only in himself, but also in others. While on the one hand Mariano endeavoured in his exterior conduct to do nothing which might strike the eyes of others and appear singular, especially if it were calculated to gain him praise and esteem ; so, on the other, he devoted all his efforts to purifying his heart, and to the acquisition and exercise of charity, humility, gentleness, interior mortification, and other solid Christian virtues, frequently saying to himself, "If thou dost not seek interior sanctity, there is an end of thee ; for exterior holiness does not belong to thy state, and to desire it is most perilous." He was, moreover, most attentive to profit by those mortifications and penances, which never fail to occur in living with others ; and he used

to say, that the kind of penances most agreeable to God and the safest, were inconvenient hours for Mass, or dinner, or supper; the distraction of exterior things in the service of the house; the burdens of each one's particular office; food badly dressed or contrary to a person's taste; the constraint of obedience to the observances of the community; the endurance of the different humours and fancies of those with whom one lives, and such like. In course of time, when he was visited by the Lord with various long and painful illnesses, as will be mentioned in the proper place, it was a very edifying thing to see how eagerly he sought to resume his attendance on community acts which had been necessarily interrupted on account of his illness; so much so, that the Superior was often obliged either to refuse his too premature requests, or to hinder and moderate his excessive fervour. When unable to perform everything, he tried at least to do what he could, and in such manner as he could; for example, he used to go to the Oratory with the rest, and sit when unable to pray kneeling; or again, he waited at table, resting himself from time to time when he felt weak. Whenever he was obliged by illness to take any particular food, he used to say a *Miserere* or *De profundis*, as a penance for this singularity; and he prescribed to himself these or similar prayers, instead of those community acts which he happened to miss, although his absence arose not from his own will, but from necessity. He was always indifferent to all the offices and employments which from time to time

were committed to him by the Congregation and by his Superiors. It was quite enough to make him undertake or leave off a thing, to know that it was or was not pleasing to the Superior, and he at once subjected his intellect and will without requiring any other reason. From observing this in him, Father Virgilio Spada, who for many years governed the Congregation, used to say, "Father Mariano weighs everything in the balance of the sanctuary." Although his own inclination led him to desire retirement, silence, and solitude, in order to attend to prayer, reading, and other mental exercises, yet he was most ready to deprive himself of them, whenever the duties imposed upon him required it, and obedience employed him in exterior occupations. Hence it was that he took great pleasure in the example of a lay-brother, related by Father Louis of Granada, who, though bearing the burden of the whole convent, and taking no rest all the day long, still preserved such recollection amid his occupations and distractions, that when evening came he attended to the prayers as perfectly as if he had spent the whole day in preparing for them. "Seek to imitate this," he noted down for himself, "so that no employment may hinder thee from loving God and thy neighbour, or from being obedient, detached, chaste, self-restrained, and conformed and resigned in God. Moreover, be indifferent to this or that occupation; be ready for any, but attached to none; and accustom thyself to pray in such a way that thou mayest be as easily raised to God, and

merit as much by action as by prayer, through a simple intention and pure affection, which seeking God alone, does everything for love and with love."

He maintained the same indifference when he had to give his opinion or vote in Congregation about the interests and affairs of our body. After satisfying his conscience by speaking his own sentiments with freedom, according as the nature of the affair might require, and without any human respect or fear of displeasing any one, he then remained utterly indifferent to the determination which might be come to; nay, further, if he saw the majority were of a different opinion from him, he had no difficulty in conforming himself to their sentiments, and he pursued the same practice in the election of the Superior and the officers of the Congregation. But that it may be more clearly seen on what maxims he regulated his conduct in this matter, I may be permitted to transcribe what] he wrote in confidence, when he was Superior, to a father of another Congregation: "When we have given the truth a fair field by stating clearly our sentiments, we should then do the same for humility, by yielding to the opinion of the community. I for my part, who would be most glad to become a novice of your Reverence, confess that I have had to struggle during many years with my zeal for the affairs of the Congregation, and I should never have had the heart to serve the Congregation in the office of Father, (for this

is the name we give to the Superior in the house,) if God had not delivered me from it. As to the way He set me free, I believe it to have been a pure grace of God, which used to present to my mind the following dilemma: either I think that I have greater light than the others, or I do not; now, if I consider my light less than theirs, and yet urge my opinion, I am guilty of impiety, and am a traitor to the common good; but if I imagine that I have a greater light than my companion, and much more than a whole community, I am convicted of pride, and this is enough to convince me that I am under an illusion, and that my opinion cannot be in accordance with the heart of God. I confirmed this view by the example of our Father St. Philip on several occasions; and, finally, I concluded that my own opinions may deceive me, as in fact they have done many times; whereas charity and humility cannot deceive me. If, then, in Congregation, after I have spoken without disguise my sentiments in the Lord, they are not approved, I restrain myself, and subscribe to the opinions of my brethren, from the motives on the one hand of humility, as esteeming them more illumined than myself; and, on the other, of charity, in order to prevent disunion; and I then remain perfectly contented, because I am certain of having done the will of God, who wishes me to be humble and charitable, and not tenacious of my own opinions. You must know, that in accordance with these principles I have more than once, after having stated my own opinion

in Congregation, on perceiving that it did not please the majority, given my vote against myself. Pardon me for bringing forward the example of one, who might be, and gladly would be, your disciple."

In his conversations, especially with persons of the house, he laid down to himself the four following rules, which he strictly observed: to shun most carefully every approach to back-biting, especially against Superiors; not to talk of the defects of others; not to tell what had passed in secret; and to avoid mere matters of curiosity, when there was not some praiseworthy end in view, to sanctify such frivolities. He paid special attention to these rules, at the time of the common recreation, when, according to the directions of the Institute, the Fathers all assemble together at the end of dinner and supper. He was most punctual in his attendance there with the rest, and he used to say, that the holy Father had three motives for wishing this: first, for health's sake; secondly, to maintain mutual love; thirdly, for the purpose of learning the art of conversing holily, which leads a person to accommodate himself to all, and to take part willingly in every one's enjoyment. Although he was naturally very grave, Mariano knew how to season his seriousness with so much affability, that, as was said of S. Francis Xavier, "He was at the same time most grave and most agreeable." He preserved an unalterable evenness of temper; his face was always cheerful and joyous, and though people sometimes

tried him by tiresome and annoying conversations, he was able by his great kindness to enliven, divert, or check them without in the slightest degree wounding charity or displeasing any one. It happened more than once, that persons inadvertently introduced topics of conversation, which were of a nature to be in every way disagreeable to Mariano; but though he was then Superior of the Congregation, he put no restraint upon their liberty, which in other respects was blameless, and listened with the same serenity of countenance, as if he were attending to a most agreeable discourse. When the recreation was over, some one, who had observed the whole thing, asked Mariano privately, how he could help contradicting and interrupting the conversation; to which he answered, "How so? at recreation we must smile though we chafe;" meaning by this, that although not unfrequently a person may feel within some grief, aversion, or displeasure; still he should not at that time, even by the slightest change of countenance, disturb or sadden the common cheerfulness and recreation.

In his rooms he loved the greatest simplicity compatible with his condition of secular priest, both as regards the furniture and everything else. If he had followed his own desires and inclinations, he would have kept himself within the limits of an austere religious poverty; but he suffered himself to yield to the sentiments of others, and he avoided equally the ostentation of an affected poverty, and the vanity of super-

fluous worldly ornaments. The same simplicity appeared in his poor and humble dress, far removed, however, from all dirt or singularity, but of a kind becoming the ecclesiastical life which he professed, according to the saying which he much loved ; "Ornament and uncleanness are alike to be shunned."

CHAPTER VI.

WITH WHAT ZEAL AND SUCCESS HE ADMINISTERED
THE WORD OF GOD.

It is the custom of the Congregation of the Oratory of Rome, to appoint its members to administer the word of God, as soon as they have completed the first three years, provided that they are priests. Mariano had been preparing for this office during the three years by assiduous study, of which we shall now speak, before relating how he succeeded in his preaching. When he had set himself free from all worldly hindrances, as was mentioned above, he divided his time between prayer and the duties of the Institute, on the one hand, and sacred studies and reading on the other. He took as a maxim, which he observed faithfully all the rest of his life, to renounce for ever all pursuits external to the sphere of his vocation ; and though gifted with a rare genius and capacity for every science, he was able to restrain himself in all his studies, so as not to transgress the limits of his vocation.

In this way he at once mortified the curiosity of the intellect, ever eager to acquire fresh knowledge, and the natural longing to appear a man of learning and science, which is wont to deceive not a few, and to lead them to apply themselves to pursuits for the most part unprofitable, and apt rather to puff up than to edify, as the Apostle says. He noted down for himself the following rule under the head of "Studies:" "Jesus Christ crucified; charity, obedience, justice, that I may be built up and may build up: let other studies be banished." He meant to signify, that his studies ought to have for their sole object charity, obedience, and the fulfilment of the duties of his state, in order to please God, and for his own edification and that of his neighbour.

He acquired, in fact, an ample knowledge of holy Scripture and theology, especially morals; and in addition to this, he read continually the holy Fathers, among whom he was most familiar with St. Chrysostom, and also with the Summa of St. Thomas. By these studies he laid so good a foundation, that his success was very great in preaching, in administering the Sacrament of Penance, in the direction of souls, and the other functions of the Institute. Although he always tried to remain hidden, and to conceal what he was from motives of humility; still, so universal was the esteem for his talents and knowledge, that many eminent persons of the court, and even the Sovereign Pontiffs themselves, consulted him on various occasions, as we shall see here-

after. He used to say on this subject, "Sacred studies are necessary for all the members of the Congregation, both for their own guidance and for the direction of others, and it is a mistake to suppose, that spirituality without learning will suffice for our vocation, since a man may very easily find himself afterwards without either spirituality or learning. Our holy father pursued his studies himself at the proper season, and he wished the same to be done by the members of his Congregation. When, then, Mariano was appointed by the Congregation, after the completion of his three years, to administer the word of God, both in Church and at the Oratory, he endeavoured to fulfil this apostolical employment in the best and most fruitful way that he could. He accordingly laid down to himself some rules to be observed with reference to this ministry, after having taken the advice of others in the house and out of it, especially of Father Nicolò Zucchi, a celebrated preacher of the Company of Jesus.

First, he determined to select with the greatest care a good and useful subject for his discourse, since, without this, the rest could hardly help being a failure. His next point was, to prove his theme by arguments founded on texts of Scripture, in choosing which he preferred before every other the literal sense, on sentences from the holy Fathers, on solid reasonings, and on the examples of the Saints, illustrating his arguments by appropriate similes. In the selection of his proofs, he took those which seemed to him the

strongest, and at the same time the most popular, and he avoided the subtilities and abstractions of the schools. At the end of his discourse he endeavoured to point out the way to put in practice what he had been discoursing about, and he descended as much as possible into particulars.

He imagined to himself, that he had to convince some obstinate person of the truth of his proposition, and he sought to answer all the objections which might be brought against it. But, above all, after proper study, he brought his thoughts to maturity at the feet of the crucifix, seeking there to convince himself, and to create in himself a burning hatred of that vice, or a love for that virtue, about which he was to preach; for he used to say, "It is a hard matter to persuade others, and to speak with fervour and fruit, if one is not thoroughly persuaded and convinced oneself." His ordinary discourses turned upon the four last things, the virtues and vices, the vanity of the world, and the contempt due to it; and he frequently preached upon devotion to the Most Holy Virgin, to instil into others that love for Mary with which his own heart burned. His style was ever easy and familiar, in a word, adapted to the comprehension of the multitude, as the Institute prescribes. Before beginning to preach, he sought an utter distrust in himself by the Divine assistance, making use of the following ejaculations among others: "Bestow on my heart the light of understanding, and on my lips the words of edifi-

cation, and on my hands the work of justice ;" or, "Grant me to understand faithfully, to set forth usefully, and to perform efficaciously ;" or, "Give me to think aright, to speak worthily, and to confirm my words by my life." He invoked the protection of the Blessed Virgin, of his own guardian Angel, and those of his hearers, of St. Philip, and the other Saints. He set before himself, as his only end in preaching, the glory of God and the sanctification of the souls of his hearers. "This should be my end," he used to say, "to change and sanctify those who hear me ; for he who seeks anything else in his sermons but the benefit of souls, does not understand his business." His views will be more clearly seen from some of his memoranda on this subject: "Thy attention should not be bestowed on devising many topics, but in developing well thy subject. Determine with care the end which thou proposest in thy discourse, saying in thy heart, 'I wish my hearer to conceive this sentiment, understand this truth, or make this resolution,' and then direct to this end all thy study and means. When thou hast done this, thou wilt understand rightly by what causes it is produced, by what preserved, what effects it gives birth to, what means nourish it, what their nature is, and how far they avail. Next, arrange all thy words in order, that thy hearer may feel as thou dost ; and be assured, that all thoughts or quotations which do not bear upon this end, are arguments without a conclusion, like arrows shot at random. Let all

the fruit thou seekest be to abolish sin. Attend to the order of the things thou hast to say. Let thy sermons especially portray the beauty of virtue and the foulness of vice. Preach frequently on the four last things; exhort continually to penance. Rejoice to discourse on the vanity and contempt of the world. Sermons are called the word of God; take care, then, that what thou sayest has been really said by God, either by the mouth of His Son, or of the Apostles, or of the Prophets, and beware of topics which are novel, subtile, and thy own. Strive to be able to say, 'Thus saith the Lord;' for in the word of God there is might, and souls are a-hungred for it, and not for thy thoughts or subtilties." By these means Mariano succeeded in his discourses to the wonderful profit of his hearers, and impressed upon their minds eternal truths with such sweetness and compunction, that he continually wrought in his auditors a change of life, and brought them to holy resolutions, so that some of them quitting the world embraced religion, while others, remaining in the world, amended their ways and gave themselves to a devout life. There were some too among his hearers, who from devotion used to take down his discourses in writing. His preaching was in high esteem, not merely with the common people, but also with men of great learning and wisdom, who professed to draw no less satisfaction than profit from his discourses. Cardinal Sforza Pallavicino came once to hear him, and was so delighted and moved by the sermon,

that, when it was over, he said to Father Giulio Diotallevi, who was by his side, "Truly, it is evident that this is a man of God;" and he insisted that Mariano should bring him the discourse written at full length. Mariano was, therefore, obliged, to his great confusion, to set it down at his leisure in writing, for it was not his custom to note down more than the Latin sentences.

It was at this time that the Cardinal formed an attachment to Mariano which lasted till his death. Cardinal Francesco Barberino also, when he heard that it was Mariano's turn to preach at the Oratory in the evening, almost always attended, and derived from it the greatest satisfaction. Not to mention others, when Cardinal Alderano Cybo, in the time of Clement IX. staid at Rome to transact some business relative to the affairs of his diocese of Jesi, he used to go with pleasure to hear the sermons preached in the church by Father Mariano. Monsignor Agostino Favoriti, then canon of St. Mary Major, and afterwards secretary of the cypher to the venerable servant of God, Pope Innocent XI., notwithstanding the great distance of that Basilica near which he lived from the Chiesa Nuova, came very frequently to hear Mariano on the days when he preached, and he used to call him a "hidden treasure." Father Antonio Cottoni, procurator-general of the third order of St. Francis, and Canon Alessandro Polini, both persons of much learning, were as frequent in their attendance. Signor Renato Simoni, for many years Superior

of the Congregation of the Mission at Rome, affirmed, that to his knowledge a Frenchman of great learning, who was not satisfied with any of the numerous preachers that he had heard during his stay in Rome, was persuaded to attend Mariano's sermons at the Chiesa Nuova, and that he remained fully contented with the spirituality and learning with which the Word of God was handled by him in a way, as sweet and familiar, as it was profitable and efficacious. The same encomiums were passed upon him by three apostolic preachers, Father Oliva, General of the Company of Jesus, Father Nicolò Zucchi of the same Company, and Father Bonaventura da Recanati, a Capuchin.

Finally, to omit the testimony of many other persons eminent for their dignity and learning, we will conclude with the eulogium passed upon him by Mgr. Alessandro Strozzi, bishop of Arezzo. "The veneration," he says, "with which I regarded Father Mariano Sozzini, on account of the gifts of nature and grace with which the Lord was pleased to enrich that noble soul, was such that I was never weary of listening to the Christian piety, which he instilled into the minds of others, not merely in his familiar discourses, but also in those which he delivered from the pulpit, with so much fervour and sweetness that it was evident he had imbibed religion with his mother's milk." When Mariano had finished preaching, he used to recollect himself for some time in prayer, supplicating the Divine Majesty to render the Word of God fruitful both in him-

self and in his hearers, and to assist him to put in practice that which he had been teaching others. He was always ready to preach, not merely in his own turn every week and at all the functions of the church and the Oratory, but also as often as he was asked by others to take their place or for any other reason, and he never excused himself or complained that he was overburdened with work. During several years, on account of the inability of the others, and the fewness of the fathers, he undertook of his own accord twice the usual number of sermons, thus engaging to deliver every week two on the week days, not including the festivals. He declared that in this employment he experienced the sensible assistance of God, for sometimes when he began the sermon ill of a fever, by the end of it he found himself cured. Not inferior to the reverence with which Mariano administered the Word of God, was the attention with which he listened to it. His longing for it was very great, and so far as his sicknesses and weighty occupations permitted, he used to hear every day one of the four sermons which are daily delivered at the Chiesa Nuova. An unpolished style or defective pronunciation in the preacher did not offend him; but so long as the matter was sound, profitable, and calculated to produce compunction, he listened to it with the greatest satisfaction. Before the sermon, he invoked the Holy Spirit to obtain light and grace to profit by it, and afterwards he returned thanks to God for the benefit he had received, endeavouring by a short

application to himself of what he had heard, to draw from it greater profit to his soul for the perfection and increase of his piety.

CHAPTER VII.

HE IS APPOINTED TO HEAR CONFESSIONS. HIS EMPLOYMENTS IN THE SPIRITUAL AID OF OTHERS.

IF Mariano, in all his actions, proposed to himself to follow the footsteps of St. Philip Neri, and to imitate his virtues, much more did he endeavour to do this when obedience summoned him to hear confessions. As the Saint, by means of this Sacrament, gained innumerable souls to God, and thus merited to be called the Apostle of Rome, by displaying in the administration of it an unwearied assiduity, an extraordinary sweetness and persuasiveness, and a burning charity towards all; so, too, Mariano, in the exercise of the same virtues, proved himself a worthy son of so great a father, an unwearied labourer in the Lord's vineyard, and an excellent director of the souls who came to him. His assiduity was so great, that he reserved no time for himself, but was always at the service of every one who wished to see him, either in the confessional or elsewhere. It is a rule of the Institute, that the confessors of the Congregation should be always in church ready to hear confessions during the morning on Wednesdays, Fridays, and all festivals, and each in turn on the

other week days. Mariano went down into the church early on these days, and remained in the confessional until dinner-time, except during the time he said Mass, or was called away for some urgent reason. Not content with this, he remained there on the other days also, and very frequently even after dinner; so much so, that the venerable Father Pietro Francesco Scarampi, confessor of the house, a man of great illumination, who died in the odour of sanctity while attending to the plague-stricken in the year 1656, was forced to put some restraint upon his fervour, by fixing for him certain times, in order that his health, which was weak, might not suffer a notable injury. Mariano bowed his head without reply to this order; and though it seemed to him at that time somewhat hard to limit his labours for the souls of others, yet he afterwards confessed that it was reasonable enough, not merely for the assigned reason of health, but to mortify, as he said, that indiscreet fervour, which proceeded rather from his fiery and energetic disposition, than from the pure love of charity. When tired or busy, he needed but a simple sign from the porter or sacristan-brother, to go at once to any one who wished to confess to him, or to ask advice of him; for there was nothing which gave him greater pleasure than to employ himself unceasingly in guiding souls to Paradise through the Sacrament of Penance.

He combined in the administration of it two things, exceedingly difficult to unite, a most un-

affected humility and modesty, with a great power of persuasion, and an unbounded openness in admonishing and correcting his penitents, whenever their advantage required it. Such was the sweetness with which he seasoned even his strongest reproofs, that no one was displeased or embittered by them; but, on the contrary, all were edified and moved to compunction, so that it passed into a saying, that Father Mariano might insult a person, and yet, from his way of speaking, the reproaches would be received with thanks instead of resentment. He acted in precisely the same way when he had to deal with persons of high birth and dignity. Many of these, after confessing to him, were fully satisfied with the freedom with which he directed their consciences, and admonished them when necessary, without failing at all in the respect which their station demanded.

His charity and zeal extended to every kind of person. He received and embraced all without any exception, like a loving father. Nay, the more humble and mean their condition, so much the greater was the joy of his heart in employing himself for the profit of their souls; and he was accustomed to say, that where nature had given less, grace shone more clearly, and that a son of St. Philip could have no better title than that of servant of the poor. Every one met with the kindest attention from him. He treated all with great gentleness and sweetness of spirit; and none could overcome his patience, however repeatedly they might

try him by their importunity and troublesomeness.

At a former period, before he became a confessor, Mariano had a most extraordinary longing to go and preach the Gospel to the infidels in the Indies. To this succeeded a burning desire, or, as he used afterwards to term it, a most subtle temptation, which made him fancy that the sphere of action in the Congregation for the service of God and his neighbour, was too limited, for he longed to go into the prisons and on the public squares, and to preach there with a crucifix in hand, or else to give missions, or traverse cities and country places, in order to spread abroad the seed of the Divine Word, or to employ himself in such-like works of piety, which are practised by persons dedicated to God in other Institutes and Orders. He found, however, abundant room for his zeal and burning charity, when, in his employment of hearing confessions, he learned that he could in this way promote God's glory, and co-operate in the salvation of souls, if not with so much noise and outward show as in the above-mentioned labours, yet at least with no less merit, with perhaps greater fruit, and, what is more, with security from the dangers of men's praise and applause, since everything is transacted in secret with no witness but the eye of God. Hence he held this sacrament in the highest esteem, and he used to say that it is the greatest of all works, and second only to the sacrifice of the Mass; for through confession the priest

opens heaven and shuts hell, dispenses the Blood of Christ, gives away the treasures of grace, and works wonders greater than those which Moses wrought in the Old Testament. He consoled himself by considering, that his labours for the conversion and sanctification of Christian souls, counterbalanced all the success he might have had among the infidels. "For Christendom," as he used to say, "is dearer to God than the heathen, and, hence, a life spent in toils for Christians, is far more pleasing to Him;" and, moreover, the part of Christendom which is Christ's more especial heritage, is Rome, the seat of His Vicar, and the centre of religion; so that, full of joy, he used to exclaim, "My lot has fallen to me in a fair place, for Rome is the choicest portion of the inheritance and the head among the members of the Church."

The dispositions which he brought to the administration of this sacrament were in no degree inferior to the esteem in which he held it. Besides the unintermitting study of cases of conscience and of the science of the Saints, he added the practice of all the virtues, and a continual prayer to God for the lights he needed, and for mercy and abundant graces, according to the wants of his penitents. He acknowledged himself unworthy and incapable of exercising this office in a way befitting it. Thus in reply to a priest who was thinking of quitting the confessional, on the ground of his unfitness to guide others, he said, "I dislike exceedingly any one's thinking himself fit for so high

an office, and I pray God never to let me be seduced by such an illusion." Hence, he placed all his confidence in God, to whom, as he said, he offered up unceasingly most earnest prayers, using often those words of Solomon: "I am a little child, and ignorant: give Thy servant; therefore, a teachable heart, that he may judge Thy people, and discern between good and evil." Before entering the confessional, he used to say the following prayer: "O Lord God, who wilt not the death of a sinner, but rather that he may be converted and live, be propitious to me a sinner, and receive my prayers, which I humbly offer up before the sight of Thy divine clemency, for Thy servants and handmaids who desire to confess their sins, that Thou mayest blot out their offences, and keep them safe hereafter from all crimes through Christ our Lord." He added to this prayer, when he had opportunity, the psalm Miserere, and the hymn, Veni Creator Spiritus, and he invoked the protection of the most holy Virgin, of the Angel-guardians, of St. Philip, and all the Saints. Numberless were the souls of every sort whom Mariano gained to Christ; so that F. Fr. Carlo Maria of Macerata, General of the Capuchins, was wont to say of him, that in conducting souls to heaven, he was like "a draw-net cast into the sea, gathering fishes of every kind." Frequently there came to him sinners habituated in vice, and corrupted to the core by all manners of uncleanness. He received them, however, with so much love and sweetness, and knew so well how to gain them,

that in a short time they had not only amended their former bad life, but become most fervent and exemplary. Not to mention other instances, one of these persons, after having declared his miseries and innumerable defilements, instead of a severe reproof which he expected, was greeted with these words, spoken in a most touching manner: "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God." Mariano then animated and comforted him with the hope of God's mercy in so effectual a manner, that, full of spiritual consolation, he put himself entirely into his hands, and became ultimately a man of great virtue.

His charity extended also to those unhappy women who led a life of sin, to the ruin of their own souls and those of others. He used the greatest circumspection in dealing with them, and at the same time laboured most earnestly to bring them to repentance, sparing no trouble or inconvenience to remove them from occasions of sin, and to establish them in places of security. He had the consolation of bringing about in many a lasting change of life, and many others he induced to embrace the religious state and retire from the world. He replied in the following terms to one of them, who wrote to him from her monastery, with the liveliest sentiments of gratitude for the great charity he had shown her: "I thank you for your too kind sentiments towards me, which I have never deserved, except by the simple desire of serving your soul; and even if I had merited anything, I confess that I have received from you a too abundant reward, in your virtuous

and holy change of life, and the promise of further advances in piety. I rejoice very much in what you write, that you desire nothing else but Paradise. May our Lord be pleased to limit to this one object all our desires."

It was one of his maxims to have no choice as to the number or condition of his penitents. Whether they were of this rank of life or that, men or women, rich or poor, he received every one without distinction, looking on them as sent him by Divine Providence, and he gave them all the same pains and attention. How great were his caution and circumspection in relation to his female penitents, will appear most clearly from a letter which he wrote to a father of another Oratorian Congregation: "With regard to female penitents, they should be treated with all charity and patience; but still, with as much brevity as possible, without any intimacy and partiality for one rather than another; for this is to the advantage both of the penitents and the confessor. Also it should be a rule never to set foot in their houses, except in the case of sickness, and then only with all proper circumspection." He himself practised these instructions so scrupulously, that nothing but illness could ever induce him to pay a visit to one of his penitents, a lady of very high rank, who derived the greatest consolation from treating with him on spiritual subjects.

Mariano had also received from God a wonderful gift of gradually conducting souls in every state to a sublime degree of Christian perfection. He suited himself to the capacity of each one,

and seeking out the good or bad inclinations of his penitents, he endeavoured to mortify the one and to foster the other, by grafting on them sound Christian virtues. He gave the following reply to a father of the Congregation of Florence, who had begged advice of him: "We should love all our penitents with a sincere and equal love, aid them much by our prayers, direct them with discernment to perfection, according to the condition and capacity of each, and not according to our own peculiar spirit: this is a point on which many confessors have gone astray." Among other things, he insisted much on the frequentation of the Sacraments, examination of conscience, daily spiritual reading, and mental prayer for those capable of it; but he always at the same time inculcated liberty of spirit, so that no one should feel disquiet at omitting any of these pious practices, when compelled to do so by his necessary avocations. In such cases he wished the persons to compensate, by performing better their daily actions with the pure view of pleasing God, by raising from time to time their minds to heaven in ejaculatory prayers; and, lastly, by a continual practice of resignation, and conformity to the Divine Will in all things. He laid great stress on this last point, and it was an exercise very dear to him, and one which above all others he recommended to souls desirous of advancing in virtue. "Let no one come to my confessional," he used to say, "who does not wish to become a good man." Not that he rejected, or did not compassionate with extreme charity, the most

inveterate and hardened sinners, bearing their falls with the most patient gentleness, but because he did not wish frequent confession to degenerate into a ceremony and a simple narrative of sins, without any regard being paid to the amendment and correction of defects. Much more did he detest conversations in the confessional, and the waste of time which ensues from talking about indifferent or foreign matters, except when the spiritual good of his penitents made it necessary, in order to counsel and direct them.

Moreover, he made great difficulties about entering into the temporal affairs of his penitents, however much they might entreat him, unless he were constrained by an evident motive of charity, and then only in very few cases. "We should be much on our guard," he writes to a father of another Congregation, "against allowing seculars, under the pretext of charity, to entangle us in their temporal interests; because, hence, we frequently find ourselves insensibly drawn away from the purity of our Institute, and we perceive, when too late, that beneath the cloak of charity we have been serving the passions of others. The fruit which comes of it is loss of time, vain-glory, and odium in the eyes of the people, who, though they beg us to interest ourselves in their temporal affairs, yet hate us when we lower ourselves to do so." He used to caution confessors to beware of being deceived by their penitents, in regard to the restitution of the property of others. For, blinded by covetousness,

penitents endeavour by prayers and pleas to lead astray their incautious confessors, and to bring them over to their side, in order thus to still their remorse of conscience, and 'to make excuses in sins.' He, therefore, recommended the confessor, in such cases, to take the part of the absent and innocent creditor, and not to be ready or inclined to free the penitent from the obligation of restitution, or to allow him any longer delay in performing this duty, unless there were weighty reasons to rest upon, and he had first consulted, not merely his books of moral theology, but also persons skilled in the law, upon which the solution of difficulties and the decision of cases very frequently depend. God rewarded the labours of Mariano in cultivating and perfecting souls by so great an outpouring of grace, that he had the satisfaction of beholding many of his penitents reach an eminent degree of piety and devotion. Many of them, turning their backs on the world, consecrated themselves to God in religious orders of strict observance, and became excellent religious; while many others, continuing in the world, led under his direction an exemplary and perfect life. He used to tell some of his intimate friends, that it was a subject of great confusion to him, to hear of the virtues practised by many of his penitents, from which he was himself, he said, so far removed; and he thanked God that he had opportunities of receiving light and instruction in virtue from his disciples. There is among the manuscripts in our library at the Vallicella, a narrative of the

life and virtues of a married lady, named Flaminia Papi, one of his penitents, which he wrote at the instance of a Roman princess. In it we see, on the one hand, in spite of all his endeavours to conceal it, how great a grace Mariano had received from God for guiding souls to the highest perfection; and, on the other, we behold an assemblage of singular and heroic virtues which this lady attained under his conduct, and which she crowned with a wonderful patience, resignation, and cheerfulness, exhibited during the long and severe illnesses with which God was pleased in the last years of her life to try her, and to purify her like gold in the crucible.

Though he loved to see in his penitents a great purity and delicacy of conscience, still he was careful that they should not give way to scruples. Hence, when they had once made a general confession with proper attention, he rarely allowed them to make another; "For," he said, "little advantage comes of it usually, and it opens the door to scruples." Instead of brooding over the past, he urged them to think upon the present, and to attend seriously to the amendment of their lives for the future. He gave the following rule to one of his penitents who was in great trouble and anxiety about the sins of her past life, because she feared being tormented by them at the hour of death: "If the devil should try to disturb you at that moment by suggesting to you that you have forgotten many sins, ask him how many; and if he answers, 'Ten,' reply, 'You are mistaken: they must be

more than twenty, and more than thirty; nevertheless, I will hope in God's mercy, and not in my own carefulness.' By this act of humility, the devil will go away confounded and overcome."

He took special pains in training those persons who were destined for the ecclesiastical life, or who already professed it; for upon these, he said, depend the interests of the laity and the sanctification of the Catholic world. Mariano left no expedient untried to make them realise the sublimity of their state, and to induce them to embrace a system of life in accordance with it, in order that by first sanctifying themselves, they might become effective instruments in the sanctification of others. Very many ecclesiastics arrived under his direction at a high degree of virtue. Some of them were raised by the Sovereign Pontiffs to the Cardinalate, and others to bishoprics, and various ecclesiastical dignities. They gave great edification, and were of much benefit to their dioceses, and to the souls committed to their charge. With reference to this subject I will quote part of a letter written by Mgr. Alessandro Strozzi, Bishop of Arezzo, formerly a penitent of Mariano's, who has been already mentioned above: "I knew this good servant of God thirty years ago at Rome, when I was studying there..... Though my regular confessor was Father Aibar, still I used sometimes, when he was away, to go to Father Mariano, who with his usual kindness was pleased to look on me with a most loving and paternal affection.....It happened,

after some time, that Father Aibar went to Florence; and I having to choose a confessor, was already so enamoured of Father Mariano's eminent virtues, that I immediately entreated him to add to his kindnesses, by taking me for his spiritual child. He at once made me a present of the Introduction to a Devout Life, by St. Francis of Sales, expressly enjoining me to ponder well the instructions contained in that book, and to draw profit from them. I continued under his direction, I know not how long, with inexpressible satisfaction. I saw in him every virtue in an eminent degree, but especially, as they were more apparent, charity, humility, and detachment from earthly things." Mgr. Francesco Grisolini, Bishop of Sarsina, who also was a penitent of Sozzini's, writes thus: "I have always looked with admiration and veneration upon Father Mariano Sozzini, as a great servant of God. I came to know him in the following way. In the year of the plague at Rome, while I was making the spiritual exercises under the Fathers of the Mission, I was inspired by God to choose a guide and spiritual father, such as St. Francis of Sales speaks of in his Introduction to a Devout Life. I accordingly prayed the Divine Goodness to bestow one upon me, and I asked that he might be the first one I should see in the confessional at the Chiesa Nuova. He proved to be Father Mariano, and though I was at that time perfectly unacquainted with him, I have since then always regarded him as an angel sent me from heaven; and I hope

by his means to obtain the salvation of my otherwise miserable soul." Many other things might be related on this head, but they shall be omitted, partly for the sake of brevity, and partly because we shall speak of them elsewhere. We will at once conclude this chapter by giving the rules which he prescribed to himself for the administration of this Sacrament; and it is easy to gather from them with how truly an apostolic spirit he exercised this function.

FOR THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE.

- "1. A love towards God.
2. Love towards our neighbour.
3. Humility, which makes one feel unworthy of this ministry, and more miserable than one's penitents.
4. Diligence in performing every part of the Sacrament.
5. Patience under the difficulties of this ministry, and the intractability of penitents.
6. Benignity; charity.
7. Christian liberty in regard to sins and sinners, whoever they may be.
8. One's will to be an unbiassed and faithful instrument of the Holy Spirit.
9. No acceptance of persons, but an inclination towards the poor and miserable.
10. Care and attention in aiding beginners, the advancing and the perfect.
11. An entire exclusion of all worldly things.
12. To decline and shun honour, glory, and every advantage and reward."

CHAPTER VIII.

HE IS APPOINTED TO THE CARE OF THE NOVICES.

ONE of the most delicate and important offices in the Congregation, is the care and direction of the novices during the first three years from their entrance ; for it depends on him to whom this office is entrusted, to foster the young plants, and imbue them with the spirit of the Institute and the virtues of the holy founder, in order that they may be in their time fitting instruments for their own sanctification as well as that of others. On this account it is usual to appoint to this office one of the eldest and most exemplary of the fathers. Notwithstanding this, however, Father Oderico Rinaldi, who was at that time Superior, perceiving Mariano's singular virtues and talents, appointed him to this post with the approbation and consent of the father deputies, when he had scarcely completed his first ten years in the Congregation. Mariano did all he could to escape it, representing his own insufficiency, and saying with sincerity of heart, that he was only fit to be a disciple and not a teacher of others, for so it seemed to his humility. The Superior and deputies, however, continuing firm in their purpose, and refusing to receive his excuses, he yielded to the opinion of others, and accepted the office under obedience. His success in this employment was so

great, and he gave such satisfaction to all the Congregation, that he was confirmed in it without interruption for the following ten years, and he would have been continued still longer had he not been elected Superior in the year 1662, as will be related below. It was one of his maxims, that the best mode of aiding others, is to become holy oneself. Hence, he applied himself more than ever to the exercise of every virtue; and he endeavoured to perfect himself in the exact observance of the Institute, in order that he might the better fulfil the new duty imposed on him, of sanctifying and conducting to perfection the novices committed to his care. Moreover, from the study of the holy Fathers and the best masters of the spiritual life, he drew up for himself a small treatise regarding the mode of directing them conformably to the spirit of the Institute. This little work of his is preserved among other of his compositions in our library, and though very brief, it is easy to perceive from it how much prudence, discretion, and light God bestowed on him. The following are some other memoranda which he made: "With regard to the office of novice master in the Congregation, remember,

1. Never to receive on account of it the slightest honour, or advantage, or service.

2. Be thyself altogether what thou wouldst have them to be.

3. Allow every one to follow his bent in the spiritual life.

4. So far as the capacity of each one admits,

guide them by the path of solid virtues, and particularly the virtues dearest to the holy Father, charity, humility, detachment, &c., and keep them clear of certain theories, &c.

5. Conduct them by the way of holy cheerfulness and liberty of spirit.

6. Practise them in the exercise of a holy and continual mortification, so far as they are capable of it, but always with discretion and cheerfulness.

7. First, sanctify by every means thyself; be most sparing in commands; abhor acting the master; pray for them, and leave the care of them altogether to God, our Lady, and the holy Father, but do this from the bottom of thy heart.

8. Remember that they are thy masters, and that the sole relation thou art in to them is, that of serving and aiding them.

9. Take care that they have a lively and true devotion to the Blessed Virgin.

10. When thou desirest some virtue in them, first of all acquire it thoroughly thyself; secondly, recommend them with great faith to God, the Blessed Virgin, the holy Father, and their Angel-guardians; lastly, advise them about it with great love, but sparingly."

In putting into practice these maxims he behaved to the novices with as much humility and modesty as if he had been one of them, or rather their inferior. If he had to mention or recommend to them anything, he did it with great sweetness. If he had occasion to reprove them for

some failing, he made choice of the most suitable time, and he used towards them the greatest gentleness and charity possible, as would be the case between two friends, or between a loving father and his children. Lastly, whenever he had to give them any instructions, he shunned the slightest shadow of authority and superiority; and on this account he used always to refer his teaching either to what he had heard from the old Fathers in the house, or to the sayings and doings of the holy Father, or again, as was his most usual practice, to what he had learned from his dear master, Father Pietro Consolini, whose memory was perpetually engraven upon his heart. By manners so gentle he won for himself the love and veneration of the novices, and thus easily obtained from them whatever he wished: he had only to show a desire for something to their advantage, in order to obtain it, so extremely docile and obedient were they.

But it was less by the instructions which he gave them, that they were stimulated to advance in spirituality, than by the exemplarity of his life, which was of so even a tenor that every action, however slight, was regulated by virtue. His attention to God in the midst of his occupations, his entire detachment from the world, his burning love of God and his neighbour, his humility and unalterable affability with all, his entire dependence on the Superior as though he had been a novice, the perfect and exact observance of the Institute, which appeared in every one of his actions; all these served

as so many lessons and exhortations, which were all the more efficacious, as being not words but deeds. Hence, what was said of F. Pietro, his master, might have been said of Mariano, that it was needful to act with him differently from others, for whereas the usual remark is, that we should attend to what our director says, not to what he does, for he is, after all, but a man; here, on the contrary, it was necessary to look more at what he did than what he said, inasmuch as he was exceedingly sparing in giving instructions, from the supreme abhorrence he had of the name and ostentation of authority.

But if he shrunk from conversing about spiritual matters with his novices, he was unwearyed in speaking of them to God. Every day, and especially in the unbloody sacrifice of the Mass, he offered most fervent prayers to Almighty God, in order to obtain for them abundant graces and advancement in virtue. Every day he presented them to the most holy Virgin, praying her that, as the Mother and Foundress of the Congregation, which was the name St. Philip gave her, she would take them under her protection, and guard them as her sons. Lastly, every day he commended them to the angels and the saints, and especially to the holy Father, whom with filial confidence he frequently addressed in the following prayer: "Bless our novices, and pour into them the seeds of future sanctity, and cherish lovingly the first fruits of their spirit."

Moreover, he did not neglect to exercise them

discreetly at proper times and places in mortification, accompanied by a holy cheerfulness, and to promote in them the acquisition of every virtue, according to the capacity of each one, and those virtues more especially which are not subject to illusion, and which are most suitable to a son of St. Philip. "No one will ever tell you," he used to say, "not to become humble in heart, or more chaste, or more obedient, or not to love God more, and be more conformed to His divine Will."

In reading the Lives of the Saints, which he used earnestly to recommend to them, he advised them to pause upon these interior virtues, and to strive to reproduce them in themselves. "This," he said, "is the sound and safe way which the Saints have followed, and in which no one can go astray; namely, becoming humble, despising self," &c. The Lord blessed Father Mariano's labours and anxieties for the novices entrusted to him, and heard his incessant prayers. Under his direction they became for the most part persons of great virtue, and very useful in promoting God's glory and edifying their neighbour. Among them F. Prospero Airoli was most conspicuous. Though he was removed from this world by a premature death at the age of twenty-eight, he had arrived at such an eminent degree of perfection, that F. Mariano, to console himself for his loss, drew up an account of his holy actions, which might serve as a pattern to the novices of the Congregation; and he declared that he had received

by his intercession some particular graces from the Divine mercy, as may be seen at length in the Historical Memoirs, by F. Marciano, who composed a Life of F. Prospero from F. Mariano's narrative. Not to speak of others, one of Mariano's disciples was F. Leandro Colloredo, afterwards Cardinal and chief Penitentiary, who by his heroic virtues graced the Congregation and the purple, and died Jan. 11, 1709, in high esteem of sanctity. It is impossible to express the veneration which Leandro always professed for Mariano, and it was this which moved him to collect after his death records of his virtuous actions, and to make a sketch of his life, which has been the source from which we have drawn the largest portion of this narrative.

Mariano was regarded with like reverence by his other novices, and their esteem and confidence towards him increased in proportion as in the doubts and temptations which happened to them, they found from his counsels and direction a sensible assistance of God and a happy result, as often as they acted according to his suggestions. Mariano, however, on these occasions putting no confidence in himself, but looking in all things to the Divine Goodness, which assists in a special manner those who recur with humility of heart to their directors, used to employ those words of the Psalmist, "I was humbled, and He set me free." There was among the novices one who had entered the Congregation at a somewhat advanced age, and who was possessed of singular talents and abilities, which

had been already tried in various functions before he had joined the Congregation, and who was fit to aspire to still higher ones. This person was assailed by a violent temptation, to account his state as one little suited for doing great things to the glory of God, and for the service of his neighbour. The temptation coming thus to him under the appearance of good, induced him to think that it would be better for him to try to obtain some bishopric or other ecclesiastical dignity, which he could easily succeed in getting, as he was known, both personally and as a man of learning, to people of influence and distinction. The novice faithfully declared his interior state to Mariano, who made it clear to him that this was a mere temptation, and gave him something to read which he had written about ecclesiastical dignities. The result was most excellent; for he had scarcely read it, when he felt in a moment all his perplexities disappear, and he persevered until death in the Institute which he had entered. In conclusion, or rather, as an appendix to this chapter, in order to exhibit more clearly on what principles Mariano directed himself as well as others in what regards the Institute, I have thought it well to insert the following instructions which he gave Father Luca Millini at Carbognano, where they were spending some time together in the country, upon his requesting some directions as to the right way of living in the Congregation.

CHAPTER IX.

INSTRUCTIONS OF FATHER MARIANO SOZZINI FOR A
MEMBER OF THE CONGREGATION OF THE ORATORY.

“1. Let him have the rules of the Congregation constantly in his hands; let him love and esteem them, and live in exact observance of them.

2. In reading the Life of the holy Father St. Philip, he will derive great light for his advancement in perfection, by endeavouring faithfully to copy in himself the spirit and virtue of the Saint. He will also derive much instruction from the Lives of his first companions, notwithstanding the brevity with which they are written.

3. I would desire him highly to esteem the principal means of perfection proper to his vocation, which are prayer, the Word of God, the Sacrament of Penance, and the most holy Sacrifice of the altar. In addition to these, he should clothe himself, as it were, with a praiseworthy devotion to the holy protectors of the Congregation, which are, the Blessed Virgin, the holy Father St. Philip, the Angel-guardian of the Congregation, St. Gregory the Great, the holy martyrs SS. Papias and Maurus, and the Saints in general.

4. Let him consider that the Congregation is entirely founded in holy charity, according to the constant declaration of its holy founder, who

said, that instead of vows and religious bonds he intended to found the Congregation solely in charity.

Therefore, let him, above all things, endeavour to perfect himself in charity.

Let him love all (his brothers) with his whole heart.

Let him speak well of all.

Let him judge all favourably.

Let him excuse all.

Let him do good to all, according to his ability.

Let him heartily compassionate all.

Let him daily pray to God for all.

Let him guard against antipathies, and moderate them by virtue.

And with equal precaution, let him guard against sympathies, which are very prejudicial to the holy charity of community.

Let him bear towards all an equal, pure, and holy love.

Let him guard against particular and partial friendships.

Nevertheless, he may more willingly associate with the most worthy, whose society will be most useful to him.

He must be especially careful that the diversity of opinions in the Congregation do not degenerate into factions, but always perform his duties steadily and charitably, without binding or attaching himself to any party.

5. As he seeks to perfect himself in holy charity, he should understand that there is an

order in charity, and that the first degree of charity is due to his Congregation, which is his mother, his nurse, and his guide to heaven. It would, therefore, be a delusion for him to attach himself to exterior works of charity, unless he had first perfectly performed such as are interior and domestic, which, for example, would be the case, should any one neglect to visit the sick in the Congregation, that he might attend the hospitals, &c.

6. Recreation, at which the fathers must assemble twice a day, after dinner and supper, requires a modest cheerfulness; and one of the fathers when going to the hall for recreation, used to ask of God the four first fruits of the Holy Ghost, 'Caritas, gaudium, pax, patientia—Charity, joy, peace, and patience;' since the practice of these four virtues makes recreation lively and useful.

7. Let him consider that the primary virtues of this vocation, and those for which our holy founder and his first followers were distinguished, are humility, charity, detachment from the world, and the living disengaged from secular affairs, to occupy ourselves solely in God, and in the accomplishment of His holy Will.

8. I would have him consider, that though far behind many religious states in austerity of living, in attendance in choir, in missions, &c., we may yet equal every other in the primary virtues, such as the love of God and our neighbour, the perfect performance of the Will of God, purity of conscience, obedience, humility, de-

tachment, chastity, faith, patience, hope, rectitude, veracity, meekness, &c. And, what is more valuable, these virtues, which are of great merit before God, can be practised without any ostentation or vanity, as we have neither public penances nor signs of austerity in our dress, &c.

9. Many deceive themselves by the care they take of their health, since too great care or too great neglect of health, is equally blameable. Generally persons retired from the world sin in being careful even to superstition in this respect, for self-love is most ingenious in giving the colour of necessity to the use of comforts, and in imagining infirmities which it has not, or at least in magnifying such as are real; believing that justice requires many exemptions from the rules, much singularity in diet, and many dispensations from the ordinary labours of the community. From this there arises an irreparable relaxation of spirit, so that to advance in perfection is almost impossible, and, consequently, the other members of the Congregation are unjustly burthened by the labours, from which one exempts himself through excessive delicacy: thence, murmurs at his deficient virtue arise in the Congregation, together with an universal temptation to want of charity towards the indiscretion and meanness of spirit of this delicate person; whilst he, on the contrary, fancies himself badly used, and complains of want of charity in the Congregation, and of the inhumanity or partiality of the Superior and officials; so that, by little and little, he be-

comes unwilling to remain in the Congregation, and the members of the Congregation, equally unwilling to retain him amongst them, and a reciprocal loss of charity and of spirituality takes place, which in time becomes intolerable.

It would certainly be an error, and indeed a sin, injudiciously to neglect our health, but on this point I would give two counsels. One is, that if we must err, it is better to lean towards a holy contempt of self, than to an excessive delicacy and jealous care of our health. The second is, that when any one feels a bodily indisposition, after having recommended the matter to God, he should with filial confidence manifest his necessity to the Father Superior, and with holy indifference commit the application of remedies to his care and prudence. I, however, warn him, that in manifesting his indisposition to the Father Superior, he should not use artifice or exaggeration, so putting the Father into the dilemma of granting something improper, or leaving the applicant openly discontented. It appears to me to be a laudable thing, that in manifesting his difficulties to the Father, he should give him to understand how ready he is to abide by his judgment with holy indifference; inclining rather to abstain from remedies than to apply them.

10. It is a most laudable thing in the Congregation to imitate our holy father, who knowing that his vocation was to Rome, would never quit this holy city, though it is certain that just reasons there may be for a temporary absence

from Rome. It appears to me, that four causes may be justly assigned for such absence. One is, when the Pope would employ some member at a distance from Rome, as in the cases of Fathers Tarugi, Velli, Scarampi, &c.; and in this case, a good son of the Congregation should do nothing but humbly place the matter in the hands of the Congregation, and obey in simplicity.

The second cause is, some motive of devotion, such as to visit the Holy House, &c., which when it only occurs once in a way, under the counsel and direction of the Father, and in times and circumstances which are not inconvenient to the Congregation, may be regarded as reasonable, and is not condemned by our elders. The frequency of these pilgrimages would, however, be suspicious; since he who seeks spiritual good out of the sphere of his vocation, will never find it. Besides which, as one of our fathers remarked, Rome so abounds in memorials and sacred treasures, that to desire to leave it, to seek them elsewhere, would raise a suspicion either of curiosity, or of weariness of the vocation.

The third cause of absence may be some weighty business, requiring the personal presence of the member. This cause cannot be easily assigned, for the laws of charity rarely oblige in similar cases; and without a strict obligation of charity, our Institute requires the members of our Congregation not to embrace any business, especially such as would distract them from their vocation. Nevertheless, as such a cause of absence may sometimes be justly assigned, a good

son of the Congregation, after having recommended the business to God, should confer with the Father Superior, bringing to his feet a sincere indifference as to the 'Yes,' or 'No,' and declaring that he asks a counsel and not a permission.

The fourth just cause of absence is, a state of convalescence or weak health; but here there is great danger lest self-love should represent this cause as being more imperative than it actually is. Many of the Congregation, when they see their brothers often leave Rome for recreation under this plea of indisposition, may be tempted in consequence; whilst many who remain in Rome and supply the labours of the absent, may consider themselves in conscience to need relief more than they. But where the health really needs such relief, it is reasonable, and our holy Father determined upon having some place of retirement, such as Carbognano was and still is, where he sent Fathers Nicolò Gigli, Baronio, &c.

Here two things must be observed in practice. The first is, to suspect the desire of absence, in which self-love may have a great share, as the person may only want to relieve himself from labour, to take his meals at his own pleasure, to enjoy more liberty, &c. He must, therefore, ask light from God, to enable him to distinguish between necessity and temptation, and then speak of the matter to the Father, simply representing his motives, and showing that he would be willing, and even prefer, to receive a negative. He should also consider whether there be many ab-

sent from the Congregation at that time, lest he should thoughtlessly increase the labours of those who remain. The second thing to be observed is, that when such a change is necessary, as far as is possible, a house or vineyard of St. Philip, or of his Congregation, should be chosen, and the person should avoid going to strange houses, or living in the same houses with women; and he should also, if possible, avoid going to a town of much resort, or one which is visited by the Roman court, since in doing this, he would pass the bounds of necessity, and throw himself into a life of pleasure, which would perhaps be not very edifying to those who might see him leave our own modest house to enjoy luxuries in those of strangers. Besides, in mixing with courtiers, if he observed the reserve and simplicity of our state, he would make himself disagreeable, and be noticed for his troublesome singularity; or should he stoop to the usual profaneness of others, he would suffer spiritual loss, and give little edification to his neighbour, whilst the Congregation would be displeased at receiving so little honour from one of its members.

11. The love of our own room is always to be commended, and carries with it the best effects, since there spirituality may be cultivated, and interior peace preserved, and there also a sweet school of perfection may be found. There we can enjoy the exercises of prayer, and of contemplation with spiritual reading, and the sacred studies proper to our vocation. The cell or room should be clean, modest, furnished like those of

the other fathers, and moderately provided with books calculated to advance the member in spirituality, and in the knowledge of the ministry proper to our state.

12. Application to study is necessary for the members of our Congregation, and, after spiritual exercises, is the most commendable; but it needs some limitation.

(1.) The studies must be sacred, and neither profane nor curious.

(2.) The love of study and of application must not prejudice the acquisition of spirituality.

(3.) It must not injure the health.

(4.) Neither must it interfere with the common observances of the Congregation.

(5.) It would be commendable in the member, to seek light and counsel of the Father Superior respecting the measure and choice of his sacred studies, that he may practise them with merit, and with assurance of the Divine Will.

(6.) In short, I am pleased with the counsel of St. Bernard, who commends study in two cases only, that is, when it edifies ourselves or our neighbour. With these precautions, we shall, I believe, avoid two injurious extremes in our studies, which are, an excessive attachment to them, and a reprehensible idleness.

13. As regards the concerns of the Congregation, I desire two things in our people, candour, and indifference. I say candour, because we should freely say what we feel 'In Domino—In the Lord,' for the service of God and the Congrega-

tion, without human respect, &c. I say indifference, because we should express our sentiments dispassionately, and be equally content whether our own opinion or that of another be adopted. It is good never to speak of such business, excepting in the time and place of scrutiny, unless it be necessary to take some light or information on the business; and, above all, he must never allow himself to engage his vote to any person whatever, either an extern or domestic, since this practice is contrary to the well-being of the Congregation, and its frequent results are remorse of conscience, and some breach of fraternal charity.

14. A holy distance from courts is expressly enjoined by our rules, and besides being pleasing to God, it is agreeable to Rome itself, and to ourselves in the Congregation. Visits to the sick, or some office of evident charity, makes an approach to the court commendable; but it would first be right to confer with the Father, as our most virtuous members are wont to do, before meddling with the court. I would, however, never have this holy estrangement from court degenerate into marked incivility or superstitious singularity.

15. We should endeavour to live in holy detachment from our relatives, restricting the marks of our love to the time of their sickness or purely spiritual necessity; and, in general, it is a great virtue to be able to live detached from all business or secular care, in which friends and relatives would unhappily entangle us under

the false colour of charity, whereby we lose spirituality and interior peace, and disgust the Congregation; whilst even in the world, we gain nothing but discredit, and, in many cases, hatred.

16. A filial dependance on the Father befits every member of our Congregation, and though the Congregation enjoins no precept of obedience, it, nevertheless, teaches that love binds its members to an obedience not in the least inferior to that of vow. Thus voluntary obedience extends not only to the Father, but to all the officials of the Congregation, each in his proper sphere, requiring indiscriminately from all not merely obedience but also humility and fraternal charity.

17. One of the most important spiritual maxims, but, at the same time, one which is least understood, is to accommodate ourselves to the community, and to regulate our sentiments and actions according to the direction of the community, excepting in the case of manifest sin. This virtue is most estimable in holy communities, since it includes a constant exercise of interior mortification, and a secret practice of humility, in daily yielding even perhaps our most pious sentiments to those of the community, so that it involves a daily abnegation of self through the grace of fraternal charity. This virtue is rarely known without an especial grace from God; since self-love leads us to a high esteem of our own spirit, and a tenacious attachment to it: but the Saints inculcate with

extreme earnestness, that whoever aspires to sanctity, must humbly follow holy community, and shun every singularity as a pestilence, however specious it may be in appearance, since it foments a secret pride and destroys common charity. Neither let it be said, that he who contents himself with community only, cannot advance above the others in sanctity.

(1.) Because if he observes community more perfectly than others, he must for that very reason be more perfect than the others.

(2.) Because he who leaves a pious work to conform himself to the community, has double merit, that of the good which he desired to do, and that of depriving himself of this merit for the common good according to his vocation.

(3.) Because it is false, that community can hinder perfection and sanctity, since it is certain that the measure of sanctity must be taken by our interior, by the love of God, the perfect accomplishment of His Holy Will, &c. and it is impossible that this should be impeded by community which affects only the exterior, so that we should all desire to advance in perfection, and in this community will greatly aid and never impede. But lest I should digress too much, I will refer to the enlightened observations of SS. Bernard, Basil, Gregory the Great, and Bonaventura, on this head.

18. I would have each member to esteem greatly even the meanest and humblest offices of the Congregation, such as carrying the candles at High Mass, ringing the bell for sermons,

serving in the refectory, collecting the offerings during the preaching, &c. These are treasures bequeathed to us by the humility of our holy Father, and besides being of much benefit to those who perform them in love, we may say, that Religious and spiritual persons speak of them with great edification.

19. In the election of officials, which is renewed every three years in the Congregation, three things are to be desired. 1st, That each member should give his vote to the best. 2ndly, That he should shun as a pestilence every sort of canvassing prior to the election, constantly but prudently closing his ears to any attempt to introduce intrigue under any possible pretext of good, and go to the scrutiny without letting any one know to which side his vote will incline. 3rdly, That with regard to any office which may be assigned to himself, he observe an entire indifference and detachment. A certain regard for the lowest office appears to me to be praiseworthy. On this point I am much pleased with the opinion of one of our fathers, who said to me, 'The Congregation may give me whatever office it pleases, but I am resolved that the office of infirmarian shall not be taken from me;' meaning, that whether he were elected infirmarian or no, he was resolved, by the help of God, to treat the invalids of the Congregation with all the charity and attention of an infirmarian.

20. We must be exceedingly circumspect in accepting the burden of employing our interest

with Cardinals, noblemen, &c.; for though we may be requested to do so as an act of charity, there are many dangers and frequent causes of repentance in the practice. It may easily happen that under the credit of our recommendation, some unworthy action may be carried on, or that some person may be deceived or injured, the public scandalized, and the Congregation greatly offended. We should, therefore, very rarely accede to such requests, and never without a careful discernment of the character of the person, and of the business, whilst we should be very cautious in engaging our promise.

21. In all our undertakings we should earnestly endeavour to keep up a holy and constant cheerfulness, which adds perfection to spiritual works. This is pleasing to our neighbour, gives durability to the spiritual life, and is what our holy Father greatly desired in his children. And we may be assured that the continual application of our Institute requires some moderate recreation and relief, otherwise we should lose our health, spiritual life would become tedious, and generally we should not persevere in it. I wish that the members of our Congregation should be prudent in their choice of recreations, that they may go always hand in hand with virtue. To oppose them altogether is an error, the merit lies in choosing such as may edify. One, for example, will find pleasure in a garden, where he can in solitude give freedom to his devout thoughts. Another will amuse himself in read-

ing some pleasing little book of sacred poems, &c. Every one according to his taste.

22. It becomes the humility of our state, that, as far as possible, our members should not allow themselves to be served by others, but should wait on themselves, in sweeping their rooms, bringing water, keeping themselves clean, &c. ; except where there is a just cause for doing otherwise, with the knowledge and especial permission of the Father.

23. I will not speak of ecclesiastical dignities, for the rule expressly declares that they cannot be excepted, unless the Pope commands that they be so. But I must not omit to say, that the holy alienation from dignities, which through the grace of God is to be found among us, is the fairest crown belonging to the humility of our Institute, and besides its great merit with God, it also reflects great honour on our holy Father, when we prefer the humble state of a child of his before all prelacies.

24. To avoid all nunneries has been always much praised by our fathers, as intercourse with nuns would divert us from our own peculiar duties, produce dissipation of mind, and reciprocal loss of time, with many other results pernicious to ourselves, be a disedifying example to other nuns, and cause dissatisfaction to the Congregation. Of course there may be just exceptions to this rule, of which the Father will be a good judge.

25. Almsgiving is a virtue, which, through the grace of God, has always been conspicuous in

our Congregation, and I would have this virtue to be practised by every one in our house, according to his means. I would also have it practised in the way most pleasing to God, such as with secrecy, &c. I am much pleased when spiritual and corporal alms-deeds are united, for example, when the money given not only relieves the body, but also assists the soul by removing sin and promoting virtue. It appears to me to be commendable to choose some kind of alms proper to our state; for example, the education of a poor boy of great promise, the assistance of converted heretics, in which, besides corporal aid, we may give stimulus and help towards Christian perfection. Alms given to preserve the modesty of women is a very good thing, but not without danger, and to be given with much circumspection, and without the least intercourse or familiarity with them. Self-love, mingling itself with things spiritual, has deceived, and ever deceives many.

In assisting poor families, I think it better to provide them with bread, wine, and clothes, than to give them money, since money in the hands of a prudent alms-giver goes further, and is more useful than in those of a poor person.

In distributing alms, I think it good not to lay yourself under an obligation for a month or a week. First, because, after an engagement, it is difficult to withdraw the money, even when the necessity ceases, without producing great complaints. Secondly, because the fixed destination of such money shuts up the means of aiding

others more worthy, who may day by day be pointed out to us by God. Therefore, even when we do think it right to bestow so much a month, we must never give hope of continuing to do so, but rather the contrary.

26. I should wish our people always to have great charity for the different religious orders, and to live always on good terms with them, speaking well of them, and assisting them as far as lies in their power, but without being particularly connected with any. And, above all, I wish that they should avoid every sort of emulation, as regards the religious orders, willingly yielding and being satisfied with the victory of charity.

27. It seems to me that our subjects should regard the holy city of Rome with especial love, God having fixed our vocation there; since, as we know, by revelation of St. John the Evangelist, God has appointed that St. Philip and his sons should find their Indies in Rome, the city most dear to God, most favoured by Heaven, most illustrious through the blood of martyrs, of all cities in the world; against which are directed all the hatred, arms, and policy of all heretics and enemies of Christianity; so that the welfare of the whole world depends on the welfare of Rome, and, as our holy Father said, 'He who does good to Rome, benefits the whole world.'

28. Lastly, I wish that in our Congregation nothing should be esteemed or valued but Christian virtues. I would only have knowledge, prudence, and talents esteemed as far as they are

instrumental to the knowledge and love of God, and to the aiding our neighbour in the attainment of perfection. I would that such instruments should be acquired with due application, but that they should be kept carefully concealed, except when the glory of God and benefit to our neighbour require us to use them.

29. I must not omit to remark, that as our Congregation is not bound by religious bonds, a holy liberty of spirit should shine amongst us. For example, it is the will of God that one person should be more favoured in contemplation, another in active graces; one in works of temporal mercy, another in spiritual works; one in sacred studies, another in holy simplicity; that one should excel in one virtue, another in another. This variety of spirits will render the Congregation supremely beautiful, and that no one may err by canonizing his own spirit, it must be discerned by holy obedience, under the guidance of the Father. This due liberty of spirit being presupposed, it will follow, that every one must esteem and be edified by the spirit of his brethren, and sincerely prefer them to himself; avoiding a subtle error of such as are little spiritual, who only esteem those who follow their own spirit, censuring, or little esteeming, and, perhaps, trying the spirits of those who do not walk with them.

30. A subject of the Congregation is generally exposed to two temptations directly contrary; one is to wish to do too much, the other is to wish to do nothing. Both the one and

the other are equally pernicious and repugnant to virtue. Some one, for example, will greatly affect the retirement of his chamber, study, prayer, and solitude, with certain devotions which suit his taste, believing that he shall find in these things spiritual profit and interior peace of heart; whilst, on the contrary, exterior occupations would extinguish his spirituality, occasion many imperfections and sins, and impede his interior peace. It consequently happens, that when the Congregation would employ him in the ordinary offices of the community, or engage him in active ministries for the service of his neighbour, he is disturbed, and performs the task enjoined with imperfection, languor, and almost with irritation, without giving satisfaction either to God, the Congregation, or himself, till he at last becomes weary of his state, and either abandons his vocation, or fulfils it with great weariness and without merit.

The remedy for this temptation consists in the consideration of two things. The first is, that all spiritual satisfaction or interior peace enjoyed contrary to obedience and our vocation, must be a manifest delusion, which alone would be sufficient to render that person incapable of spirituality. The second truth is, that occupations undertaken through obedience only, when contrary to our taste, have the greatest merit; first, through the special goodness which they require; secondly, through the great merit which pure obedience carries with it; thirdly, through the holy victory which we gain over

ourselves and our repugnant taste; besides the great merit of co-operating with the holy community of which we are members, and of consecrating ourselves to its advantage. And as to the loss of interior peace, we need not be at all anxious, since the Lord well knows how to bestow it in the midst of occupations, it being the inseparable companion of a good conscience. Or if for the love of God we ever do suffer some disturbance, His Divine Majesty will amply repay us. The second temptation, and one equally to be shunned, is the desire of doing too much, and this is more to be dreaded by good souls, since it introduces itself under colour of virtue, zeal, and merit. Some one, for example, having entered the Congregation, will be disgusted with the humble and unpretending exercises of the Institute, and will sigh to be employed in the conversion of souls, and in those pious works and holy undertakings of which we read in the Lives of the Saints; and, in consequence, will be disheartened, and perhaps repent of having chosen a life which restricts virtuous operations to a very narrow sphere. This temptation usually agitates the souls of those who are endowed with the greatest gifts; and the devil is wont to derive three advantages from it. The first is, to puff up the individual with an excessive esteem of himself, and of his imaginary spirituality; the second is, to make him think meanly of his vocation, esteeming it below his talents; and the third is, that diminished esteem is followed by diminished

love, and a daily contempt of the daily exercises ; whence he lives unhappily in a foolish desire of that to which God does not call him, and a culpable contempt of that which God really requires of him.

The remedy for this deception and illusion is true humility, and a true conformity to the will of God. True humility will enlighten a man with a low opinion of himself, and make him really desire the last place in the house of God. It will make him esteem every mean employment greater than his talents, and ingenuously believe that every other brother would serve God better than himself. Therefore, a humble man is never better pleased than in a mean employment, and shuns and fears nothing so much as those that are sublime. This has been the sentiment of all the Saints. True conformity to the Will of God regards as a manifest delusion all that God does not require of it ; consequently, it knows infallibly and without distinction of mean or exalted offices, that its sanctity is placed in those exercises which God wills, however humble they may be ; and that utter ruin and delusion will always be found in things not willed by God, however sublime and holy they might be in their nature."

CHAPTER X.

MARIANO IS ELECTED SUPERIOR OF THE CONGREGATION.

IN the year of our salvation, 1662, it pleased God to deprive the Congregation of its head, by the death of F. Girolamo Bernabei, who for two years and a few months had governed it with the reputation of great prudence and virtue. His death occurred on the 18th of July, and the fathers having assembled on the 29th of the same month, for the election of a new Superior, their election fell on Mariano. And though there were not wanting in the Congregation members of greater age and longer standing than himself, their esteem of his piety and singular endowments was so great, that he was preferred to every other. The event showed that they were most judicious in their choice; since, during the space of fifteen years, his election was confirmed every three years, a thing not practised since the time of St. Philip. This election was heard throughout the house, and also out of doors, with universal applause, occasioning grief and repugnance to himself alone. Amongst others, F. Gio. Paulo Oliva, General of the Company of Jesus, who regarded the Congregation with especial love, experienced such consolation, that he would immediately come in person to congratulate the Fathers, to whom

he said, "You have greatly edified me by choosing that holy man for Superior."

That he might bear well the new charge imposed on him, Mariano, as was his wont, implored aid and succour of the Divine clemency, not less by his own prayers than by those of others; confessing himself to be incapable of bearing such a burthen by his own strength, and indeed altogether insufficient for it.

After God he placed his chief trust in the protection of the Most Holy Virgin. In her maternal bosom he was wont to repose himself and the Congregation, to her he had recourse with filial confidence, and through her he asked for light, strength, and counsel from the Divine Goodness. It happened at this time, that the Cavaliere Pietro Berettini of Cortona with his admirable pencil painted on the vault of the Chiesa Nuova that remarkable miracle, in which the great Mother of God supported the falling roof of the same Church. We cannot express the sentiments of tenderness, devotion, and confidence in the Virgin which Mariano derived from this circumstance, animating himself with the hope, that the Queen of Heaven, who so graciously sustained the material part of her house, would with equal and even greater benignity sustain the spiritual edifice, and he implored for himself and for the other children of her house an increase of spirituality and fervour in the service of God.

After the Virgin, he had recourse to his Angel-guardian and to those of the Congregation

and of the fathers and brothers, whose aid he invoked every morning when he went down to the Church. He did the same to the holy protectors of the Congregation, and to those whose relics are venerated in our church. Then he was wont with filial confidence to bear to the feet of the holy Father all the business and emergencies of his office. He had a private key made to the chapel in which St. Philip was wont to celebrate Mass, and where he received extraordinary favours from Heaven. Here Mariano prolonged his stay and his prayers : here he matured all resolutions important to the good service of the Congregation ; and from this sanctuary he received those holy maxims and most prudent counsels by which he regulated the government of the Congregation with so much wisdom and such great edification to himself and others.

These directions may, in great part, be gathered from what he wrote to the Superior of a Congregation who had consulted him on such matters : "The government of the Congregation," he says, "must always be faithfully exercised according to the maxims and spirit of St. Philip. Above all, be most vigilant in maintaining a true and cordial charity amongst the fathers and brothers. Let the mode of government be gentle, but in two cases severe ; one is, when there is a question of the slightest shade of impurity ; and the other, when there is in the Congregation a headstrong and turbulent subject who would trouble its peace : in these two cases the sweet-

ness of the Superior should become gall. The Superior should charitably contrive to draw all he can from the members of the Congregation, desiring much and being content with little ; and God often gives consolation by bringing out lovely changes with great merit to the Superiors, who, in the meantime, should with courage prepare for some discourteous expressions from their children. I think, however, that through the grace of God, with time, charity, gentleness, good example, and unwearied exertion, he will accomplish what he pleases. Nor must he be alarmed though it may happen that all his children may not be angels. The good providence of God will infallibly arrange that good Superiors should receive consolation from their children, but that there should always remain some drop of bitterness arising from such as are less perfect ; for we cannot deny that in communities, the imperfection of one is an occasion of merit to the others who are good. In these cases, three things appear to me particularly praiseworthy: first, that the good Superior should derive from them the fruits which God requires ; namely, humility, mortification of self, meekness, and unconquered charity, that he may never lose his sweetness: secondly, that he should recommend the conversion of that subject perseveringly and efficaciously to God: and thirdly, that after having so recommended the matter, he should dispassionately and peaceably ascertain the sentiments of the Congregation, and proceeding with mature judgment and repeated conferences with the Congregation, he

should manfully, but always dispassionately, execute the inspiration of God to the Community. I beseech him to take courage in the direction of the Congregation, since God, who has placed him in his office, will give him abundant spirituality for filling it well. He must beware of that dangerous maxim, 'Let things alone,' which seems to have in it something good, and to imply confidence in God, moderation, and the preservation of peace; but which in reality soon pulls down Congregations, brings discredit on them, and turns their houses into mere lodgings for seculars. A good Superior should, I think, constantly watch over every thing, great and small, remedy what he can, and when for the time he cannot remedy any thing, he should dissemble, put off the matter to another time, recommend it to God, tolerate with prudence but never with carelessness, and, in short, always desire the best, but content himself with a lower degree of perfection, according to the disposition of each."

Mariano governed the Congregation in conformity with these maxims, so full of discernment and Christian prudence; and to animate himself and others to a life still more conformed to the spirit of St. Philip, he with great labour collected those memorials and notices of the first disciples and companions of the Saint, which had been greatly neglected by our members, that they might serve as a stimulus and example for following their footsteps faithfully and imitating the virtues which they practised. These memorials were extended and compiled into a little volume by

Father Giacomo Ricci, Secretary of the Index, and Procurator General of the Order of Preachers, who through the love which he bore to Mariane and the Congregation, was pleased voluntarily to take this burthen on himself. The work being added as an appendix to the Life of St. Philip, met with universal approbation, and has produced much fruit, so that in a short time they have been reprinted in many places. He also co-operated in bringing to light the Life of the Venerable Servant of God, Giovenale Ancina, one of the first companions of the Saint, and afterwards Bishop of Saluzzo, whose beatification is now under consideration by the Congregation of Rites, and that for the same reason, that the example of the elders might induce their successors to imitate them.

And, indeed, by these domestic examples he enforced his frequent exhortations, as well in public as in private, using them as sharp spurs to advance himself as well as others in the difficult way of Christian perfection. Above all, he was never weary of recommending humility and mutual charity as the two fundamental bases of the Institute, and the hereditary virtues of the holy Founder. Nor did he repeat any words more frequently than these, "Be humble, be humble; love one another from the heart."

In the first discourse which he made to the fathers and brothers in what is called "the Congregation of Faults," he took for his theme these words of Ecclesiasticus, "Rectorem te posuerunt, noli extolli; esto in illis quasi unus ex ipsis—

They have made thee ruler; be not lifted up; be among them as one of themselves." And he discoursed wonderfully on humility, showing its absolute necessity for all, but especially for himself, who presided over the rest; and protesting that as he bore the name of Father, (the title given to Superiors by the members of the Congregation,) so with a father's heart he desired to love all tenderly without distinction or partiality. His actions corresponded with his words, for he never allowed the rank of Superior to give him any exemption, pre-eminence, or singularity, except the first place, as prescribed by the Institute, and he bore himself towards all as though he had not merely been their equal but their inferior; never permitting either those of the house, or even strangers of the meanest condition, to stand uncovered in his presence. In speaking, he never used disrespectful words, nor words which expressed command; but when he had occasion to advise or order, he seemed to entreat rather than to command. He not unfrequently served the Mass at the high altar like the lowest cleric, and presented the cup for purification to the communicants.

In his own apartment he would never be served by the lay-brother whom the Congregation assigns to the Superior, but, as long as he could, he cleaned and arranged his room himself, alleging the example of St. Philip, who would never be assisted by any one in what he could do for himself, as he learned from Egidio Calvelli, who had lived with the Saint. He considered

himself to be subject to every official of the house, and obeyed all with the greatest readiness, as the porter, for example, going down to the door immediately when he called him; or the brother-sacristan, by going at his time to celebrate Mass, or to the confessional according as he was requested, and so all the rest. He left to the subordinate officials of the house the free exercise of their offices, without interfering in them either little or much, except when it was necessary to do so for the maintenance of discipline, or else when the official had met with some annoyance, in which case he declared that whatever caused dissatisfaction, he took upon himself, since, as a father, it belonged to him to screen his children.

Besides this, he besought two persons, one in the Congregation, the other an extern, to take upon them the office of his monitors, and he entreated them freely to warn him of all the faults which he might commit of which they should be aware, whether these faults were personal or connected with his office of Superior. As for charity and kindness to his own people, he declared that he would have neither time nor hour in which he would not be ready and willing to serve the common good, regarding that rule as inviolable: "*Suos omni tempore, atque hora admittat; lætus audiat, consoletur, adjuvet—*Let him admit his subjects at any time or hour, hear them willingly, console and assist them." Consequently, he received all with a sweetness and benignity, and with an effusion of charity, far

removed from every shade of affectation, assisted and consoled them, especially in sickness or other sufferings, so that he was regarded by all with equal love as being a Father, not in name only, but in very truth: and in every circumstance they opened their hearts to him with great confidence, and allowed themselves to be guided and ruled by him. It happened that a member of the Congregation, having fallen into a protracted illness, was afraid that it would render him unfit for the functions of the Institute, and lived in distress and anxiety; Mariano, to comfort him, publicly encouraged him to lay aside every fear, and to be cheerful, assuring him that the Congregation sought nothing from him but a patient and a virtuous life; adding, "A good man is never burdensome to a community." The individual in question declared that he experienced unspeakable consolation from these tender words of Mariano, so that he could more easily bear with patience the affliction with which God had visited him. Many times too did he repress the fervour of those who after some illness wished to return to their wonted exercises, and approving their good-will, suspended them from every labour, even those which were most necessary, that he might rather exceed than be wanting in charity and discretion.

Whilst he was Superior two of the best rooms of the house became vacant, and, according to custom, Mariano, as Superior, had the first choice of taking them or not. He was persuaded to exchange his old ones for them, as they were

more light and airy, and would be more beneficial to his health; nevertheless, having understood that they would give comfort and satisfaction to another, nothing more was wanting to make him refuse them, and give them up to be enjoyed by him who had desired them. He was most discreet, and, at the same time, most complying, in permitting those reasonable relaxations which are found expedient and necessary for persons of application, and however severe and rigorous he might be in depriving himself of them, when not constrained to use them by absolute necessity, he was condescending in allowing them to others. "But," said he, "we should be most careful that these our recreations and country excursions should be accompanied with great modesty, and the exercise of the virtues befitting our state." He especially liked the members of our Congregation to frequent the vineyard of St. Onofrio, where the Community possesses, within the walls of Rome, a small house, in an airy place, with a fine prospect, since there they could take recreation amongst themselves, without being under the necessity of seeking it elsewhere in the houses and vineyards of seculars.

As to the corrections and admonitions which he was obliged to give, he sought the most suitable time, when his subjects were most able and disposed to receive them with fruit. With some, therefore, he would wait till some festival, as well to have the particular aid of the Saint, which he invoked by anticipation for that end, as to render the admonition more fruitful through

the recollection and greater devotion which we are wont to have at such times. With others, he would preface the admonition with some present, or other gratification, or at least with some peculiar demonstration of affection, in order to win them, and by that means to dispose them to take in good part the correction, as an effect of love and a desire of his welfare, and not of dislike, passion, or any other human respect. With others, he made use of some book, which he either gave or lent them to read, or at least to find out some example, in which, as in a glass, they might see themselves and their faults, and so amend. Lastly, he always accompanied the bitterness of correction with sweetness in words and suavity of manner, knowing well that these means are always necessary in order that the correction may produce fruit, but more especially so with persons entirely free, as are the members of the Congregation.

There was in the Congregation a certain member, who, though possessing many qualities both good and useful to the community, was naturally so warm and vehement, as to cause no little trouble and annoyance to the others. It is true that he himself did the greatest penance for his passion, since no sooner was the excitement over, than he was greatly humbled and confounded. Mariano, greatly pitying the imperfection of this man, was determined to cure it by gentle means. He first used every means to obtain his good-will and confidence, and for this end caressed him much, dissembling his errors, and in-

dulging him in all that was possible. He then by little and little warned him to be more moderate, and insinuated the method of becoming so, and thus by degrees he succeeded in rendering him tractable and meek.

In two cases, however, as we have named above, Mariano was severe, and he used unreservedly to exercise all the authority and zeal of a Superior. The first case was, where he had to deal with the least shadow of immodesty. Once he learned that some one in the Community, whilst talking in a secular jesting way, had fallen into some unbecoming levity, and this was enough to induce him immediately to deprive him of his office, which was one that obliged him to converse with seculars and strangers. He intimated to another, who had used some gesture which exceeded the bounds of strict propriety and modesty, that he must under some pretext ask leave to quit the Congregation, otherwise he should be dismissed; and, in fact, he was obliged to leave the Congregation, though the thing appeared trivial. In another case, he restricted the liberty which the members of the Congregation have after three years, of going about alone in Rome like secular priests, and obliged him to go out with a companion, and never without his express permission.

The second case in which Mariano exercised severity was, when there was any fault opposed to fraternal charity which disturbed mutual concord. He then used all rigour in correcting the delinquent, protesting that he would not suffer any turbulent spirits who would destroy the peace of the house to remain in the Congregation.

One of them having permitted some inconsiderate and offensive words to escape him when addressing another, was suspended by Mariano from public preaching for some weeks, and besides having to acknowledge his fault in the presence of all the rest, was obliged to go daily, for some time, to visit the sick in the hospital. He would have rigorously punished another member for the same cause, had he not been withheld by the effective interposition of the offended parties and his many promises of amendment. He, however, would have him remember, that should he ever fall into a similar fault, he should infallibly meet with the deserved chastisement. He used a gentler, but not less efficacious method, with two members between whom there had arisen some rudeness and dissatisfaction. He one day invited them both to dine with him at the vineyard of the Congregation, and took the opportunity to make them lay aside all bitterness, and with paternal but strong admonition re-established perfect charity and union between them.

In these cases of want of modesty and disturbance of mutual charity, the zeal of Mariano in removing occasions was so constant, that he would have thought nothing, had it been necessary, of depriving himself of the best members of the Congregation, for he lived so thoroughly persuaded of the Divine assistance in doing this, that he said, "Let us be faithful to God in practising the virtues proper to our vocation, in keeping the house pure from the shadow of a stain, and in preserving holy charity and con-

cord among ourselves, and let us not doubt but that God will be faithful to us, in multiplying His heavenly benedictions with a liberal hand." It seemed to him, that no diligence which he could use in this matter could be too great. And he would sometimes reply to those who opposed him, and told him that such an one thought his rigour excessive, "Tell him that that beast, Mariano, will have it so;" this man, in other respects so meek and humble, being willing to incur the reproach of being arrogant, indiscreet, and unyielding, provided he could preserve in the Congregation that spirit of purity and charity which is the precious inheritance left us by our holy Father.

In other things his actions displayed the greatest kindness and gentleness towards all, although some had imperfections and faults, (as must happen in a large community,) he compassionated, dissembled, and bore them patiently, helping them more by good example and prayer than by reproofs and chastisements. At the same time, he was most attentive in availing himself of the means which he thought most fitted to excite the tepid to fervour of spirit, and all to exercises of virtue, progress, and perfection, and he, therefore, was deeply impressed with the maxim, "*Subditorum culpas ferat patienter, corripat dulciter; medeatur, ac tollat fortiter*—Let him bear with patience the faults of his subjects, correct them with sweetness, heal and remove them with firmness." One means which he used above all others for this end, was inde-

fatigably to recommend the exercise of prayer, as an universal remedy against all evil, and the most efficacious means of obtaining every good from God, and so much the more as the spirit of the Institute is chiefly founded in prayer, and St. Philip consequently desired that his Congregation should be called the Oratory, that each may learn from the very name, that he must be indeed a man of prayer, who would be truly numbered amongst the children of the Saint. He also, as far as possible, promoted a tender devotion towards the great Mother of God, as the common mother and mistress of the Congregation; and he tried to multiply her pictures throughout the house, that he might excite our members to revere, venerate, and love her on all occasions and in every place; and he wished that the Feast of her Immaculate Conception should be celebrated with the same solemnities as the other feasts of the Virgin, though in his time it was not declared to be of precept, as it subsequently was by Clement XI. of holy memory. He greatly abhorred lawsuits, so that on any occasion of disputes, connected with the property of the community, he willingly gave ear to every proposal of fair accommodation, even though the house suffered some loss. He desired that the same detachment from worldly interest should be manifested by the Congregation, and he was wont to say, "Let our dealings with our neighbour be always removed from every shadow of interest, as well in matters which regard our-

selves, as in those of the Congregation over which the providential care of God will be more fully extended, in proportion to the disinterested services which we render Him. It happened that one of the fathers of the Congregation was much embarrassed by the lawsuits of some of his relations, in which he thought himself bound in charity to assist. The means which Mariano thought should be taken to free him from an engagement so incompatible with our state, may be gathered from the following letter which he wrote to the Father of a Congregation at a distance from Rome, in which, though he speaks in the person of another, it is very probable that he refers to what was his own expedient in the case of this individual: "I pity your Reverence as regards the proceedings of that member, who so frequently and so imprudently meddles in the courts of law and in litigations, which renders him burdensome to the community and odious to the public; and since your Reverence wishes to hear my sentiments on the point, I will briefly relate what our Congregation did in a similar case. We had amongst us a father in other respects of good and amiable qualities, but who somehow or other interested himself in the domestic lawsuits of his brother and nephews, more than was suited to his own state; so that even externs declared themselves to be disedified by his conduct. Our Father corrected him privately, and he afterwards received some public admonition, besides which, moderation in these negotiations was enjoined on him in the name

of the Congregation of Deputies. But as the good father really desired to amend, and gave hopes of doing so, though in effect the desired and becoming moderation were not apparent, our Congregation of four deputed one of our fathers to take upon himself, as far as he judged necessary by the obligation of charity, all the charge of the lawsuits belonging to the father, so that the other suits to which he was not so bound, might be left to his brother and nephews, whilst in those in which Christian charity really obliged him to take part, they would have the assistance of the father newly appointed by the Congregation, and not of him who had such a fancy for lawsuits."

He endeavoured to cultivate a holy and reciprocal charity with religious of every order, and practised the same towards ecclesiastics of every degree, especially the parochial clergy. In one place where a new Congregation was founded, he gave this advice, "Let us earnestly endeavour to keep up a good correspondence with all religious orders, (and I mean the same as regards parish priests), shunning all emulation like a pestilence, always showing esteem for them, and speaking well of them to others, rejoicing when their churches are crowded, and sometimes abstaining from a public function, which may be a temptation to them, for it is certain that this good law of holy friendship greatly pleases God, edifies the people, and attracts good-will to the Congregation." He relieved many religious by alms, as far as was in his power, and always

recommended the members of the house to honour them, to speak well of them, and to show them marks of affectionate esteem.

He supremely revered ecclesiastical Superiors, and desired that their orders should be punctually executed, and he promoted the accomplishment of them by his example, even to his great personal inconvenience; and where obedience to Superiors was concerned, he used great delicacy, even in the least things. If any one in his presence blamed the conduct of Superiors, he steadily opposed him, and when he could do nothing else, broke off the conversation by saying, "The Lord takes care of the Church, His spouse, and, therefore, I will lay her at the feet of the crucifix, that He may succour and dispose of her as He pleases;" and he insisted upon this point greatly, not only with the fathers of the house, but also with those of the Congregations out of Rome, who asked direction from him, writing thus to them: "We should earnestly endeavour, that our fathers should always have a cordial confidence in and dependence on the Bishops, being aware that this good correspondence, besides being due, produces good effects in favour of the Institute, for the edification of the public, and the good of souls." Lastly, he watched with great earnestness over the punctual observance of the Institute, and the preservation of the good discipline introduced by the holy father, and confirmed by the practice and example of his disciples, and especially by Father Pietro Consolini,

whose novice, as we have said, Mariano was, and of whose spirit he had drunk deeply. He led on all the rest by the example which he gave in his own person, being supremely diligent and exact in all the observances and functions of the community; and whilst surrounded, and, at times, almost oppressed by occupations, chiefly in aiding his neighbour, he never, as far as was possible, dispensed himself from any, but endeavoured to be amongst the first in the Oratory and in the functions of the Church, as well as at meals, at recreation, and other community duties; and his exactness and punctuality in these things seemed at once to incite and reprove the others of the Congregation, to incite the observant to walk unweariedly in the way which they had undertaken, and to reprove the imperfect and negligent, and induce them to change their habits and amend.

CHAPTER XI.

HE TRIES TO RESIGN THE OFFICE OF SUPERIOR.

THE office of Superior of the Congregation, which Mariano had filled for nearly twelve years, was so heavy a burden on his humility, that whenever the triennial election took place according to custom, he always most earnestly entreated the fathers to free him from the charge, and to restore him to the state of a subject, that, as he said, he might begin to prepare

himself for death, and to bring his own accounts before the tribunal of God, without continuing to charge himself with those of others ; but his entreaties had been useless, and his prayers thrown away. At the fourth triennial election, he had especially and with still greater warmth renewed his entreaties, and besides this had employed the intervention of the Abate Alessandro Sozzini, his nephew, that he might earnestly beseech the fathers to free him from the office of Superior, alleging that besides his other incapacities, he was unfitted for it by the pressure of his habitual infirmities, which his advanced age caused him to feel more and more. But as he was unable also to obtain his wish on this occasion, and as all the entreaties of himself and his nephew were fruitless, he bethought himself of using other means for shaking off a burden rendered almost intolerable to him by his humility, which was opposed to every semblance of esteem and superiority. The renewed election of a Superior and officials was to be made according to usage in the year 1674 ; and following the example of St. Philip, who, to exempt himself from the continued office of Superior, successfully interposed the mediation of Cardinals Federigo Borromeo and Agostino Cusano, he had recourse to Cardinals Alderano Cybo, and Gio. Giacomo Franzone, both most affectionately attached to Mariano and the Congregation ; indeed, not less so than the above-named Cardinals had been in their day to St. Philip and his community. They both engaged to interpose their good offices

with the fathers, and to persuade them to relieve Mariano from the office of Superior, which they did with all warmth and earnestness. Cardinal Cybo, in particular, addressed the following note to Father Paolo Arringhi, Dean of the Congregation: "As your Reverence well knows my regard for Father Mariano Sozzini, and the particular esteem which I entertain for his zeal and virtues, you must be aware of my especial desire that his health may be long preserved; and feeling as I do, that this may be seriously injured by his continuing in the post of Superior of the Congregation, I cannot but desire that he may be discharged from it, and another member provided at the coming election. Knowing, therefore, how much your Reverence can further this my wish, I have determined to entreat by this note that you will have the goodness to favour me by earnestly using your influence in this affair. I would have presented my request in person, in order more strongly to express my anxiety, had I not been prevented by business connected with a Congregation. I assure your Reverence that I shall ever feel the obligation, and commend myself to your prayers, &c.

"From my own house,

"30th of March, 1674."

To facilitate the accomplishment of his desire, Mariano thought it well to express fully in writing the reasons which induced him to petition the fathers to be relieved from the office of Superior, and he framed a petition to the Congre-

gation conceived in the following terms: "It is well known to your Reverences, that our holy Father, having been Superior of the Congregation for ten years, thought fit to request the fathers to exempt him from the charge, and to add weight to his request employed the Cardinals Borromeo and Cusano as his intercessors with the fathers, who allowed themselves to be persuaded by the petition of St. Philip, and the kind intercession of the two Cardinals, as we read Book 2nd, Chapter 16th, Number 9. To-day two Cardinals, Cybo and Franzone, both much attached to the Congregation, unitedly entreat the fathers, that after twelve years spent in the office of Superior, they would be pleased to dispense me from any longer continuance in that office, which by this note I lay at the feet of your Reverences, humbly beseeching you charitably to pardon the very bad service which I have rendered to that Congregation, which I supremely esteem and love, and to which the entire offering of myself is for ever due. It is the holy custom of our Congregation always to govern ourselves after the example of our saintly elders, whence I hope that neither their concession nor my petition will suffer any contradiction; and you will be pleased to observe, that in assigning the reasons for the petition already made by our holy father, these precise words are used, that he desired to be a subject and not a prelate, and that he was old and wished for some time in which to prepare himself for a good death. I desire no other judges than your Reverences, whether admitting

these claims of our blessed father to be reasonable, you should not regard them as just when urged by a most miserable sinner. I beseech your Reverences to consider that I have employed, as my intercessors, two Cardinals most attached to the Congregation, but having no hierarchical authority, that they may not impose the slightest restraint, but merely strengthen my humble prayers to your pure compassion." Lastly, to the human exertions named above, he joined fervent prayer, which he addressed to God for this end; besides which he undertook a devout pilgrimage to the Seven Churches, imploring the assistance of the holy martyrs whose relics are there venerated, and accompanying the visit by abstinence and fasting on bread and water.

On the day preceding the election, the fathers assembled; the note from Cardinal Cybo was read, and then the petition of Mariano. The urgent verbal requests of the Cardinals were also represented, and it was concluded, that, according to custom, Mariano should renounce the office of Superior before the new election, and that then the Congregation would be free, either to confirm him or elect another. Since, on the one hand, they perceived that his entreaties only arose from his humility, and, on the other hand, every one was convinced that the personages in question, having a great regard for the Congregation, would not be greatly displeased, if for its advantage he were again confirmed in the office of Superior, and the more so, as in this case the plea of age and decrepitude could not be urged,

as in that of St. Philip, since Mariano was not then more than sixty-one years of age.

With this determination they proceeded the next day to the election, which again fell on Mariano, who could not withstand the will of God, which destined him to continue his labours for His glory and the benefit of the Congregation.

This decision was heard with particular pleasure by the two Cardinals, who admired the virtuous contention between Mariano and the Congregation. Thus the modesty and humility of Mariano were crowned with the merit of the refusal, and the Congregation was not defrauded of the advantage of having for its Head and Superior a man of such eminent merit and virtue, of whom Monsignor Crispini, Bishop of Amelia, in his book entitled, "School of Sanctity of the Great Master, St. Philip Neri," thus writes, Book 5, Section 15, No. 4: "Father Mariano Sozzini, a noble Sienese, (be it said without offence to his modesty), conspicuous for the ornament of so many virtues of every kind, which render him a lively portrait of his holy Father Philip, whose place he has for fifteen years worthily filled to the general edification of Rome, which, in a great measure, beholds its great Apostle Philip renewed in the person of Mariano, so that in speaking of this worthy priest we may justly use the words of Ecclesiasticus: 'Mortuus est pater ejus, et quasi non est mortuus; similem enim sibi reliquit post se—His father is dead, and yet, as it were, not dead; for he has left behind him one like himself,' " &c.

Not long after this, Mariano was visited by God with a wound in his leg, which became so dangerous, that in the judgment of the physicians and surgeons it threatened mortification. How Mariano conducted himself in this and other sicknesses will be shown in the second book, when we begin to discuss his private virtues. Immediately he took occasion from his illness earnestly to renew his entreaties to be discharged from the office of Superior, hoping that what his humility could not obtain, might be more readily granted to the additional plea of this most grievous malady, and the more so, as the evil must be tedious, and prevent the attendance and application befitting his office. But even at this time his resignation was not accepted, though he was entreated by the fathers to moderate or give up all that would prejudice his health, and reserve for the advantage of the Congregation his authority and example, which were the best services which it could possess for its direction.

Again did Mariano submit his judgment to that of the Congregation, and with great profit and edification, both to the community and to externs, continued to direct and govern it to the end of the fifteenth year, when, in consequence of his daily increasing infirmities, the fathers thought fit to yield to his entreaties, and to elect another Superior in 1667, giving him that exemption from all office usually granted to those who have been Superiors. The sentiments of Mariano in this matter of accepting or refusing the rank of Superior, may be

easily gathered from what we have related above, but they will be yet more apparent from a letter which he addressed to one of his sisters, an Abbess in the Monastery of Siena, who, moved by the same spirit, wished to disencumber herself of the Superioress's office, and asked counsel of Mariano, who replied: "I am greatly pleased that your Reverence lives in heartfelt aversion to the office of Superioress, and I would advise you humbly to use every means of deliverance which you can adopt with Christian prudence, and under the sanction of your director. But I never could approve of certain modes of withdrawing yourself, which partake of violence and disobedience, and which are opposed to the dispensations of God's Will, whose secret judgments may make us saints in the state of Superiors, and reprobates in that of subjects," &c.

Before concluding this chapter, we must not omit to mention what occurred whilst Mariano continued in office, relative to the worship of our holy Father, and the conduct of Mariano in the affair. Some fathers of the Congregation desired that a petition should be presented to Clement IX. of holy memory, who was much devoted to the Saint, that he would ordain, that throughout the universal Church his feast and office should be celebrated as a double, as had been the case with other holy founders. Mariano had always shown great repugnance to this, and one day when the discussion of the matter was renewed, and some persons were more than ever anxious to persuade him, "I have observed," said he,

“that in all things God has taken the honour of our Saint upon Himself, therefore, I, for my part, leave all to Him.” Wonderful to relate! a few days only had passed when the Sovereign Pontiff, moved by his own devotion to the Saint, without any preceding entreaty, ordained that for the future his feast should be celebrated as a double by the universal Church. This event led Mariano to glorify the Divine dispensations, and still more confirmed him in an idea which he had always maintained, and on which he had acted respecting the mode in which St. Philip desired to be venerated by his children; and as this idea seems full of extraordinary light, it deserves, I think, to be expressed in his own words, which he wrote to a father of the Congregation at Florence: “Let your Reverence,” says he, “be persuaded that one of the greatest consolations which I can receive, is the seeing and hearing the honour given to our holy Father; but it would greatly please me that we, the sons of St. Philip, should have a different manner of honouring him from the world. Let us honour him by the imitation of his virtues, and the world by exterior worship and public demonstrations, and I sincerely believe that our holy Father will be pleased with this our moderation in praising him, which we can scarcely do without some danger of self-complacency. In particular I can mention to your Reverence, that in the time of Pope Clement IX. I was many times urged to petition his Holiness for a double office of St. Philip, it being supposed that I

should have found every favourable disposition. I always refused to do so, to the distress of some of our people, when unexpectedly we heard that a 'Moto Proprio' of his Holiness had been promulgated, prescribing the office of the Saint, 'Sub ritu duplici,' and you may imagine my consolation. I went to thank the Pope in the name of the Congregation, when he told me that the modesty of our Congregation in abstaining from petitions, had obliged him to constitute himself promoter and solicitor. A short time since we received letters from the West Indies, from three Congregations of St. Philip, which are producing great fruit. A Congregation has been founded in Lisbon, of which I hear great praises, and thus devotion to our holy Father is daily propagated in distant countries, without our being able to imagine the means which God uses. I have perhaps scandalized the piety of your Reverence by the rusticity of my sentiments, and if so, I most willingly submit to your censure."

CHAPTER XII.

HE FOUNDS A HOSPICE FOR CONVERTED HERETICS
AT ROME, AND PROMOTES OTHER PIOUS WORKS.

Nor content with benefiting the Congregation and his neighbours by the exercises and ministries of the Institute, Mariano employed himself with equal zeal in promoting various works of piety, the chief of which was the erection of a

Hospice for heretics converted to the Catholic faith. This holy work had already been begun under Clement VIII., by the venerable servant of God Giovenale Ancina, of the Congregation of the Oratory, but was afterwards suspended and finally abandoned in consequence of that father's appointment to the bishopric of Saluzzo. But Divine Providence ordained that it should be renewed by another member of the same Congregation, Father Mariano, and perpetually established by him on a more solid foundation in this very city of Rome. The manner was as follows: William Leslie, a Scottish priest, who resided in Rome that he might promote the business of the missions, being an intimate friend of Mariano's, often recommended to him the ultramontane heretics, who came to Rome, and abjuring heresy were received into the bosom of the Church. As far as was in his power, he readily assisted them in all their necessities. But as the lodging them was the greatest difficulty, whilst by going into hired lodgings they were often subjected to dangers, scandal, and injuries, it was thought that it would be very useful to have a house devoted to the purpose of receiving them during the time in which it was necessary to instruct and catechise them, till they could find a suitable establishment and occupation. In consequence of this, when Duke Philip Cesarini one day sent fifty crowns to Mariano, to distribute in alms at his pleasure, the latter, inspired by God, and confiding in His assistance, employed

them in hiring a house near the Church of San Giovanni de' Fiorentini, and under the auspices of the Most Holy Mary, on the day of her glorious Assumption, August 15th, 1673, began to lodge four converted heretics there, the care of whom he entrusted to one of his penitents, named Francis Spentner, a native of Salsbourg, who lived in San Giovanni de' Fiorentini, that he might assist them and instruct them in the Catholic faith. As the number of applicants increased every day, it became necessary to take a larger house in the same vicinity, and again Divine Providence sent Mariano an alms proportioned to his necessity, though he never asked any, but, on the contrary, many times refused to accept what was offered him for that purpose, as particularly it happened in the case of a German merchant who was his penitent. This person being informed by one of his countrymen of the charity which Mariano exercised towards the converted heretics of his nation, immediately went to offer him the half of his income; but, as he had daughters to provide for, Mariano constantly refused the offering, telling him that the money should be used in the honourable establishment of his daughters. There was a long contention between them, the one being resolute in his desire to give, and the other equally determined to refuse the money; but, at last, Mariano conquered, and the good man was not less edified than confused by his generous detachment, at a time when the work was in the greatest

need of help. In the same manner, a pious maid-servant had saved sixty crowns from her labour, and brought them one day to Mariano, to be employed in this work, but as he refused to receive them, she entreated him with tears to accept them, and to console her he was obliged to take a part.

The Lord also provided zealous co-operators, as well priests as laymen, and the greater part his penitents, amongst whom were some distinguished gentlemen, who gave up themselves and their substance to the spiritual and temporal aid of these same converted heretics, under the care and direction of Mariano, who, that he might more firmly establish the work, framed some rules and constitutions to be observed by those engaged in it for their own direction, and for the good of the souls of others. They vied with each other in distinguishing themselves by works of charity to the poor converts. Some, when they became inmates of the Hospice, washed their feet, served them at meals, and read at table; others took upon themselves to lead them to the devotions of Rome, and to pious functions in the churches; some, who were better informed, instructed and catechised them in the truths of the Catholic faith, teaching them to recite the office of the most Blessed Virgin, and similar exercises of Christian piety; others had the care of providing them with necessary food and clothing; and others, when they were instructed and confirmed in the faith which they had embraced, found trades and employments for them according to

their condition, or in other ways provided them with a suitable establishment.

Neither were there wanting persons of the first rank who wished to share the merit of concurring in so holy a work, and amongst the rest Cardinal Chigi assigned a fixed alms of fifty crowns a month. The Duke Philip Cesarini, named above, also devoted large sums to this object at different times, and in process of time, Cardinal Nini left by will a bequest of 15000 crowns, whilst Cardinal Rasponi constituted the Hospice his sole heir.

The fame of the great charity practised in the Hospice was soon diffused throughout Rome, and even beyond it, and reached the ears of the then reigning Pontiff, Clement X. of holy memory, who on the approach of the holy year 1675, had himself thought of erecting a similar Hospice for the reception of converted heretics, who were wont to visit Rome in greater numbers on account of the Jubilee. To this end he had purchased a house in the neighbourhood of the Ripetta for 7000 crowns, and had already assigned to it an endowment of 10000 crowns; but being informed of what Mariano and his companions had done, and were still doing so successfully, he proposed to Mariano, through Monsignor Bernardino Rocci, his Maggior-domo, who afterwards became a Cardinal, to assume with his companions the management of the new Hospice, designed by himself, and thus by uniting the two houses to render the work more complete and ample. Mariano and the others

felt at first some difficulty in undertaking so heavy a charge, and the more so, as they doubted whether they should in future have that liberty which they thought necessary for the good discipline and regulation of the Hospice, as they would have to depend on the prelates and ministers of the palace, whom his Holiness had destined to be the superintendants of the pious house. But being assured by Monsignor Maggiordomo on the part of his Holiness, that it was his pleasure that the direction of the Hospice should, as at first, depend entirely on them, they accepted the offer, and on the 31st of July, 1674, the translation of the Hospice of Mariano to the above-mentioned house in the Ripetta, took place. Hence, in the following year it was again translated by apostolic authority to Santa Maria della Grazie at the Porta Angelica, to the house of hermits annexed to the Church, a place judged better and more suitable, as well from the accommodation of the Church itself, as for its neighbourhood to the apostolic palace. This translation took place in the year 1675, in virtue of a brief executed by the Supreme Pontiff on the 13th of March in the same year. In this brief his Holiness makes honourable mention of the charity of Mariano, the founder of the Hospice, and of that of some of his companions, and moreover asserts, that in less than two years they had received ninety-two persons, who having abjured heresy had been restored to the bosom of the Catholic Church.

The joy of Mariano was inexpressible in be-

holding the work which he had begun for the benefit of the converted heretics, so well established and confirmed by apostolic authority, and he offered continual thanks to God, who from such weak beginnings had raised so great an edifice, from whence resulted so much glory to God, so much honour to the Roman Church, and such great benefit to those poor wanderers, who, being enlightened by God, wished to abandon their errors and to return to the maternal bosom of holy Church. William Leslie above mentioned, has left behind him these remarks on the subject: "I shall never forget the great joy of this holy man (Mariano) at the advancement of this excellent design, which was almost the fulfilment of his first vocation, to employ himself in assisting the infidels. He seemed quite another person after this event, and I am persuaded that the joy of his holy soul contributed to preserve his life all that time, for before it seemed to be visibly failing." Whilst he lived Mariano never ceased by alms and counsel to lend every assistance to the good management and advancement of the Hospice, which was maintained in the same place, till, after his death, in the year 1685, it was transferred to a noble palace in the Strada di Borgo, Cardinal Girolamo Castaldi, of illustrious memory, having left a will to this effect, and in this house the same pious work continues to be performed to the great edification of the Catholic world.

Mariano also laboured to introduce into Rome

the Nuns of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin, instituted by the great St. Francis de Sales, and to found a monastery of that Order. The difficulties which crossed his design were both many and considerable, but by the help of God they were all surmounted by the exertions of Mariano and those of Father Colloredo of the same Congregation, who was afterwards Cardinal, and of whom mention is made elsewhere; and both had the happiness of seeing this Institute, so observant and so exemplary, introduced into Rome for the benefit of the public. It was also he who in the year 1675 induced the Superiors of the venerable Archconfraternity of the Most Holy Trinity of the Pilgrims, founded by St. Philip Neri, to institute a Congregation of twelve secular priests, well furnished with doctrine and exemplary in conduct, who should attend to the service of the Church annexed, and to the instruction of pilgrims who resorted there in great numbers from all parts of the Catholic world, as well as of the convalescents, to whom food and shelter are given in that house of piety. To this end, by the permission of the Superiors of the same Archconfraternity, he drew up the rules, in which he prescribed to the said priests the manner of conducting themselves in the community, and the exercises of Christian piety in which they ought to employ themselves for their own sanctification and the edification of others. These rules, after having been practised for many years with equal fruit, as well by these priests as by the pilgrims and convalescents to whom they chari-

tably administer consolation both for soul and body, were afterwards approved on the third of June, 1692, by Innocent XII. of holy memory, in his 25th Constitution, registered in volume 9, of the new Bullarium, page 251.

So also there having been already established in the Church of St. Pantaleon in the Rione de' Monti, an assemblage of priests and secular clerks, which had been originated by a priest of holy life, named Paul Motta, but without particular constitutions, and, therefore, in danger of shipwreck and ruin to the great injury of that district of the city of Rome, which was greatly in need of ecclesiastical labourers; Mariano happily became aware of this circumstance, and gave them constitutions framed with such spirituality and light of Christian prudence, that they were not only accepted by those priests, and observed by them with great profit to themselves and others, but after the death of the servant of God, they were thought worthy of praise and approval by the Venerable Innocent XI. of holy memory, in a Bull given November 15th, 1684, which may be seen in the new Bullarium, vol. 8, page 343. Lastly, Mariano, who saw with the eye of Christian compassion so many poor cripples and mendicants, who passed most miserable lives in wandering about the city, and that not merely in a temporal, but often much worse, in a spiritual sense, since they lived without the fear of God and with little care of their souls, proposed to the Venerable Innocent XI. of holy memory, who greatly esteemed him, and had made use of him in many

important affairs of the Pontificate, to erect a hospital destined to receive poor cripples of both sexes, and to furnish them with necessaries after the plan of that of Lyons and other European cities, Protestant as well as Catholic. The Pontiff listened to the proposal with his accustomed charity, and gave to Mariano the care of considering the means which would conduce to so commendable a work of mercy. He, therefore, procured from Paris, Lyons, and other places, the rules and constitutions which had been adopted in similar hospitals, sparing no pains, labour, or industry, in facilitating and hastening the execution of his designs. For this purpose, by various writings still preserved amongst the MSS. in the library of Vallicella, he clearly demonstrates the necessity and usefulness of such a hospital, studiously obviating or smoothing the difficulties which some persons urged against the design. He also shows how a convenient building might be found and a fund established for its maintenance, without burden to the public. By order of his Holiness many Congregations for the arrangement of this matter were held in the Chiesa Nuova, Mariano being present, as also Monsignor de Luca, then Auditor to the Pope, and afterwards Cardinal, with other legal gentlemen and cavaliers deputed for the purpose, and they would probably have come to the resolution to found the hospital, and by inclosing the cripples to clear the city of all these vagabonds and beggars, had not the death of Mariano frustrated the undertaking of which he was the great promoter

and solicitor. It was no more thought of, till Innocent XII. of ever-glorious and holy memory, began the work, amongst the other magnificent undertakings of his Pontificate, and it was completed by the great Pontiff, Clement XI. of holy memory, his successor, in the great hospital of St. Michael, in which poor decayed people are sheltered and fed ; though, perhaps, from the state of the city, which is too much exposed to the continual incursions of pilgrims and vagabonds of all nations, it has not been the means of clearing it of those disorderly mendicants, who not only infest the streets, but even the very churches of Rome.

BOOK II.

AN ACCOUNT OF HIS VIRTUES AND HIS DEATH.

CHAPTER I.

MARIANO'S FAITH.

IN the preceding book we have treated of the actions of the Venerable Servant of God, Mariano Sozzini, following the order of time as much as possible. In this second book, without observing any order of time, we shall speak particularly of his virtues, and, lastly, of his happy death.

We begin with that virtue which is the basis and foundation of every other, and, indeed, of Christian life itself, we mean faith. This virtue was so lively in Mariano, and so high in degree, that in him was verified that word of the Apostle, "*Iustus autem meus ex Fide vivit*—My just man lives by Faith." He regulated all his operations by the supernatural maxims of faith, by the light of which he contemplated all the prosperous and adverse occurrences of the world; and he was accustomed to say, that the true and proper denomination of things is that which faith teaches, often repeating, "*Nullum malum, nisi peccatum; nullum bonum nisi Deus*—Nothing evil but sin, nothing good but God." When, in

undertaking things which he knew to be for the service of God, it was suggested to him, that there might be opposition, he, guiding himself by the dictates of faith, never lost courage, but immediately replied, "It will be what God pleases, neither more nor less;" and, armed with this strong shield of faith, he surmounted every pusillanimous fear, adding, "Acts of lively faith courageously repeated, are most excellent and powerful weapons against hell." Knowing that faith is the special gift of God, he often implored it of the Lord with burning words, and especially with those of the Gospel, "Domine adauge Fidem—Lord, increase our faith." He also had recourse to the Apostle St. Paul, as to a man full of faith, beseeching him to obtain this grace for him: "*Ut ex fide vivens jam non mihi vivam sed ei qui pro me mortuus est*—That living by faith, I may no longer live to myself, but to Him who died for me." For the same reason he had a special devotion to St. Mary Magdalene, as to one whose faith was commended by our Redeemer, and to the holy martyrs also who had been deemed worthy to shed their blood, and to lay down their lives for the faith. He had hung up in his room prints of the various torments endured by the martyrs, and at the sight of these painful objects his heart was inflamed with an ardent desire to imitate them, and to shed his blood for the holy faith. For a long time he discoursed in the Church on the Acts of the martyrs with such spirituality, as plainly showed that he burned with the desire to partake

of their sufferings. We have spoken in another place of Mariano's desire to carry the Gospel to the infidels in India, and to diffuse the Catholic faith amongst heretics. Now it should be understood that this was not merely a passing wish, but such an intense and constant desire, that doubting whether it might not be a divine inspiration, he thought it right to communicate it to F. Federico Savorgnano, a very enlightened man, who was then confessor to the house. The latter at first advised him to despise it, and to make no account of it, as being incompatible with the state which he had chosen, adding that the angel of darkness often transforms himself into an angel of light, and under the pretext of greater though distant and uncertain good, seeks to divert the soul from certain and present profit, and by little and little to disgust it with its own vocation. But the more he tried to remove this thought from himself and to reject it, the more it fixed itself in his heart, especially in time of prayer; wherefore, he again conferred with F. Federico, who, having examined the circumstances, thought the matter worthy of serious reflection, and one day expressly said to him: "I would not have to render an account to God, for having prevented this good work, if He calls you to it; therefore, let us recommend ourselves to God, and pray over the matter; and as you are going to Carbognano, use the opportunity to ask light from God, that you may discern and know His holy Will."

Mariano left home to strengthen his health after a severe infirmity which he had suffered, and removed to Carbognano, a healthy place, where the Congregation possesses some property, with a small house for the use of the fathers who need retirement in the country. He availed himself of his solitude, not so much for the recovery of his health, as to be able more freely to apply his mind to the words by which it seemed to him that God had called him to this undertaking. Here, for the space of forty days, he did nothing but ask light from God, that he might know His will, offering ready and blind obedience. As the time for his return to Rome drew nigh, he was one morning imploring the grace of the Holy Ghost with this ardent desire and incessant sighs, and walking in the woods with the Epistles of St. Paul in his hand, which were his ordinary study and meditation, when he met with these words of the Apostle to the Romans, "*Quomodo prædicabunt, nisi mittantur*—How shall they preach unless they be sent?" and immediately a sudden interior light flashed upon him, under which, to his amazement, the ardent desire which he had hitherto felt, gave way, and he bethought himself that he must not address himself to the meditated enterprise of going and preaching the faith, and giving his blood and life for it, unless specially destined for that work by the Sovereign Pontiff. He experienced a profound calm in his soul, and, consequently, resolved to think of it no more, but to devote himself to

the perfecting himself in his vocation, and to the sacerdotal exercises of his own Institute. On his return, he communicated all that had passed to his confessor, who confirmed him in his determination, telling him that this was the Will of God, who sometimes permits these holy desires in souls for their profit, although He does not will their execution, that they may gain by the desire the merit of those good works which they cannot effect, just as though He did not will the building of the temple by the hands of David, the inspiration of the idea was His gift, and David had the merit of admitting and fostering the desire. But if the servant of God could not in the body go to preach the faith to infidel and heretical nations, his soul sought to promote it in various ways, and with the greatest zeal; the first effect of which was, the erection of the Hospice for converted heretics, of which we have spoken in the twelfth chapter of the first book. He also sought and earnestly embraced opportunities of co-operating as far as was in his power with the holy Missions to the heretics and infidels. The Bishops and religious missionaries who came to Rome to lay the results of their apostolic labours before the Holy See, and to receive fitting help for the benefit of their missions, found a zealous friend and protector in Mariano, who interested himself greatly in all their wants, and even more than he would have done in his own case. He assisted them by his counsels, and by his energetic good offices with the principal personages of the Ro-

man court. He relieved their temporal necessities by liberal alms; and when he could not himself help them, he procured them the assistance of able and trustworthy persons. When he met with any one whom he thought calculated for the apostolic ministry of the missions, he excited his spirit with all his power, and led him by good living and study to prepare himself for this high and faithful service; and when he thought him matured, he proposed him to the proper persons, to be employed in the missions, as he did in the case of a French clergyman, named Thomas Dautan, a penitent of his, to whom, before his departure for the Indian mission, he gave some written instructions, in order that he might employ himself successfully in that ministry; and in answer to a letter which the latter addressed to him when near the termination of his long voyage, he says, "I congratulate you on being so near the place of your vocation, where I hope that you will be much consoled by the noble opportunities which God will offer you of employing your labours and your life in the honour of His Divine Majesty, and the benefit of your neighbour. I certainly do feel a holy envy of you, but I shall rejoice that you can suffer and do what I myself am unworthy to undergo. Commend me to God, that in my old age I may at last begin to love and serve Him, and to live and die for Him alone."

As the heart of the servant of God glowed with zeal for the propagation of the faith, so he ex-

cited the same zeal in his penitents, teaching them among other things, to offer daily and fervent prayers to God for this end. And here I may be allowed to relate what happened in the case of a penitent of Mariano's, named Flaminia Papi, who, as we have said elsewhere, was guided by him into a sublime degree of perfection in the conjugal state. I will give the circumstance in the words used by Mariano himself when writing her Life: "Once whilst she was at confession, a good eastern Bishop came to salute me, and as soon as he was gone she asked me who that foreigner was; I replied that he was a poor Bishop recommended to me by a minister of the Propaganda, and I could not help adding with a sigh, 'This poor Bishop tells me that he shall return to his Church without having even an altar-cloth, nor so much as a chasuble to vest himself in, and I know this to be the simple truth, since it has been confirmed to me by persons worthy of credit.' The good lady begged that I would have the goodness to let her know when the Bishop was to leave Rome, and when she came to confession frequently asked when he would go. After some weeks she unexpectedly sent to my apartment a large basket, containing a complete and abundant service for the altar, including altar-cloths, vestments of every colour, frontal, chalice, and paten, cross, thurible, and a sacred picture for the altar, in short, an abundance of every requisite. The good Bishop came to take leave of me, when I led him to my room, and opening the basket, showed

him Signora Flaminia's gift, saying, 'A married gentlewoman and the mother of many children, who is my penitent, begs you to accept this little gift.' The astonished Bishop raised his eyes to heaven, shed tears of devotion, gave thanks to the unexpected Providence of God, and sent a thousand benedictions on that holy soul, saying, 'Non inveni tantam fidem in Israel—I have not found such faith in Israel;' as it seemed to him that he had found more compassion in this married secular than in ecclesiastics, who seemed more obliged to such works." So far Father Mariano. Lastly, the favourite and most frequent theme of Mariano's discourses was the faith, and all that concerned it, together with the means of extending it throughout the world; so that William Leslie, the Scottish priest mentioned above, who laboured indefatigably in Rome in the promotion of the sacred missions, deposes of him, "O how many conversations we had on this subject, and how many times did he excite and urge me to speak to him of it, and to give him all the information in my power respecting the state of the Catholic religion amongst the infidels, so that I was often ashamed to appear before him, since he left every one or sent them away that he might listen to me; and I saw that a most intense ardour was kindled in his breast, which was ever visible in his face when he heard my narrative." "O, my God," adds the same Leslie, "what grief it gave him when any opening was lost for the introduction of the faith in places where it had never penetrated, or where,

if it had penetrated, it had died away; and this was one of his greatest afflictions, his true sorrow, and the only bitterness of his soul, and he often repeated, '*Messis quidem multa, operarii autem pauci*—The harvest indeed is plenteous, but the labourers few;' and talking to me, he would add, '*Rogate Dominum messis*—Beseech the Lord of the harvest,' " &c.

A distinguished foreign ecclesiastic bears the following testimony to his ardent zeal for the propagation of our holy faith: "I often beheld in that Apostolic man an ardent desire for the restoration of canonical discipline, and the revival of the ecclesiastical spirit, &c. He grieved, and with frequent sighs lamented, that in Rome there was no seminary of ecclesiastics, in which a large body of evangelical labourers might be trained and prepared—some to fill the prelacy, and other dignities and apostolical offices—others to convey and spread the words of salvation in all parts of the world, and to kindle the whole world with that divine flame which Christ brought on earth, and the strength of which the Holy Ghost confers on those whom He calls to such apostolical works, if they prepare themselves to receive it," &c.

CHAPTER II.

HIS HOPE.

THE most important and powerful weapons belonging to the Christian and religious life, said Mariano, are hope and confidence in God; and

in proportion to this light and to his esteem of this virtue, he sought during the whole of his life to make greater progress in it. Reflecting on his state, which being that of a secular priest did not oblige him to the usual three vows of religion, he with pious ingenuity prescribed to himself, that his three religious vows should be the three theological virtues, Faith, Hope, and Charity; and as the breach of any of the religious vows would be an enormous sacrilege, so failure in the exercise of these virtues he regarded in himself as a most grievous transgression.

He greatly delighted in looking up to heaven, and giving vent to his spirit he would transport himself to some high open place, and whilst standing there in the contemplation of heaven, would refresh himself with the lively hope of having it in his possession; and he spoke of this with a confidence so humble and at the same time so generous, that Cardinal Alderano Cybo, who often spoke most familiarly with the servant of God, said, with wonder and edification, "This is a language which few can use." Whilst staying at Frascati, to recruit himself after a grievous illness, a few months before his death, being unable to leave the house in consequence of a disease in his leg, he spent much of his time in a little balcony, from whence, being able to see the country as well as the sky, he was greatly comforted in his spirit, and said to his companion, "O what a lovely prospect! how it pleases me, because I seem to behold in it a vestige of the immense greatness of God, and to begin to

taste here a sample of what is there ; and though it be distant, O how it consoles me !”

Being most devoted to the holy Angels, and seeking to learn from theologians and the holy Fathers all that he could respecting them, he gave this reason for doing so, which was suggested by his hope, “They must be our companions for ever in Paradise ; and we, therefore, must seek to know as much as we can concerning them whilst we remain here.” For this reason he honoured them with an especial veneration, and with the fervent and continual sighs of one enamoured of celestial glory, asked of them to obtain for himself and others, “*Ut nihil jam in hoc mundo cupiamus, et solo æternitatis amore pascamur*—That we may no longer desire anything in this world, and feed on the love of eternity alone.”

He said that it is of faith that we can do nothing without God, whilst we can perform all things by His Divine favour ; so it was also true, that in proportion to our hope and confidence in God, we shall obtain and enjoy His favour and assistance ; and considering the mischief which comes upon a soul when its hope grows languid, “If,” said he, “we give way to that great delusion of letting ourselves grow weak in hope and confidence in God, it must follow too clearly, that we shall be weak in our experience of the favour and assistance of God, and, consequently, that we shall work imperfectly, wearily, and with much labour, and, in short, with the danger of not persevering ; whereas hope increases merit, adds strength and vigour in the most difficult

works, and carries perseverance with it." He desired that all should often ask of God a generous and filial confidence in Him, and that, under the most adverse circumstances, we should cast ourselves into the arms of God, as a child into the arms of his mother, and that, after the example of Abraham, they should hope against hope. To a religious, who in a letter communicated to him the distresses of his soul, which had fallen into extreme diffidence, he replied, "You should remember how St. Thomas and all theologians, asking in what Christian hope is founded, reply, that it is founded in three things, the wisdom, power, and goodness of God; because we know that God knows us, and has the power and will to save us. And passing to another question, whether we can suppose a case of a person hoping in God, and being disappointed in his hopes, they reply that this is impossible, because it is directly repugnant to the perfection of those Divine attributes, wisdom, power, and goodness, as though He either knew not how to save those who trust in Him, or were unable or unwilling to do so. Let us add, that it is also repugnant to His attribute of truth, as He has so many times promised in Scripture, that He will save those who hope in Him. Neither must you tell me, that were this the case no one would be damned, because the wisdom, power, goodness, and veracity of God are always the same. It is true that many Christians are damned, and that for two reasons, either that they do not hope, or that they pre-

sume. There can be no doubt that the will to commit grievous sins obstinately and impenitently, is incompatible with hope, and degenerates into presumption ; wherefore this would not be to hope virtuously, but to presume rashly." The exercise of hope had become so familiar to Mariano by the frequent acts which he made, that he found great facility and consolation in them, and he was chiefly aided by some considerations he used to make, which are as follows :

"1. When I compare the Divine Mercy with my necessities, I find the Divine Mercy to be beyond comparison greater than my miseries.

2. The Passion of my Saviour infinitely outweighs my sins, and it is of faith that it is mine.

3. The Lord has vouchsafed to promise me salvation in many places of Scripture, and this His simple word ought to suffice, nor can I doubt without doing Him great wrong.

4. God expressly commands me to hope in Him. This precept is enough to make me hope inviolably in Him, and though a hundred million of reasons may oppose this, I wish always to live and die in hope, for this reason only, that God commands me to do so. And I will always declare without fear of delusion, that I am mad, that my brain is mad, and that all the world is mad, if they would tempt me to the contrary.

5. And, lastly, I will declare that it is certain that I give great glory to God by my hope, since I honour His wisdom, His power, and His good-

ness, and also greatly honour His Passion, whilst I profess and hope that a single drop of His most precious Blood could save a soul most worthy of hell for a thousand causes." With these well-established grounds of hope deeply rooted in his heart by prayer and meditation, Mariano at the close of his life felt himself so strengthened in this virtue, that as will be seen when we come to speak of his happy death, he invited all his visitors to Paradise, and that as freely as though it were to some garden, and he already possessed a certain earnest of his salvation. The hope of Mariano shone wonderfully in all the adversities which befel him, for he always appeared unchangeable, placing his whole trust in God, and always expecting the needful aid from Him. In the affairs of the Congregation, having been, as has been said, Superior for the space of fifteen successive years, whenever there was an apprehension of penury or trouble, his most certain resource was hope and confidence in God, and he was wont to say, "Let us be good and trust in God, and nothing will be wanting to us." Lastly, in the various employments and offices to which he was called either by charity or obedience, he had an entire distrust of himself, his strength, and his talents, but cast himself wholly on God, and entirely hoped in Him; and he was accustomed to remark, that as it was good to foresee the difficulties and temptations we might encounter, it was equally necessary to entertain a great hope and a generous confidence in God, for surmounting them and coming off victorious,

holding it as a certain truth, that in all that God requires of us His grace will be always greater than our weakness, and His mercy larger than our miseries.

CHAPTER III.

HIS CHARITY TOWARDS GOD.

THE love of God was the only object to which all the life and actions of Mariano tended, he having in all things, great, small, or indifferent, prescribed this inviolable and universal law to himself, to please God alone, and to conform himself to the Divine Will. "*Universa lex mea et Prophetæ,*" said he, "*Amor Dei, amor proximi, voluntas Dei.* In hujus observantia impondium sit, atque integrum holocaustum totius vitæ meæ—My whole law and prophets shall be the love of God, love of my neighbour, and the Will of God. In the observance of this be all my efforts spent, and the entire holocaust of my whole life." He had with particular study collected sentences from the Holy Scriptures and the Fathers in praise of charity, and those which treated of the best means of nourishing and increasing it. These, compiled into a little book, served often to refresh his memory and excite his heart to the love of God. His thoughts were constantly on God, and his heart so recollected and raised up to Him, that he often seemed to be rapt, as it were, in ecstasy, and like one out of his

senses ; whence it happened, that walking through Rome, he knew not where he was, unless his companion told him, as, amongst other instances, it occurred one day when walking with Father Tommaso Sagrati, he was so much absorbed, that Father Tommaso was obliged to show him the waters of the Tiber, to convince him that they were on the Ponte Sant Angelo. In the latter years of his life, this interior communication of love and union of spirit with his Heavenly Lover had become so familiar to him, that Father Luca Mellini says of him, "It seemed to me that he went about like one beside himself ; he conversed, but it was as though he conversed not ; he spoke and discoursed, but as though he spoke and discoursed not ; and it appeared as though he were more there than here, and he was not moved by anything, and I observed that he spoke and discoursed as though he were in another country, well knowing his abstraction from terrestrial things."

His greatest consolation was to discourse, or hear others discourse, on the love of God. For the most part the subject-matter of his sermons was the love of God, of which he spoke with such spirituality and force, that his face became, as it were, transparent, displaying the fire which was contained in his heart. F. Carlo Maria de Macerata, his great friend, affirms of him, that in conversing with him familiarly, when the conversation turned on the love of God, he saw him to his great delight fall, as it were, into an ecstasy, and heard him express his sen-

timents on the infinite charity of God to man, and the ingratitude of man towards God, in words so appropriate and inflamed, that he could easily see how great was the fire that glowed in his breast; so that on leaving him he was always greatly affected and edified. He asked this divine love above all other blessings from the Divine Goodness, and in order to attain it, he composed some invocations in the form of a Litany, in which he humbly begged the gift of perfect charity from each of the Three Divine Persons, and then of the Holy Trinity in Unity. He then had recourse to the Most Holy Virgin, the Seraphim, his own holy Father St. Philip, &c. and to those other Saints, who whilst they lived on earth were the most inflamed by the love of God. For this purpose he frequently visited the most Divine Sacrament, for that being altogether a mystery of love, he found in His presence a marvellous increase of love in his soul. He desired that the love of God should be the director, counsellor, and principle of all his daily actions, of the Mass that he celebrated, of the Divine Office, and the other prayers which he recited, of what he did, and what he left undone, so that it was noted down by his own hand, "*Negotia vel abdicare, vel suscipere ex unico consilio divini amoris. Amor dominus; amor consiliarius*—To resign or undertake works at the instance of Divine love alone. Let love be the lord, and love the counsellor."

As one of the principal effects of the love of

God, when it is great, is the desire to suffer great things in the service of God; so the venerable man not only received with joy and exultation of spirit those crosses and tribulations with which it pleased the Lord in various ways to try His servant, as will be seen hereafter; but he also panted with desire to give his blood and life for the love of Christ; and, as the way of a bloody martyrdom was closed to him, he with holy ingenuity prescribed to himself another sort of unbloody martyrdom, to be inflicted on his heart by the hand of Love, as appears from the following sentiments: "Since thou art unworthy of martyrdom, choose at least Divine Love for thy Tyrant, and subject thyself courageously to all the tortures which it may lay on thee. Would it leave thee naked, take thy liberty from thee, deprive thee of every comfort, take away thine honour, or thy reason, torture thy inclinations and thy will; would it take from thee health, nay, life itself; leave thee neither time, nor hour which can be called thine own; should it take from thee all means of grace, and deny thee one drop of consolation; should it crucify thee by aridity, desolation, temptation, and weariness, and sometimes by exterior occupations, by secular business; would it have thee to be despised and trampled under the feet of every one; if God condemn thee to be the perpetual slave of His creatures, without leaving thee an hour of respite; learn to live in this noble martyrdom, and yield up thine heart and life in it. The martyrs have generally suffered

for the faith, thou must suffer for charity. They have suffered in defence of the Word of God; thou must suffer to please His Divine Heart, and to satisfy His love. Take courage, for thine may be the worthier martyrdom, since charity is greater than faith; and, besides, the martyrdom of love is more lingering, and involves no sin in any one. It proceeds from a nobler hand, is less apparent to the world, and often more profitable to our neighbour, since it is for his good that we are wont to suffer."

CHAPTER IV.

OF HIS CONFORMITY TO THE WILL OF GOD.

FROM that Divine Love which inflamed the heart of Mariano, there arose such a conformity of his will to the Will of God, that it was exactly that "*Idem velle et idem nolle*," "which," as says the angelical doctor, St. Thomas, "is the inseparable companion of true friendship." This conformity to the Will of God in all things, and especially in things contrary to his own taste and satisfaction, was the dearest and most favourite exercise of Mariano, in which he laboured most earnestly for himself and for those under his care; for he said, that in this consisted the compendium of Christian perfection.

In all his affairs he maintained a holy indifference, and was most careful that no undertaking of his should transgress this rule of the Divine Will

in the smallest degree, and that not only in essentials, but in time and the most minute circumstances. "Abhor," said he in a memorandum, "abhor as a pestilence, premeditation and the distribution of hours, and always live with a soul tranquil, free, and disengaged, with a resolution to do from hour to hour whatever God shall please. Take good care of this, for it is of the greatest importance, and know that in this thy teachers are St. Philip, Father Pietro Consolini, and thine own experience." He executed this with such fidelity, that with wondrous tranquillity he passed from one exercise to another without complaining, or caring when diverted from any work which he was performing, however good and holy it might be, suspecting anything in which his own will was concerned, however virtuous and reasonable. "Reservatio," he said, "*propriæ voluntatis in una tantum re etiam rationabili et sancta perdit hoc exercitium*," that is, of conformity to the Will of God; "*cujus fundamentum est omnimoda indifferentia, sine ulla prorsus exceptione*—Reservation of one's own will in one single thing, however reasonable, entirely destroys this exercise, the foundation of which is utter indifference, without any exception whatever." And he went so far as not to acknowledge virtue itself to be virtue, unless stamped with this noble mark of the will of God, adding, "*Exercitium virtutum periculosum nisi exercentur, quia Deus vult, et quatenus Deus vult*—The practice of virtues becomes dangerous, unless they be exercised, because God wills them, and as far as He wills."

Once, on the 12th of May, he wished to visit the Seven Churches, to solemnise by this work of piety the feast of the holy martyrs SS. Nereus and Achilleus, who are held in especial veneration by the Congregation. He went down to the house door to wait for the carriage at the hour appointed, for in consequence of his weak leg he could not make the visit on foot. But as the carriage did not come for many hours, he very tranquilly withdrew into the neighbouring Oratory to wait, and in the meanwhile to read a devout book, as he always carried one with him for that purpose. The carriage came at last, but so late that there was no longer time to make the intended visit to the Seven Churches, and he was obliged to content himself with going to that of the above-named holy martyrs, SS. Nereus and Achilleus. At this accident a father of the Congregation who was with him, said with some agitation, "It is wonderful! There almost always arises some impediment to a good action." "Rather," replied Mariano gaily, "we should rejoice when the Lord God breaks some design of ours; and not only when He breaks one, but two, three, ten, or more; and we should only be the more joyful when He successively breaks the head of all." We could give a long and almost daily catalogue of similar occurrences, as he was most careful not to admit the slightest attachment or affection to his own will into any of his actions, but in everything to depend on the Divine pleasure, and to live in unreserved conformity to the Will of God, in which, as he told a person in his confi-

dence, he placed the basis of his perfection and the continual exercise of his life ; consequently, he was wont to say, that in lying down to rest at night, he had two consolations, one when he was so weary that he could do no more, from having been labouring all the day in the service of God and his neighbour, according to his vocation, as he could call such days “*dies pleni—full days.*” His second consolation was, when he found that he had not done his own will throughout the day, God having occupied him in doing His Will by cutting off all time for doing his own. It was his maxim in this matter, that it is not enough simply to offer our works to God, but that it is necessary that the actions should be such as could be offered to God ; and he added, that it was a great delusion to suppose that we can make them good by simply offering them, for we must first see whether the action was really pleasing to God, both in itself and in its time and circumstances ; and it was, therefore, his habit, before undertaking any work whatever, to have recourse to God, by that ejaculatory prayer which was so familiar to him, “*Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?*” That he might obtain light to know the quality of the action, and also its relation to the Will of God as regarded time and circumstances, he was also in the habit of saying, “*Nullam rem licet optimum ipsiusque rei felicem exitum nec nimis velis nec magis, quam Deus velit—Desire nothing, however good, nor the happy success of a thing too much, nor more than God wills it.*” That he might never err in the

knowledge of the Divine Will, and distinguish the movements of the Spirit of God from those of nature and those of the Devil, "Thou must," said he to himself, "subject thyself to the judgment of thy Superior and spiritual Father. But know certainly, that if thou wilt walk in this royal way, than which there is none more secure or more sublime, thou must divest thyself in all things of thine own opinion, and thine own will, and in this contest alone consists the whole victory, for it is certain that if thou givest credit to thine own judgment, and walkest after the movements of thine own will, thou art guided by thyself, and not by God. Therefore, manfully reject whatever thy judgment may propose, or thy will persuade thee to do, neither do thou give heed to it, as being a suspicious and dangerous suggestion, and so check the activity of thy soul, that it may be simply passive, and depend upon the good pleasure and providence of God. Thou must, therefore, on thy part, content thyself with doing nothing, and be ready faithfully to execute that which God interiorly dictates to thee, and be very vigilant when a desire to do anything comes over thee, as to have some book or engage in some particular study, &c. Be not seduced by these allurements, which are afflictions and misery of spirit, but quietly and with a total renunciation of thine own will repose in the good pleasure of thy God, saying with St. Philip, 'Lord, if thou requirest nothing from me, make me to know it, and I will never move or do anything of myself.' And learn as a ne-

cessary consequence, if thou really art desiring to be led by the Will of God, thou must lay aside all solicitude or plans for the future, since these belong to one who guides himself by his own foresight, and not to him who desires to be guided by God."

The conformity of the servant of God to the Divine pleasure shone eminently in his illnesses, which, though long, frequent, and painful, he received with wonderful serenity of countenance and tranquillity of heart. To any one who asked how he did, he usually replied, "O, I am just as God pleases." He never asked to be healed; but with total indifference was wont to offer himself to his Lord, that He might do as He pleased with him, his health, and his life; and in the same way he would also beg the Fathers of the Congregation to make a similar prayer for him. In the same spirit, when replying to a Father of the Congregation in Florence, who interested himself much in asking his health from God, "I thank you heartily for your kind feelings respecting my illness, with regard to which I beg your Reverence to be so good as to offer me all and altogether on the altar to His Divine Majesty in the holy Sacrifice of the Mass. More than this I should not and cannot desire." Being one day exhorted by Father Carlo Maria Macerata, General of the Capuchin Fathers, who has been many times named, to offer his prayers to God that he might be delivered from his malady, he answered frankly, "That I will never do. I will not breathe a single sigh to that end. Let His

Divine Majesty do with me as He pleases." To his nephew, the Abate Sozzini, who with great anxiety sought every possible remedy for the disease in his leg, which threatened gangrene, he many times said, that he did not wish to be cured, since that wound which God had sent him, ought to be very dear to him; adding, "Things which come from above, should be very dear to us."

Mariano perfectly practised a similar conformity to the Divine Will in all the accidents and misfortunes which befel either himself or his illustrious family, which suffered various reverses and calamities, and especially when it pleased God to call his brother Nicholas, the head of the house, from time to eternity, by a premature death, exactly at the time when his Royal Highness of Tuscany had invited him to Florence, to be tutor to the Prince, his eldest son; he received this stroke, so severe in itself and in its circumstances, with an admirable peace and tranquillity of spirit, and wrote in these terms to his nephew, who had sent him the tidings: "We should bless God in all His dispensations, and cordially place His good pleasure before all our private interests. In the death of my brother, we shall derive sufficient consolation from the Christian virtues in which he has ever lived, and our consequent hope of his eternal salvation. Would that all we, who are affected by this loss, might draw some fruit from this visit of our Lord, by applying our souls to some serious amendment of our lives," &c., &c.

CHAPTER V.

HIS CHARITY TOWARDS HIS NEIGHBOUR.

CHARITY towards our neighbour is inseparable from charity towards God, being, as St. Gregory the Great observes, a branch of the same root, a rivulet from the same fountain. Mariano had the most tender charity for his neighbour, and from the time of his entrance into the Congregation, his life might be said to have been one continual exercise of fraternal charity. All that we have related in the preceding book in relation to his various employments, and especially his office of Confessor, Chapter 7th, would suffice to show the greatness of that fraternal charity which glowed in his breast; nevertheless, we must not omit to mention in this place, some things which remain to be told relative to this virtue. First, he had made it his rule to recognise Christ in his neighbour, "Because," said he, "we have all been conceived and generated together in the bosom of the Eternal Father, in the heart and bowels of Jesus Christ, in the fire and love of the Holy Ghost, and are all the children of God, members of Christ, temples of the Holy Ghost; to whom is granted one spirit, one inheritance, one and the same end, one table, one vocation; in short, we are all created in the image of God, all purchased with the most precious Blood of His only-begotten Son."

Acts of fraternal charity should, according to his teaching, be chiefly practised in judging well of our neighbour, in speaking well of him, in cordially seeking his advantage, in procuring for him with all our strength those treasures of love which does not regard man, but God; in gently bearing with his faults, accommodating ourselves to his will, and renouncing our own. As to what relates to judging well of our neighbour, Mariano especially studied to find virtues, even in those persons of whom he saw or heard actions little praiseworthy, that as far as was possible he might not diminish the opinion and esteem in which they were held. To a priest who one day mentioned some levities which had occurred in some religious persons, he gave this advice: "We should edify ourselves by everything," adding, that one of the principal consolations which we shall have at the point of death, will be the never having judged ill of our neighbour, according to the word of our Saviour, "Judge not, and ye shall not be judged." To a subject who was about to enter the Congregation he gave this solid instruction: "Heartily love all, judge well of all, speak well of all."

As to speaking of our neighbour, a thing so slippery, even for virtuous persons, he observed such care and delicacy, that no word was ever heard to issue from his lips, expressive either of contempt or aversion for any one, nor any word which could in the slightest degree offend charity. On the contrary, by word and deed he showed an entire esteem for all. He had a con-

stant and most fervent desire to do good to all, and to die, if need were, in the actual service of his neighbours. From morning to evening this was his occupation, to employ himself wholly in helping them in their spiritual or temporal wants, sparing neither labour, expense, nor health. He neither desired place nor time, not even an hour for himself, provided he became all things for all, that he might win them to Christ, for he considered that one of the chief consolations at the hour of death would be, the having been most kind, and profuse in every mercy. As we have spoken elsewhere of the charity of the servant of God in works of spiritual mercy, we shall here speak chiefly of his works of corporal charity for the temporal benefit of his neighbour, which, however, he always endeavoured to unite to that which is spiritual, as will be shown by the following instances amongst the many which we might adduce. He maintained at his own expense a great number of poor youths, that he might remove them from occasions of sin to which they were exposed; setting them to study, so that they made great progress in piety and letters; and some, entering religion, became excellent religious. He exercised the same charity to many poor girls, by taking them from dangerous houses and maintaining them for a long time in safe places, till they were either professed in various monasteries, or respectably married. For this purpose also he caused a lady, a penitent of his, to take a house at her own expense, and to her he, for

the necessary time, committed the care of preserving and providing for these poor creatures, who were in danger of losing their souls or their honour. Once, when he went into the country to Castel Gandolfo, for the recovery of his health, a poor man died, leaving two children of tender age, a boy and a girl. Mariano took charge of both, and causing them to come to Rome, he placed the boy in the College de' Letterati, and he subsequently took the religious habit under the Capuchin Fathers, and he placed the girl with a pious lady, who at her death left her a competent fortune. In the same college, de' Letterati, he also placed another youth named Peter, who appearing before him in rags, and half naked, his compassionate heart was so touched, that he caused him to be clothed, and supported him for many months, till he was admitted into that college. He was one day informed, that two poor foreign ladies were living near St. Peter's, destitute of all human help, and that one of them was a Huguenot. Mariano, moved with compassion, immediately sent a carriage with a confidential person to fetch them. He maintained them, and provided them with every necessary, causing the wretched Huguenot to be catechized; and she, having become a Catholic, entered, through his means, into the pious house of San Sisto, and after some months he sent the other at his own expense back to her own country. With an equally liberal charity he assisted a noble Frenchman, who, not having sufficient money for his support, was

supplied by Mariano with all necessaries during his stay in Rome, and on his departure gave him twenty-five crowns for his journey. He also assisted another poor Huguenot in soul and body; for, through his exertions she abjured heresy, and, having married a Catholic, received from him a suitable dowry; and after she was married, he gave her what was necessary that she might return with her husband to her own country. To a person of rank who had fallen into extreme poverty, by which he was strongly tempted to give up his three daughters to sin, as persons of distinction sought for their ruin, the charitable hand of Mariano was so liberally and opportunely extended, that he was wont to call him another holy Bishop Nicholas; nor did he ever cease to assist these girls, till they had chosen their state of life, and two of them had become religious. He sought to be informed, whether in the public prisons there were any persons whose families were destitute and in danger of losing their honour, and in these cases he used most earnestly and energetically to interest himself for their release, whilst in the meantime his alms relieved the necessities of the poor family, providing for the wants of their souls and bodies. To those who, being called into religion, were resolved to follow the invitations of the Holy Ghost, he administered such charity as to provide for all their wants, employing for that purpose many hundreds of crowns; and so great was the number of those whom he sent into various religious orders, that

there was hardly one of those observant of their rule amongst whom he had not many penitents. He was not content to spend all the money which he had for the benefit of the poor; his charity not seldom led him to deprive himself of his own clothes, that with them he might cover the poor little ones of Christ. Once, when he was travelling in the winter, meeting one who was half naked and suffering from the cold, he took off his own under-vest, more willing to suffer himself than to see others suffer. One day also, happening to meet a poor priest, who commended himself to the servant of God, and asked a pair of breeches, as he was suffering greatly from the cold of February, Mariano took him aside, and taking off his own, presented them to the priest, though the latter, admiring his singular charity, would not on any account accept them, notwithstanding all his entreaties. For the service of the poor, he kept up an understanding with a penitent of his, who was a tailor, and by means of him contrived to clothe with economy many poor persons who came in his way from time to time. He also employed persons who were charged to purchase cheap stockings, shoes, linen, and other necessities, that he might be able to supply without delay any number that might be required, to those mendicants who were sent to him by Divine Providence.

It was a maxim with him, that it is far better to provide the poor with clothes than with money, "For," said he, "money in the hand of a prudent alms-giver is worth much more

and goes much farther than in those of a poor man." Besides, he considered it, as it were, an especial service of charity to become their steward and provider. For this purpose he contrived to have the necessary provision sent from day to day to many poor families, and where this was out of his power, he begged and earnestly exhorted his penitents to supply the wants of the poor. So also for those who could work, he sought out opportunities of employment and work for them to do, that they might support their families by their own labour, and thus shun idleness and its attendant sins. Many times, in imitation of St. Philip, he himself carried necessities to the houses of the poor, either food or clothing, and said that he had an especial enjoyment in not only relieving these poor creatures in this way, but in becoming their servant and pastor for the love of Christ. In the distribution of alms, he had prescribed these rules for himself: "Look simply at the greatest poverty, the greatest calamity, and the greatest danger. Carefully preserve thyself from taste, inclination, and human respect; act judiciously, and endeavour to draw out some good for the souls of the poor. And, as far as thou canst, take care that neither praise nor advantage follow thee." The Lord having been pleased to visit the city of Rome with the scourge of pestilence in the year 1656, under the Pontificate of Alexander VII. of holy memory, it appeared to Mariano a happy opportunity of sacrificing himself for the service of

the plague stricken. But as he could not do this independently of the Superior of the Congregation, who was then the Venerable Padre Pier Francesco Scarampi, (who, as will be said elsewhere, died at this time the victim of charity in the service of the public Lazaretto,) he made a free and entire offer of himself to the Venerable Padre Scarampi, with these words written in his own hand: "I, Mariano Sozzini, an unworthy Priest of the Congregation of the Oratory, freely lay down my life and person at the feet of my Father Padre Pier Francesco Scarampi, that he may at his pleasure unreservedly and without limitation offer it to the Vicar of Christ, Pope Alexander VII." But though God accepted the good-will of His servant, He willed that his offer should not be accepted by the Superiors.

We have said elsewhere how great were the exertions of Mariano in preserving mutual charity and cordial union amongst the members of the Congregation, especially during the time when he was their Superior, so that we may, without exaggeration, affirm, that this object was as the apple of his eye, since he preferred it above all things, and was willing to suffer all things, so that this might remain inviolate. Nevertheless, that his sentiments on this point may be more clearly shown, we may be allowed, in conclusion to this chapter, to mention what he wrote to a father of an Oratory in the Ecclesiastical States, who, under the pretence of zeal and greater good, had been so far carried away as almost to

break the fair bond of charity, which is the only tie that binds the members of the Congregation: "Father, your Reverence may believe that I heartily pity you, and that I value your reasoning at its true worth; but I will say to your Reverence, what I am in the habit of saying to my penitents capable of perfection, and also to the fathers, I tell them that they must never say, 'I am in the right,' but simply say what humility and charity require in the matter; since, if we begin to discuss who is in the right, virtue will doubtless be the loser. It appears to me to be an excellent exchange to lose an interest, and acquire a degree of virtue and merit. He who yields when he is in the wrong, has little merit; but he who yields when he is in the right, has great merit. You may, perhaps, say in reply, that you are not zealous for yourself but for the public good. Still, it is true, that that point matters little to the public, but that it is of great importance to maintain a holy fraternal charity, which alone changes communities into Paradises, whereas the breach of it changes them into hell. That 'I am right,' is what, in my opinion, ruins many religious house. I do not say that we should not desire and endeavour to remedy disorders, but that we should believe the greatest of disorders to be the loss of fraternal cordiality and charity. I would have a remedy sought for, but with tranquillity of heart, and that we should seek it as much as God pleases, and when He pleases. For when we seek it out of the limits of God's pure Will, we really seek ourselves

and our own satisfaction under the colour of truth. I commend your Reverence for endeavouring to find a remedy to the disorders which you point out, which are really such, in my opinion; but seek it first by prayer; secondly, by modestly pointing them out to those whom they concern; and, thirdly, by asking the opinion of those who have a good and virtuous experience; and we may then believe that if these disorders cannot be remedied without prejudice to charity, it is a sign that God will permit them for our cross and mortification." In short, when writing to a Religious, who asked him for some spiritual instruction, he, above all things, recommended to him fraternal charity, in the following glowing terms, whence every one may see how deeply this charity was rooted in his heart, and how he observed it in practice: "*Super omnia autem hæc charitatem habete, quod est vinculum perfectionis*—But above all these things have charity, which is the bond of perfection." Charity being the greatest of all virtues, it consequently merits that we should watch and labour to acquire and to preserve it above any other virtue. We must resolve always to desire to have a good heart, full of charity and gentleness towards all, and especially towards our brothers; thinking well of all, speaking well of all, wishing well to all, excusing all, heartily desiring and promoting the good of all, laying it down as an inviolable rule for ourselves, always to do good, at least by prayer, to those who do us any injury. Charity teaches us to guard against certain excitements of zeal which, under

colour of justice and the public good, embitter our hearts against our neighbour. It often happens that spiritual persons impute to zeal what is but a movement of passion. Charity teaches us to divide our love amongst all, according to the order of charity, without private partiality for any. It teaches us that in cases of divisions and reasonings, the servant of God should maintain a dispassionate heart, equally charitable and gentle towards all. Live always in readiness to submit to whatever may greatly prejudice your interest, honour, &c., rather than suffer the slightest loss of charity; and remember that with the good and virtuous, it is easy to preserve love; but that when we meet with malignity, ingratitude, perfidy, calumny, and persecution in our neighbours, then charity arrives at its perfection, and is the proper virtue of Saints.

CHAPTER VI.

OF THE RELIGION AND DEVOTION OF MARIANO.

AFTER Mariano had been called by the Lord to the ecclesiastical service in the Congregation of the Oratory, having, as is elsewhere remarked, bid a perpetual farewell to the vanity of the world and secular engagements, he employed all his powers and the most zealous application to the worthy performance of the religious works belonging to his state. Having become a priest through obedience, he conceived so high an esteem for this sub-

lime state, that after many years he thought himself unworthy of it; so that writing to a Father of the Congregation of Spoleti, he said, "I confess to your Reverence that my many years of priesthood make me tremble before God; and could I live my time over again, I assure you that I should expect a far more rigorous obedience than that which was given me, before I could be induced to enter a state so unsuitable to me. O pray to God for me, that I may begin to be what I ought to be," &c. That he might the more fully invest himself with the priestly spirit and become ever more perfect in it, he seriously applied himself to the study of those books which treat of such matters, and often conversed with spiritual persons to receive instructions, as to the manner of sanctifying himself in his state. He performed the ecclesiastical functions in so spiritual a manner, and with such dignified and devout attention, as to delight the eyes and hearts of all who beheld him. He was most exact in the punctual observance of the sacred rubrics, and, therefore, often read them over, and was in the habit of exhorting young priests to do the same, and especially often to read the rubrics "*de defectibus Missæ*," that they might not fall into any one of them.

As far as his numerous occupations allowed, he was accustomed to serve Mass with great delight, and he even endeavoured to do so in the latter years of his life, though afflicted by a wound in his leg. He every day celebrated the holy Sacrifice, and he did this with such com-

punction and vehemence of spirit, that manifest marks of his emotion appeared in his face, and tears flowed abundantly from his eyes, especially in the sacred time of the Passion.

He was most devout to the Passion of the Redeemer, and before or after Mass, according as he had time, he usually made some devout consideration on it, and when the rubric allowed it, he greatly rejoiced to celebrate the Mass of the Passion on Fridays. After celebrating Mass, he loved to occupy himself with his Lord for a long space of time in fervent colloquies and affections, unless obedience called him elsewhere. So he often visited the most august Sacrament, and prolonged his stay in these visits, in regard to which he was wont to say, that as the great heat of summer is derived from two causes, which are, the long stay of the sun in our hemisphere, and the frequent percussion of his rays, so also it is necessary to abide long in the presence of Jesus in this Sacrament, the true Sun of justice, and to receive the frequent reverberations of His heavenly fire, that we may be inflamed with His holy love. After the Sacrifice of the Mass, he considered the daily recitation of the Divine Office as amongst the principal religious actions belonging to his state, because by this ecclesiastics act as the public ministers of the Church, and the delegates of the Christian people in praising God and adoring His mercies. He wished, therefore, that the best and most suitable time should be chosen for this duty, that it might be performed without hurry and with devout attention. To en-

joy the sweetness of sacred psalmody, he wished that use should be made of some holy expositor of the Psalter, who should unite piety and devotion with learning, and he greatly valued Titelmanno and the venerable Cardinal Bellarmine.

Before saying Office he invoked the Holy Ghost by the hymn *Veni Creator Spiritus*, which he repeated at the commencement of each canonical hour. So great was the devotion and spiritual sweetness that he experienced in saying Office, that he seemed like one out of his senses and rapt into God, and he also communicated devotion to those who recited it with him, as is attested by Signor Sansenotti of Turin, a noble ecclesiastic and an excellent man. "Many times," says he, "I have been invited by this venerable father to say the Divine Office with him, which I regarded as a singular favour; and I have recollected, that though I generally suffered great distractions in reciting it, I was entirely free from them when reciting it with him, as though I were reciting it in company with the angels; and this was not extraordinary, for I considered him as an angel incarnate in purity and sanctity of manners. Even when ill, he would with great satisfaction pay this tribute of praise to God, if he were not expressly forbidden by the physician; in which case, in imitation of St. Philip, he tried to hear it recited by some priest, being always attentive and wonderfully recollected.

Beside this, he always regarded prayer as the principal obligation of his Institute, which

its holy Founder would have called the Oratory, to remind his children that the exercise of prayer was one they should have at heart above all others. Mariano had fixed hours for prayer, and when he foresaw that he should be hindered by exterior works of charity, he would steal the time from sleep and use the hours of night. He every year devoted some days to greater retirement, that in them he might give himself up with greater fervour to prayer and meditation on the things of God.

We have noticed in many places how in all his offices and ministries he had recourse to prayer, in order that he might perform them effectively; but we may now add, that every resolution that he was obliged to take was always preceded by prayer, and that in the off-hand answers which he gave to questions proposed to him it was remarked, that he first raised his mind to God, asking the Father of lights to give him grace to understand the Divine Will, and by this to regulate the answers he gave and the sentiments he uttered. He always endeavoured to walk in the presence of God, and to put in practice that maxim of the Gospel, "*Oportet semper orare et non deficere*—We ought always to pray, and not to faint." To this end he frequently used ejaculatory aspirations and prayers, the use of which he also recommended to others, esteeming above all those which God puts into the heart without study or private choice. But he said, that to deserve them and to receive from God the

gift of walking in His presence, we must be humble and detached from our own ease, shunning too much loquacity, and extreme care and anxiety even about good things.

He entertained a most profound and religious respect for the words of the Sacred Scriptures, with which he had acquired a happy familiarity by study and constant meditation. The New Testament, and especially the Epistles of St. Paul, were his delight; he often meditated on them, and that he might have them always ready, he carried them with him in a little pocket volume as his inseparable and most beloved companion.

He also earnestly recommended the members of the Congregation to make themselves well-acquainted with the Sacred Scriptures; and when he was prefect of the Novices, he of his own accord took upon himself the care of calling them every day to his room, and having first prepared himself by consulting some learned commentator, he instructed them with admirable clearness, that they might understand the letter, and be penetrated with the spirit of the Scriptures. He was most devoted to the Mother of God, having with his mother's milk imbibed a tender and special devotion for her, which with his increasing years continually increased, and reached its climax when he became an inhabitant of her house, and was admitted amongst her children in the Congregation of the Oratory, which recognizes in the Blessed Virgin the Mother, Protectress, and Foundress of the Institute, as

St. Philip was wont to style her. Recollecting the name assigned to him in his baptism, his country, which glories in calling herself the city of the Virgin, and the Congregation to which he had been united, he with great affection ascribed all to Mary, "Country, name, and family," as he himself expressed it. From this he was led to excite himself in a special manner to this devotion, and to the worship and veneration of this great Queen. He had her ever in his heart, and frequently on his lips; he often breathed out fervent ejaculations to her, and he had recourse to her with great confidence in all his necessities, and in all that occurred either to himself or others. He always wore on his breast a picture of the Blessed Virgin, copied from that which is over the high altar in the church, and this he called "his jewel." He seemed unable to refuse anything to those who asked in the name and for the love of Mary: he frequently visited the churches dedicated to her honour, and celebrated her festivals with especial devotion and preparation. He tried to instil the same devotion to the great Mother of God into others. Devotion to the Blessed Virgin was the frequent theme of his sermons, and for some time he was in the habit of relating some approved miracle performed by her in favour of her devoted children. When Superior he earnestly endeavoured to promote the worship and veneration of the Virgin in the Congregation, as we have already shown. He also warmly laboured to excite it in his penitents and spiritual children,

affectionately recommending them to the protection of the Blessed Virgin. And as he had often derived great advantage in the direction of souls from this devotion, he wrote amongst other things this advice to a confessor who had asked him for instructions: "Above all things, commend your spiritual children with much faith to the care of the Virgin." He venerated with devout affection the holy Apostles, especially SS. Peter and Paul, and such was his confidence in them, that in every business, or whenever he required help, he would go to their sacred tomb in the Vatican, and there pray for a long time, and in most instances he left the tomb assured of obtaining the implored grace. Many knew this in cases of grievous sickness; for when Mariano presented his prayers for them before this sacred treasure, they, to their astonishment, felt themselves restored to their former health. He had also special devotion to the holy Angels, to the great Precursor, St. John the Baptist, to St. Mary Magdalene, St. Catherine of Siena, whose tomb he often visited in the chapel dedicated to her in the Minerva, to St. Gregory the Great, the holy martyrs Papias and Maurus, the holy martyrs Nereus, Achilleus, and Domitilla, protectors of the Congregation, and, in one word, to all the Saints in Paradise. He constantly read their Lives, and studiously endeavoured to follow their footsteps and imitate their virtues. Above all, he cherished a most tender and filial devotion towards our holy Father. The altar dedicated

to his honour, and the inner chapel were the asylums to which Mariano ran in all necessities, spiritual and temporal, whether his own or those of others. Here he spent much time, and here, through the intercession of the Saint, his soul was filled with devout affections ; here, in short, he in prayer obtained light for guiding himself and those committed to his care in the path of Christian perfection. He had the Saint's Life always in his hands, and that he might more fully learn his actions and virtues, he wished to see again the processes made for his canonization. For the same purpose he noted down all he had heard of St. Philip from Father Pietro Consolini, and willingly conversed with Brother Egidio Calvelli, who had been a disciple of the Saint, endeavouring with all his power to copy his virtues, and thus to be, not only in name, but in very deed, a true son and disciple of St. Philip.

CHAPTER VII.

THE PRUDENCE OF MARIANO.

MARIANO was endowed with a rare and especial Christian prudence, for which he was generally esteemed and sought as a counsellor by every class of persons. He was employed in various ministeries of the Congregation, and especially as prefect of the *Giovani* and as Superior, in all of which he succeeded so well, and gave such

satisfaction, that he was confirmed in the first office for ten, and in the latter for fifteen successive years, and would have continued to be so to the end of his days, if the Congregation had not been pleased to relieve him of his office about three years before his death, in consequence of his reiterated entreaties, and the serious illnesses which had attacked him, as has been related in the first book. He knew how to temper his zeal for the observance of the Institute with such sweetness and discretion, that he could exact what he pleased from his children without disgusting any one. If sometimes he was obliged to use rigour, and to give some correction, he first commended the matter to God and the holy Father, and guided himself with such prudence, that even the persons corrected acknowledged their fault, submitted to his will, and amended their conduct. He desired and laboured to obtain perfection in all, but in practice was contented with mediocrity, according to the disposition of each one. He kept in mind that saying of St. Philip, that it is a most difficult thing to govern subjects entirely free, as are those of the Congregation, and that it therefore requires great prudence in him who governs, and an extraordinary serenity, by which he must keep himself far removed from all asperity, often using dissimulation, and by a manner at once firm and gentle, gradually draw them where he will, with equal benefit to themselves and to the Congregation. He was very vigilant, lest under the pretext of good, or some

temporal advantage, a worldly spirit and false human prudence should be introduced into the Congregation, for these are the ruin of religious communities, and of ecclesiastical brotherhoods. On this subject he wrote as follows to the Superior of an Infant Congregation at a distance from Rome, and the letter is worthy of his enlightened Christian prudence: "I greatly rejoice at the good progress of your Congregation, and am much pleased that the desire of increasing it does not induce you to shut your eyes against ecclesiastical discipline, for, in my opinion, it not unfrequently happens, that either to increase our numbers, to conciliate the multitude, or to promote some interest, we relax in discipline, and make improper concessions, subjecting ourselves to the vanity and caprice of seculars, who consequently hold us in just contempt. Priests who are far from being exemplary, (and they are many,) bring discredit on our state; whilst, on the contrary, seculars are constrained to venerate those priests who disapprove of their vanities and worldly maxims," &c.

He had from God an especial gift and light in guiding souls, and leading them on to Christian perfection, by paths the most suited to their necessities, employing those remedies and using those means which were best calculated to benefit his penitents. He knew how to insinuate himself with admirable dexterity into the souls of others, and almost to master their will, that he might win them to Christ; whence, Monsignor Strozzi, Bishop of Arezzo, who has been mentioned else-

where, and who had been for many years his penitent in Rome, says of him, "In Father Mariano I admired that saintly prudence which enabled him to practise the virtues in so eminent a degree, without omitting to render the greatest service to his neighbour, and to give the best practical directions to every one, according to his capacity, in the most judicious and impressive manner." But, to avoid prolixity on this head, I refer to what has been said in the seventh chapter of the first book.

Though this most humble servant of God sedulously endeavoured to absent himself from court, and to avoid intercourse with the great, he was, nevertheless, in many instances, obliged to yield to the authority of the Pope, the Cardinals, and other distinguished personages, who desired to hear his opinion on affairs of moment, and some even constrained him to give them full instructions in writing, for their better conduct in the offices entrusted to them. Innocent XI., of holy memory, so highly esteemed the prudence of Mariano, that he often required his counsel in the most important negotiations, so that it was the general opinion in Rome, that he designed to make him a Cardinal, that he might avail himself of his labours and counsels in the government of holy Church; and this opinion was not unfounded, though the Pope could not execute his designs, Mariano having passed from this life before the promotion. Whilst the Holy See was vacant through the death of Clement X., of holy memory, at the entreaty of a great Cardinal,

Mariano was obliged to set down in writing an instruction for the future Pontiff, as to the manner of conducting himself in his Pontificate, so as to remedy the disorders then prevalent in Rome, and with sanctity to discharge the duties of that high dignity to which belongs the supreme direction of matters spiritual, ecclesiastical, and temporal. This instruction was received with universal praise and approbation, and, indeed, from the copies preserved in the library of Vallicella, and in the hands of many private persons, we may easily perceive, that though hastily dictated by the servant of God, to satisfy the desire of the person who called for it, it yet displays his enlarged and enlightened prudence, and also the Christian liberty and modesty with which he pointed out the then-existing abuses, and proposed the best and most effective means for their removal, so that a great ecclesiastic exclaimed, reading the document, "Were the instruction presented by that excellent man to the Sacred College of Cardinals, assembled in conclave, put into execution, the curse of heresy would be removed; schismatics severed from the Church, would be deprived of their excuses and pretexts; the bond which unites the Christian kingdoms to the holy Roman Church, would be drawn closer; murmurs would be suppressed; all ecclesiastical orders would flourish, chiefly the clergy; whilst, in the shortest and most effective way, infidels would be brought to the true knowledge and worship of God. And from the depth of my heart, I pray and beseech the Supreme God

that He may infuse this spirit, these counsels, and these purposes into the heart of him whom He has chosen to be His Vicegerent on earth for our common salvation."

At the earnest entreaty of other Cardinals he composed a similar instruction, which is preserved as above, in which he gave the same Cardinal admirable directions as to the manner of conducting himself in his dignity, with the spirit of a true ecclesiastic and a Prince of holy Church.

I find that he also composed some remarks on the episcopal ministry, full of the apostolic spirit, that this sublime and angelical dignity might be exercised for the good of souls, of which the Bishop of Arezzo, so frequently mentioned, thus speaks in one of his letters: "I have read the noble thoughts of our good Father Mariano to my extreme confusion, since of the many good qualities which he justly requires in a Bishop, I do not find that I possess one." I have taken much pains, but have never been able to find a copy of these remarks, whence I conclude that they are lost, together with many other things relating to the servant of God. Many religious of the first rank, Prelates and Bishops, had recourse to Mariano to receive either his verbal or written counsels, with which they were fully satisfied and extremely pleased, though sometimes they referred to things which seemed out of his sphere, so that Cardinal Bernardino Rocci said, that besides his perfect experience in spiritual things, he had also pru-

dence and capacity in everything else, and that even in temporal business he was an admirable judge. Serious differences had arisen between two distinguished personages, and their reconciliation seemed hopeless, as each warmly supported his own opinion. Their mutual friends besought Mariano to interpose, and he, desiring to unite them again in charity, willingly accepted the task, in which he used such prudence and dexterity, that he soon had the happiness of pacifying both and accomplishing the desired end. And this was not the only time in which he succeeded in reconciling irritated spirits, for many times, when urged by his charity, he undertook similar tasks with the like success. There was a woman in Rome who was in high repute for her great goodness, so that many religious persons, especially nuns, desired to see and converse with her. Some of them made use of a person of great authority to prevail with Mariano, on whom her confessor was dependant, to allow him to send her to them. But Mariano gave in this affair a great specimen of his prudence, for he would on no account yield to their entreaties, but, on the contrary, answered in the following terms: "Such an one of whom you write, is, in my opinion, a good and spiritual woman, but to make a Saint and a prophetess of her, would be her utter ruin. I have desired her confessor to put a stop to this, and in particular, to forbid her having any conversations with nuns, among whom vanity and curiosity are the greatest, and who would ask her to foretell

the future, to pray to God for unsuitable things, to relate ecstasies, and to make little bargains in spiritual matters, &c. Therefore, I have desired the father-confessor, to use my name for excluding them all, and I believe that the woman's good requires this." In his determination he proceeded with much deliberation, and always with a humble reference to God, that he might receive the necessary light from above, and, as far as was in his power, he practised the maxim of St. Philip, of never deciding on any important matter for himself or others, without taking beforehand time and counsel, and having recourse to prayer. He especially observed this rule in the case of vocations; "For," said he; "the vocations of God are most difficult to ascertain, and I confess that I can never utter my opinion on them without trembling." Being once questioned respecting the vocation of a person who was under the care of another confessor, he would not interfere on any account, but replied, "I will judge of what God requires of Signor N. from the inspirations which He may vouchsafe to give to him who has the charge of guiding him, and I promise to contribute a few lukewarm prayers, for I have not courage to take more upon myself."

But the circumspection and prudence of Mariano were especially great in examining the vocation of those who begged to be admitted into the Congregation. When as Superior he was obliged to propose any member, he commended the matter to God and the holy Father by re-

iterated prayers, and then used all possible human diligence in gaining information of the individual's character in what related to his spirituality and morals, as well as his talents and capacity for filling the sacerdotal offices of the Institute.

Following the maxim of St. Philip, of which, among others, he had taken note, that in the Congregation he desired the members to be few but good, he never yielded to any human respect, nor did the small number of members in the Congregation ever induce him to facilitate the entrance of any one into the Congregation who was deficient in the two principal requisites prescribed by the Constitutions, "They must be men of approved life and suitable manners, and be, as it were, born for the Institute." Before naming him to the Congregation, he placed before the subject the difficulties of that state of life which he was about to undertake, rather exaggerating than diminishing them, that they might not take him by surprise, and that he might measure his strength well before coming to his decision; for this purpose, he composed some brief hints for such persons as desired to enter the Congregation, which we think it well to give in the following chapter.

CHAPTER VIII.

HINTS OF MARIANO SOZZINI TO THOSE WHO DESIRE
TO ENTER THE CONGREGATION.

As all community life is difficult, it is necessary that before a man decides on such a life for himself, he should consider the difficulties which actually exist, and those which may hereafter arise; for it is not enough for him to know the perfection of the rule, the sanctity of its founder, the goodness of the members, and the exterior appearance; since even amongst the Apostles, who were chosen by Christ, and over whom He presided, though they were but twelve in number, there was a Judas who betrayed Him, a Peter who denied Him, besides various imperfections of which we read in the others; and, therefore, he who expects to find them all angels, and never to see or hear any thing disedifying, and sometimes even scandalous, grossly deceives himself, even though he should take the most approved and holy Order in existence, as was that of St. Francis during his life-time; for even in it there was a brother Elias, who caused many sighs, and a brother Giacomo Capello, one of his first twelve companions, who hung himself like another Judas.

Therefore, before we enter the army of Christ, it is well to anticipate the tempests which may arise, since the arrow which is fore-

seen inflicts a slighter wound ; and, above all things, to reflect that these shades amongst the bright colours of Christian piety are most necessary, to make the virtue, patience, steadfastness, prudence, and compassion of the good, more conspicuous ; for the Holy Ghost says, " My son, if thou wouldst enter into the service of God, stand in justice and fear, and prepare thy soul for temptation."

First, then, he should consider, that in proportion to the number of the brothers will be the variety of tempers. And this alone will occasion much trouble to any one who has not the spirit of St. Catherine of Siena. She, indeed, rejoiced in seeing that God could be served in so many different ways, and, like a skilful bee, sucked honey from all ; but as the root of all evil is self-love, and especially the love of our own virtue, any one who has not that spirit, will always think that he does the proper thing, and, consequently, that those who act differently must be acting improperly, and he will regard every one as imperfect in proportion as he differs from him in conduct. From this cause a thousand evils proceed, since if we do not esteem our neighbour, we cannot, with all our precautions, prevent our dislike of his conduct from being sometimes evident ; and this, if it comes to his knowledge, will produce a thousand bad results. Let the aspirant, then, expect to find some too lively, others too melancholy, some who will pry into everything, some who will never speak to him, and some who will resent every trifle and mortify him. Let him

consider, that perhaps he may have an injudicious Superior, who may mortify and burthen him more than the others, that he may not discreetly exercise distributive justice, that he may act with much indulgence to his companion, who is, perhaps, his inferior, whilst to him he may be all austerity; that when not well he may be loaded with work, get no credit when he complains, and be treated worse than others. This is usually a heavy temptation, whether the partiality be real or only imaginary. Let him consider that dislikes may arise amongst the members of the house, that they may not speak to each other, that there may be quarrels, that they may threaten each other, and reflect whether, should such things happen, he would enter, and let him regard this practically, and not as a mere speculation.

Let him consider that contrary to what is usual in other communities, our labours constantly increase, and that neither age nor personal merit can claim any exemption from them.

He should also reflect that he may suffer from some complaint in his head, or stomach, or from some other malady, that as all ought to be in common, the diet cannot agree equally with all, and that it is not the custom to provide a particular diet for certain habitual indispositions. It is necessary that a man should thus measure himself, I will not say his health and physical powers, (for these may to-day be good, but may change afterwards), but the power and virtue of his mind, whether he could or would in such circumstances live a common life, taking Ripa

wine when it was served in the refectory, sweet wines if they nauseated him, cabbages and pulse though he might be suffering from hypochondriacal affections; because, though he should presuppose great charity in the Superior, he must know, that if in providing food he were to accommodate, I will not say every taste, but every stomach, the life of the Congregation would not deserve the name of a common life.

He must also know that it will sometimes happen, that amongst companions destined to the same employments, as, for example, the young Fathers under the tenth year, some will be in the habit of avoiding labour, which must necessarily disturb the others; and it is good to prepare ourselves to bear this willingly, because if any one should be punctilious and say, "As I have done my part, I am not obliged to do more," the Church would often suffer, and the house be neglected, and charity would be in danger; and therefore such opportunities should be regarded as jewels disregarded by others, to the joy of those who find them. Consider that amongst those companions who are nearest in standing, a little emulation is apt to arise, either in preaching, or in being promoted one before another to those exercises which men would consider to be most important, which in those who have not great spirituality may occasion great temptation, and that, therefore, a great spirit of prayer is necessary to cut off those disorderly affections, and take away that self-love which might in time destroy a person's vocation.

He must know that antipathies and sympathies destroy communities, since the former occasion ill-will and ruptures, according to the circumstances in which they occur; and the latter, under specious appearances, are the cause of great evils, since, not content with gnawing their own bones, persons begin to gnaw the bones of their friends, and are in continual disquiet; besides which, such sympathies are a general injury, since, to "form a Congregation within a Congregation," is its destruction, and in as far as we cling to some, we necessarily withdraw from others; and it is difficult to avoid these two rocks.

Our Father St. Philip greatly esteemed a courteous manner towards our brother, such as we should use towards a stranger, but without affectation, as this preserves charity and spirituality.

He must love the Congregation, but this love must not become a passion, and, therefore, St. Philip, though he was its founder, would only have his vote a simple vote, and when he saw a bad resolution adopted, it was enough for him to give his opinion without disturbing himself; and this is a great point, because some, moved by zeal, grow warmer in matters of business, than is consistent with well-ordered charity. Primal matter, defined by philosophers as pure power without a tendency to any particular form, is the true type of a good servant of God; since, fixed alone on the Will of God in all things, he does not covet one office or one ac-

commodation more than another; quiet is no more to him than business, but he is always indifferent in all that may be imposed on him. He who rises late, gains little profit, since prayer is like the manna which could only be gathered before sun-rise. To entertain a good opinion of your brother, is a great preservative against all evils, for it will lead you to take everything in good part; and even when you see him do wrong, you will excuse his intention, or even where the action is such that the intention cannot be excused, you will reflect on the other virtues of the individual, in which this failure will be, as it were, swallowed up. Consider that this is a vineyard, and that we are here to do what the owner pleases, and that we must, therefore, not attach ourselves to exterior devotions, since self-love makes us incline more to voluntary devotions and works than to those to which we are obliged. Always set before you the observance of the rules, and do not say, "Such an one does not observe the rules, such an one says this, such an one does not do so." Avoid discourses and chattering about the affairs of the Congregation.

CHAPTER IX.

OF THE PATIENCE AND MEEKNESS OF MARIANO.

THE abundant light with which the Holy Ghost had replenished the soul of His servant Mariano, caused him to set a high value on tribulations.

In the language of Scripture and of the Saints, he called them the pledges of the love of God towards us, and the earnestness of our predestination, adding, that the important point was, not to go to sleep, but be ever alert, to draw from them all the benefit that God intends. He burned with a lively and unceasing desire to do and to suffer much for God, and preferred suffering to the most sublime dignities of this world, regarding that day as lost in which he had not suffered something for the love of God. He counselled every one who desired to make progress in spiritual life and Christian perfection, not to sink into pusillanimity. "In the spiritual life," said he, "when we meet with difficulties and temptations of various kinds, let us humble ourselves and be faithful, for our faith is never dearer to God, or more lovely in His sight, than when we are in the midst of tribulations. Let us constantly love virtue, heartily hate vice, and trust in God. This will render our temptations precious, and worthy of a crown, and will enable us to overcome every difficulty; and we should be firmly convinced that this, and this only is the way of sanctity."

Writing on this subject to a penitent of his, who lived in the world according to his instructions, he said to her, "When the Lord sends you some cross, regard it as the pledge of His Divine love, and humble your heart under it, love it, esteem it as most precious, remembering that in this way the Saints acquired their perfection, and that, as St. Francis of Sales remarks, 'Without

the cross you cannot possess the crucified One.'” In the same manner he replied to a Bishop who had confided to him some troubles by which he was much distressed: “The Lord generally invites souls to great spiritual progress and sanctity, when He sends them great crosses. I doubt not that your Lordship’s sagacity will interpret this language of Heaven far better than I could do.” To another prelate, who complained that he was unjustly persecuted, he gave this advice, “We should never allow ourselves to think that we are persecuted, since this persuasion, which springs from self-love, if once admitted, would occasion an infinity of mischief; and even when sure that our neighbour has been unkind, let us be equally sure that we have given him some just cause to be so, and sincerely taking the blame on ourselves, conduct ourselves with submission and perseverance.”

What he suggested and taught to others, was often, through the dispensation of God, exemplified in his own practice; for it frequently happened, that when he desired to snatch a soul from sin, or to prevent one from falling into it, he met with such a display of disgust and indignation in persons otherwise respectable, that some even refused to speak to him, and gave public expression to their contempt and aversion, some wounded him by detraction and vituperation, and some had even the audacity to load him with invectives and insults. In these cases, this most meek man never altered his usual kind manner of speaking to these people, nor was he discomposed by all

their outrages. On the contrary, he sought opportunities of returning benefits for the offences received, as happened in the case of one of these persons who had need of his assistance in some matter of business. Mariano never ceased to help him with great charity and energy, for he had laid it down as an inviolable maxim, always to return some benefit to any one from whom he had received injury and insult.

We have noticed in another place the patience and resignation to the Will of God with which he received the various misfortunes which befel his family in Siena. Once, especially, when his brother Nicolò informed him that he had sustained a heavy loss of property, he replied as follows: "The visitations which our house receives from the hand of God in the diminution of goods and income, are pledges of the Divine love, and, if I may venture so to speak, the earnest of predestination. If you ask me whence I derive this confidence, I answer, from seeing you accept the loss willingly with a contented heart, entirely conformed to the Will of God. What remains for you and me to do is not to slumber, but to listen to the language of God, and to draw from these afflictions all the fruit which God designs us to gather from them," &c.

He bore illness with the same spirit of Christian cheerfulness and patience. His illnesses, as we have stated in the fourth chapter, were severe and frequent, and they were observed generally to attack him at the approach of some festival, either because the spiritual fervour with which he

was wont to prepare himself debilitated his body, or because the Lord chose that holy season as the time in which He would confer on His servant those favours which He usually bestows on His best-beloved. Under these infirmities he did not give the slightest indication of mental suffering, nor did he ever make much of his bodily pains, but delighting in conforming himself to his patient and crucified Lord, he went through it tranquilly, in closer union with God, assisted chiefly by some spiritual book, which he read or caused to be read, and by the use of ejaculatory prayer, which he then more than ever practised, so that Dr. Tiracorda, physician to the Congregation, admiring such patience united to such frequent suffering, used to say, "Truly God sends the illness to one who knows how to bear it."

Monsignor Gio. Battista Nepeta, once Bishop of St. Angelo and Bifaccio, and afterwards of Massa, in the kingdom of Naples, speaking of Mariano's patience under illness, deposes, "I many times visited the Venerable Father Mariano Sozzini, whom I found in bed, and we had much conversation on spiritual subjects, by which I was greatly consoled and satisfied, and the more so, as I knew that the said father was enduring bodily pain with the utmost resignation to the Will of God. Indeed, he seemed to exult in such sufferings, especially in the sleepless nights he passed, in the wounds with which his body was covered, and the humours that showed themselves in his eyes. He once told me in confidence, that he had pain and disease in almost every member

of his body, and that in some members these diseases were multiplied. Many times in my presence, did he give thanks to God for this, and in these thanksgivings I perceived an extraordinary gladness and serenity in his countenance, expressive not merely of conformity to the Divine Will, but of consolation and enjoyment in his sufferings, and he frequently repeated these words: "Nihil, Domine, nisi mori, aut pati—Nothing, O Lord, but to die or suffer," whilst he raised his eyes to heaven, joined his hands, and with his lips blessed the Lord, uttering ejaculatory prayers and glowing expressions of love to God."

In concluding this chapter, I may be permitted to notice some maxims for his conduct in sickness, which he had set down, and which are as follows :

" SICKNESS

1. Is from God.
2. It deprives us of no real good.
3. It confers real good upon us, such as light, incapability of sinning, intentions of amendment, occasions of merit, and satisfaction for sin.
4. It must be disclosed to the Superior.
5. There must be heartfelt trust in God.
6. The physician must be admitted on obedience.
7. A second physician must not be required,
8. Nor any costly remedies.
9. The patient must ask for nothing, but accept everything as an alms with humility and modesty.
10. He must endure privations willingly.

11. He must, without murmuring, submit to denials, neglect, &c.

12. He must unite his pains and sufferings to those of Christ, and thus united offer them to God as an expiation, &c.

13. He must humbly receive the attentions of his brothers, and repay them by thanks and prayers.

14. He must continue his Spiritual Exercises as far as his sickness allows, and supply by his good-will his unavoidable omissions.

15. His best and most noble exercise will be conformity to the Will of God in holy love."

CHAPTER X.

ON THE MORTIFICATION OF MARIANO.

AMONGST other virtues mortification was very dear to the Lord's servant Mariano, for he knew it to be the guardian of chastity, and the inseparable companion of prayer, and he used to say, that without a holy and discreet mortification we could never arrive at perfection.

In the first years of his entrance into the Congregation, yielding to his fervour without measuring his powers, he exercised a rigorous bodily mortification, especially in his diet, even to the injury of his health; but the Superiors, aware of the weakness of his constitution, obliged him to moderate it, which he did, but in such a way as to unite mortification with obedience, for if

he could not entirely deprive himself of the food set before him, he fed on that which was most distasteful to him, provided it were not hurtful.

He especially abhorred discourses about food and eating, and was never heard to complain, though his provisions were insipid and badly cooked, regarding it as a meanness of spirit to stoop to such discussions and complaints. When he went, for his health or some needful recreation, to spend a few days at the vineyard of the Congregation, he would have little or no alteration made at his table from the frugal meals prepared for the common table of the house, and he did the same whenever he went to Carbognano, or other places in the country. In the spirit of St. Bernard he had prescribed to himself, "To take his food as medicine, in measure, with repugnance, and from necessity." Unless you feel indifferent about food, bed, conversation, and convenience, you are far from spiritual life, for you please yourself in the body's weaknesses. With the same love of mortification he avoided all delicacy in dress, in his bed, the furniture of his room, &c., delighting in simplicity, which, however, was always united to a becoming neatness, as has been observed in another place. His bed was so narrow, that F. Oliva, General of the Society of Jesus, a dear friend of Mariano's, used facetiously to call it "his trunk." He so neglected the care of his apartments, that even in the most searching heat of summer he took no pains to close the shutters of his window, by which he suffered greater heat, and so

in the winter he would have no fire in his room, though very sensible to cold. He was sparing in sleep, and in particular he was accustomed to rise very early in the morning, that he might give the first hours to prayer.

He avoided all curiosity in seeing the sights, as well as hearing the news of the world, so that when solemn processions passed under the windows, he never even rose up to look at them, observing this rule, "Remove secular things from your eyes, ears, and tongue, as well as from your heart." In short, to avoid repetition, we may say, that Mariano was most careful in mortifying all his natural feelings and inclinations, and even his most indifferent affections, and in cordially embracing those mortifications which were sent him by Divine Providence, preferring these to every other, because they were less his own. To show the light, spirituality, and discretion with which he acted in this matter, we here insert the rules which he prescribed for himself, and which he constantly observed during the whole of his life: "The mortification and cross of Jesus must be lovingly and faithfully embraced, even unto death. The first exercise of mortification must be ever to do the Will of God, for which we must renounce taste and sense, suffering all things, and losing all things. Secondly, the matter of mortification must be obedience, and the acting with the Community in all things. The third exercise of mortification must be the performing the ordinary duties of our vocation well and willingly.

Mortification in these three points is entirely holy, approved by God, and secure from every delusion. As regards voluntary mortifications, the most eligible exercises are those which relate to charity, that is, to the assistance and relief of our neighbour, for whose sake we must renounce conveniences and comforts, suffering for his salvation the loss of property and health. Secondly, where there is quick sensibility, humility is an excellent exercise of mortification, and the conflict and victory are most pleasing to God. A third and good exercise of mortification refers to those minor passions, affections, and propensities, which particularly retard our union with God. We must be very energetic in these three points of mortification. As to mortification in other indifferent things, such as our meals, bed, clothes, and senses, we must practise it as much as we can, as well for the exercise of penance, as for conformity to the life and doctrine of our Saviour, provided that Divine love excites and moderates the mortification, and is its efficient and final cause. Secondly, the mortification must be subject to obedience, in and for all things. Thirdly, it must not be prejudicial to that health which is required for our state and offices, &c. Fourthly, we must altogether avoid singularity, and give up the mortification whenever we should be singular in practising it.

CHAPTER XI.

HIS CHASTITY.

EVEN in exterior things Mariano was the image of modesty and the mirror of chastity. His speech, gestures, and deportment, nay, even his very walk, breathed the fragrance of that purity which he preserved in his heart, and jealously guarded as a treasure of inestimable price. Considering his state, both as a priest and son of St. Philip, he said to himself, "In thy state, chastity should be practised in the most supreme and perfect degree, nay, it should be even angelical, for purity less than that of the angels should not content thee." Writing to a novice of the Order of Preachers, who had been his penitent, and who begged for some spiritual instructions, he gave these amongst others: "Chastity in a Religious should resemble that of the angels, and this will never be acquired unless a man keep a strict guard over his heart and senses, so as anxiously to watch against every thought or movement contrary to modesty. Let him abhor all vanity, as well in his dress as in the furniture of his room, and his entire deportment. Let him abhor every discourse or confabulation which may breathe the faintest odour of aught contrary to purity, or of any vanity; and discreetly, but entirely, shun those who use such language. Let him sedulously endeavour

habitually to guard his eyes from any dangerous object, and till death steadily persevere in doing this, never trusting to his past chastity. Above all, let him avoid familiarity with women, however spiritual they may be, notwithstanding all pretexts of the Sacraments, visits to the sick, spiritual help, counsels, &c. A holy Dominican once said, that women should be spiritually assisted, like the souls in Purgatory, who are helped by the devout, but always from afar. Charity should be exercised towards them, but with brevity and holy rudeness." What Mariano taught others, he most faithfully practised himself, for he rigorously guarded his senses, and especially his eyes, not only from dangerous objects, but even from such as were vain and curious, as has been said above.

So also he was in the highest degree reserved and circumspect in his conversation with women, though they were his penitents, and of the very highest character. He never could be induced to visit any of them, excepting when they were ill, and then only for a short time, and with open doors, that he might be seen by others, when they made their confessions in bed; for he was accustomed to say, that women, though virtuous, should be revered as saints, and avoided as demons.

He also said, that one of the greatest difficulties to confessors, was how to serve women well and usefully, for they are in truth much inclined to piety, but have generally little capacity, and easily deceive and are deceived, whilst in many

instances, there springs up a certain affection between a confessor and his penitents, which is in its beginning just and spiritual, but which in time degenerates into something sensual and pernicious, which under the specious name of spirituality, nourishes passion. He, therefore, declared that he had never repented of having followed the rules left by our holy Father, absolutely to avoid all unnecessary conversations with women, and in such as were necessary, to use brevity and holy rudeness.

By these precautions, which were practised by the servant of God, and by the modest self-control, which could be observed in all his actions, he, through the help of Divine grace, attained to such a high degree of purity, that he was commonly regarded as an incarnate angel, and was so called by Cesare Cardinal Facchinetti, Dean of the Sacred College, and by many others. Not only did he maintain in himself this great affection to purity, but he studiously endeavoured to promote it in others, most effectually insinuating into their minds the means which he thought most suited to their individual wants. To such of his penitents as were heads of families, he gave a charge to watch carefully lest any disorder contrary to modesty should arise in their families, and especially to keep an eye on their men and women servants, and where their conduct appeared suspicious, to discharge them prudently without any regard to their other good qualities.

He laboured also with the Superiors of con-

vents, that seculars should be restrained from a too frequent intercourse with the nuns. As we have seen in a preceding chapter, his alms and charity were usually employed, not only in relieving temporal necessities, but in preventing the dangers which might arise to the chastity of needy persons, of whom many were by his benevolent hand preserved from the danger of losing their virtue.

He was, as has been said, still more anxious to preserve a total and inviolable purity in the Congregation, considering it as an inestimable jewel bequeathed to us by our most pure and holy Founder, so that the slightest shadow in this particular seemed to him to be a most grievous fault, and though most mild and gentle in other things during the time of his government as Superior, he was always severe in this, as may be seen, Book I. Chapter 10, to which for brevity's sake we refer.

CHAPTER XII.

OF THE HUMILITY OF MARIANO.

THE deep root which the virtue of humility had taken in Mariano's heart, and the sincerity of his self-contempt, may be easily gathered from the following notes in his own hand-writing, which were found after his death. In one of these he says, "Let thy pretension be 'ut recumbas in novissimo loco—to take thy seat in the

lowest place ;' in the lowest, poorest, and most abject place which thou canst occupy without sin ; and as far as is in thy power labour to attain it. First, because it will be very pleasing to God ; secondly, because thou knowest it in truth to be thy proper place, and God loves the truth ; thirdly, because thou wilt imitate thy Lord ; fourthly, because thou wilt walk in the royal, but little understood way of thy holy Father Philip. Blessed wilt thou be when thou shalt have arrived at the lowest place of abjection, and shalt be utterly despised. Be confounded that whilst so many spend their all in attaining some post of honour, thou wilt give up nothing for the attainment of holy humility and true abjection ; and take care so to aspire to the very lowest place, as to distrust all but the lowest." In another place he says, "It is a vile and revolting thing in a priest dedicated to God, to boast of his nobility, natural qualities, or fortune, for they are unworthy of a boast, or even of his regard, especially as his habit, which expresses hatred and contempt of the world, would in that case be a lie. Thy vocation is to live and die a poor priest ; therefore, though unworthy, desire to live and die as such in the house of our Lady and of St. Philip. Lastly, he says in another note, "To accustom myself to holy humility, I will try to live with mirth and cheerfulness amongst the brothers ; secondly, I will hate an important manner and avoid it as a plague ; thirdly, I will shun the slightest singularity as

though it were poison ; fourthly, I will never speak on spiritual or scientific subjects without weighty reasons, especially with spiritual and literary men ; fifthly, I will not wish to do more than others, but humble my understanding to the practice of the community." When he went with the others to any community act, he always remembered what is recorded in the second chapter of the Book of Job : " And it came to pass when on a certain day the sons of God came and stood before the Lord, Satan also came among them and stood in His sight ;" and regarding all the others as so many angels and sons of God, he looked on himself as a demon amongst them, a very Satan. From this mean opinion of himself, there arose that gentleness and affability of manner with which he spoke to every one, however mean and abject he might be, so that he could not endure that any one should stand uncovered in his presence. Thence also arose his exterior modesty and humble manner of speaking, so that the Venerable Theatine Father, Giuseppe Maria Tommasi, who for his extraordinary merit was afterwards promoted to the Purple by Clement XI. of holy memory, says of him, " What I always most admired in Father Mariano was his humility, of which the exterior marks were so admirable, as not only to exhibit no shadow of ostentation, but evidently to show that they bore no proportion to the perfection of that virtue which dwelt in his heart. Low esteem of himself and high regard for others were most remarkable in him. Indeed, he always

spoke of others with such high respect as to screen the person, even when condemning the faults with which he might be chargeable. He appeared to me always to give his opinion with as much caution as though he had been an inexperienced youth, so timidly did he pronounce his judgment. He one day told me of a humiliation practised by a religious in return for an insult received, and he could not help saying with much warmth, that it was not in high-flown pretensions, but in exercises such as this, that the honour and reputation of religious orders consisted." So far Father Tommasi. From this also arose his great and sincere abhorrence of all distinction in the Congregation, for he really regarded himself as incapable and unfit, and though obedience compelled him to accept first the office of prefect of the Novices, and afterwards that of Superior, we have seen his repugnance to the honour, and the pains which he took to be relieved of it. To the same cause may be traced the pleasure with which Mariano obeyed not only his Superiors, but even his equals and inferiors. He really thought himself the least of all. Although not bound by a vow, nor even by a promise of obedience, the members of the Congregation being altogether free, nevertheless, knowing the worth of this virtue, which he said was in itself sufficient to make great saints, he always lived as entirely obedient in all things, as though he had made a vow like a cloistered religious, as may be seen in many places, and especially in the fifth chapter of the first book.

In reading the Lives of the Saints, he was most enamoured with the acts of humility, as, for instance, when he read of St. Francesca Romana driving a pack-horse through Rome, or with a bundle of wood on her head; or of St. Francis of Assisium, who exchanged clothes with a beggar, and went with the beggars to the portico of St. Peter, and such as these; saying, "O, how these actions please me, how lovely they are in my eyes! This is the solid and safe way of the Saints, and we cannot err in imitating their self-contempt and humility." He would never allow certain extraordinary demonstrations of humility to be made, without a special impulse of the Holy Ghost and the counsel of enlightened men; and he thought the best exercise of humility was faithfully and readily to meet and embrace those opportunities of being little esteemed and meanly thought of, which are sent us by God, since this sort of humiliation is the most acceptable to Him, and the most secure for us, as less exposing us to the danger of vanity and self-esteem.

He held such opportunities in great account, and knew how to profit by them when sent by Divine Providence. Going one day with a priest to visit a distinguished personage, he was received with incivility and rudeness, at which he did not express the slightest resentment, but obliged his companion not to mention it to any one. As he was still obliged to transact business with that personage, he again returned to him,

but always with the same hilarity and courtesy, as though he had received no insult.

On the contrary, he avoided places and persons where and from whom he was likely to receive honour. His cousin, Monsignor d'Elci, was promoted to the Purple, but though Mariano greatly loved and esteemed him, he never once set foot in his palace during his residence in Rome, till he was dying of an attack of the stone. He then assisted him with great assiduity and attention, helping him to die well; nor did he ever leave him till the Cardinal was about to make his will, then he dexterously withdrew, and did not return till he knew that all was finished, wishing punctually to comply with the maxim left by St. Philip to his sons, never to interfere with wills, nor to be present when they were made, although in this instance the testator was so nearly related to him.

He showed the same repugnance and aversion from those things which might gain him esteem, when the Sovereign Pontiff, Innocent XI., of glorious and venerable memory, availed himself of his assistance in many most important affairs of the Pontificate, not unfrequently desiring him to attend some especial Congregations, that he might hear his opinion, which he highly esteemed. The servant of God did what he could to relieve himself from this burthen, and, as is related by Monsignor Strozzi, the Bishop of Arezzo who has so often been mentioned, he presented a memorial to the Pope to obtain the desired favour. "He showed me," says he, "in confidence, the memorial which he had addressed to his Holiness, en-

treating him, in the most humble terms, to permit him to attend to the necessary observance of his Institute, by freeing him from those affairs which, with his usual humility, he declared himself incompetent to transact, though," as the same prelate subjoins, "his Holiness did not condescend to his petitions; and he, in consequence, felt the most acute and bitter grief, so that speaking one day to a priest in his confidence, who was about to celebrate Mass, he said, "I wish you to ask two things for me from God; the first is, that the remainder of my life may be entirely spent in His service; the second is, that He would deliver me from the palace, so that for the future I may not have the slightest connexion with state affairs, but die like a simple and poor priest in my room, and in my own Congregation."

Indeed, he always loved a private and humble state, and abhorred the higher grades of ecclesiastical dignity, of which with genuine humility he esteemed himself unworthy and incapable. On this point he used to say, "It is impossible to have an eager desire of prelacies, office, and dignities, without having a secret esteem of ourselves and a preference to our own light, spirit, talents, and prudence above those of others;" adding, "See that your abhorrence of dignities be genuine and faithful, since an open ambition is less criminal than that which is concealed under the garb of humility." He ever followed the maxim of St. Philip, to shun prelacies and dignities, but to aspire to the virtues of prelates; that is, to avoid

the danger and all the evils of dignities, and to retain all that is good and useful in them. Reducing this instruction of the Saint to practice, he prescribed to himself the following mode of imitating the virtues suited to the highest ecclesiastical dignities: "My true cardinalate shall be to live as a true disciple of Christ, to aspire to the purple of martyrdom, and to live in the exercise of it until death. My archbishopric shall be to live an apostolic life, to spend my life, myself, and all that belongs to me, for my neighbour. My true papacy shall be to surpass all in loving God, according to that word of Christ to St. Peter, 'Diligis me plus his?—Lovest thou Me more than these?' to love all with an effectual, provident, useful, and tender love, 'Pasce oves meas—Feed My sheep,' even to the laying down of life, 'Bonus Pastor animam suam ponit pro ovibus—The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep;' to obey perfectly, even in difficult things, and in those which contradict my own will; in those things, too, which are commanded unjustly, or for a bad purpose, by wicked persons, and not by lawful Superiors, and this even to the acceptance of a bitter and ignominious death, 'Cum autem senueris, alius te cinget, et ducet te quo tu non vis—When thou shalt be old another shall gird thee, and lead thee whither thou wilt not.' I will appropriate to myself the title of Maximus and Servus Servorum Dei, by living in humble subjection to all creatures, and as the Pope has none greater than himself in the world, I will

zealously endeavour that no one on earth shall be meaner or more entirely nothing than myself, being assured that 'Qui humiliavit se, hic major est in regno—He who shall humble himself shall be greatest,' " &c.

In the Pontificate of Alexander VII. of holy memory, the office of Pontifical Almoner having become vacant by the death of Monsignor Ferrini, Canon of St. Peter's, and private chamberlain to the Pope, his Holiness thought of Mariano, for whom he had a special esteem and regard, and therefore ordered Cardinal Giacomo Nini, his Maggiordomo, to speak to him of the office, and to induce him to accept it; but vain were all the Cardinal's insinuations and persuasions, for Mariano, though he humbly thanked the Pope, represented to him his unfitness for that ministry, and with all possible earnestness besought the Cardinal to become his mediator and intercessor with the Pontiff, that he would not authoritatively compel him to obey and accept the place; and to the joy of his heart, he obtained the desired permission to live in that beloved hiding-place, his Congregation, which he preferred to all great prelacies. In the Pontificate of the Venerable Innocent XI. above-mentioned, a rumour was current in Rome, that the next great promotion of Cardinals would include Mariano. Nor was the report unfounded, for Cardinal Stefano Brancacci, who was then a prelate, heard it from the lips of the Pope himself, after the death of the servant of God, and he had also heard it from other quarters.

Some important personages named it to Mariano, but the humble servant of the Lord, concentrating himself in his own nothingness, could not understand how men could entertain such a thought, and with a prophetic spirit replied to more than one person, "My hat will be the tomb." And so in fact it was, for, as will be seen in the next chapter, before the promotion, he had passed from this life to the immortal life of Paradise; therefore, many believed and declared that Mariano had obtained from God an anticipation of his death, that he might escape a promotion to the purple, which on the one hand, would have been inevitable, the Pope being firmly resolved to raise him to that dignity, and, on the other hand, would have been regarded by his humility as one of the greatest possible misfortunes which could have befallen him.

THE LAST CHAPTER.

THE LAST ILLNESS AND HAPPY DEATH OF MARIANO,
AND CERTAIN GRACES GRANTED BY GOD ON HIS
INTERCESSION.

A MAN so full of merit as Mariano was already ripe for heaven, to which his heart, enamoured of God, aspired with incessant sighs. Accordingly, in the year 1670 it pleased the Divine Majesty to call His faithful servant to eternal beatitude on the 17th of September, after an illness of about a month's duration. We have

an accurate narrative of his illness and happy death, as well as of some favours granted at his intercession, written by a Father of the Congregation, who was present and an eye-witness, and addressed, as far as we can conjecture, to a Father of the Oratory in Naples. I have, therefore, thought it better to insert it entire, merely adding, that after his death many persons, through devotion, had his portrait painted on canvass. This is still preserved with great veneration, and by the permission of the Superiors it was engraved on copper, the title of Venerable being affixed to his likeness.

AN ACCOUNT OF THE LAST SICKNESS AND DEATH OF
THE VENERABLE FATHER MARIANO SOZZINI.

“Very Reverend Father and most respected Sir,

“‘*Fratres, nolumus vos ignorare de dormientibus ut non contristemini sicut et ceteri qui spem non habent*—Brethren, we would not that you should be ignorant about those who sleep, that you should not be made sad, as others who have no hope.’ I adopt these words in describing to your Reverence the pious death of our Father Mariano Sozzini, he having himself used them in relating that of Father Prospero Airoli. Thus the account of the death both of master and scholar will have the same introduction. Would that it had pleased God to enable me to continue the narrative in the same felicitous style, but your Reverence will kindly accept my intention and pity my deficiencies. Our Father

Mariano, on his return from Frascati, thought himself so much recovered, that we hoped to enjoy his holy conversation for a long time to come, and he had already resumed his functions in the Institute, confessing, preaching, saying Mass in the Church, and going with us to the refectory, when, in the middle of August, he began to feel unwell, and his indisposition increased gradually, but so decidedly, that he was obliged by fever, vomiting, and dysentery, to keep his bed. At first he was not threatened with that malady which finally deprived him of life; but, as the nativity of our Lady drew near, we began greatly to fear the event. Still, however, the physicians encouraged him, and gave him hopes of recovery, but either he internally felt himself sinking, or our good God had imparted more light to him, or, perhaps, he was guided by his pious prudence; for though he seemed to credit the predictions of his medical attendants, he would omit nothing which he thought to be a necessary preparation for death, which there is reason to think he had long before seen or felt to be approaching: for, when his Eminence, Cardinal Cybo, was at Frascati on some business connected with his church in that place, he one day honoured Mariano with a visit, and asked him what good books he had brought with him for his country reading. Mariano replied, that he had only brought a few papers with him; and on his Eminence asking why he had restricted himself to these, he said, they were only a few notes which he had set

down for his private use, in preparation for a longer journey. The Cardinal continued to persuade him to recreate himself by walking out, and not to indulge in melancholy thoughts, when he humbly, but more explicitly replied, 'Dies mei abbreviati sunt—My days are shortened, I must prepare to die.' His death occurred soon after, which led the Cardinal to remark, that Padre Mariano had gone to Frascati, not to fly from death, but to prepare himself for it, having there by anticipation studied that happy passage which he afterwards made. On the vigil of the nativity of the Blessed Virgin, he begged Father Paolo Frigerio, confessor to the house, to be with him at the hour when they sung vespers in the Church, he not being able to assist at the office in consequence of indisposition; and at that time, when he was not liable to visits from those in the house, he made his general confession with such accuracy, firmness, and brevity, that Father Paul was astonished, and still more so at the compunction and abundance of tears with which he concluded, so that the father, to excite his gratitude to God, told him that he seemed to have had the Bull of St. Catherine of Siena, alluding to what happened to Fra. Raimondo di Capua, for whom St. Catherine obtained this extreme compunction for his faults. After midnight he communicated from devotion, and prepared to celebrate in a holy manner the nativity of Mary, whom he had long before made the disposer of his life and death, being accustomed to say to her, 'Quam vis, qualem vis, quando

vis, et quomodo vis—What you wish, such as you wish, when you wish, and how you wish.’

On the following Monday he called Father Luca Millini, and begged him sincerely to tell him what he thought of his state, which to himself appeared very doubtful. Father Luca told him the opinion of the physicians with all candour, but at the same time addressed to him some cheering words; but the courage of Mariano rose superior to depression, and he replied, ‘I lament my bad life, but not this;’ and he then charged the Father to warn him of the successive changes which might take place in him.

On the following day, as the illness seemed to increase more than usual, Father Luca suggested to him the idea of communicating in the form of Viaticum; he replied that this would be a great favour from the Lord. On this occasion the same Father wished to ask him some advice, but the good Mariano only replied, ‘Pray God to inspire you from above, whence you can be better helped than here.’ The Superior then came in and told him of his danger, asking him what was his devotion as regarded the time of receiving the Sacraments of the Church. He replied that he greatly desired the Sacraments, but left it to him to procure them for him at his pleasure, committing himself entirely to his hands. Besides this, he begged the Superior to pray, and to ask the Fathers to pray, that God would grant him a true knowledge of himself, and a profound humility; ‘For,’ said he, with many tears, ‘I never understood anything

of this virtue.' He added, that before he died, if the Superior thought fit, he should like to embrace all the Fathers and Brothers 'in osculo sancto—with a holy kiss,' and to commend himself to their prayers. As he grew a little better towards evening, the Superior thought it would be as well not to give him the Viaticum, but allowed him after midnight to make a communion of devotion, which he usually did as often as he was able. The following day he rallied a little, and a priest told him that there was an improvement, but that they could not yet sing victory; when he tranquilly replied, 'I shall sing the victory to the last trumpet.' A father entering told him the same thing, saying that he gave his opinion freely, knowing that he would neither be cast down with apprehension nor flattered by hope, when he answered, 'I neither wish to anticipate my death, nor to defer it for an instant, since at all times I need the mercy of God;' so saying, he burst into devout and tender tears. To another person who also spoke of his amendment, he replied with much feeling, 'My recovery is doubtful, it is a little change;' and to the same person, who the day after was going into the Church to make his hour of adoration before the most Blessed Sacrament, which was then exposed, he said, that he must offer him as an entire holocaust to the Lord, and that in his name he must say to the Blessed Virgin, 'Do with me what you please, without any regard to me.'

Very soon their hopes grew faint, as the disease

gained ground and his strength decreased, and Father Luca naming this to him, thought it well to add that he knew that this intelligence would not grieve him, it having for a long time been his desire to depart and behold God. He concealed his feelings with a look of humility, and only replied, 'Ad hoc natus sum. It is true, that during so many years of life, I have never done anything to render myself worthy of it, nevertheless, Ad hoc natus sum—For this was I born.' But he had shown many times before that this was his sole desire, and on the preceding day he had manifested it still more, when, as the Father placed his left hand under his head, to assist him in spitting, Father Mariano said, 'Læva ejus sub capite meo—His left hand beneath my head ;' when Father Luca continued, 'Et dextera illius amplexabitur me—And His right hand shall embrace me ;' when Father Mariano replied with great feeling, 'Quando hæc erunt—When shall these things be?' Father Luca having told him that he and all the Congregation would commend him to God, he, having replied with great humility, added with particular tenderness, 'Let us love our Mother, let us love her !' then, with increased ardour and joy, 'Oh ! if you knew how gladly I die a son of the Congregation ! how gladly——!' Being almost suffocated with tears, he could not go on, but at last, recovering himself a little, he said, 'I hope that those elder Fathers whom I have known, will come and assist me at my death.' The illness continuing to increase, he was on the same Thursday evening

asked by Father Luca, whether he wished to receive the Holy Viaticum, or to make a communion of devotion after midnight. He replied that he was ready to do whatever was thought right, but that by choice he would have made a communion of devotion, and waited till the day of the Cross for the Viaticum, as he had waited the night before, when perceiving Father Luca to be a little doubtful from a fear lest he should die before that time, he frankly said to him, 'Have no scruple about this, but go to sleep;' and he said also to the Father Superior, that there was time enough for the Viaticum; and whether it were a prediction, or a feeling of devotion to that holy day, his words were verified. On Saturday morning, the day of the Cross, he seemed to be sinking, and on being asked if he would receive the Viaticum, 'I am,' said he, 'in their hands.' The Father Superior having come, he made his confession to him, Father Paolo being in bed, and before receiving the Viaticum, he desired to see all the fathers and brothers. When they were come to his room, he most humbly asked pardon of all for every offence, which he might have given to each in particular, declaring them to have been always in the right, and he alone in the wrong. He accused himself of having profited so little by living in so holy a Congregation, and assured us, that should God, in His mercy, cause him to be numbered with the sons of St. Philip above, his first care in his prayers would be to pray for the Congregation and for each member in particular. He then begged to kiss the hands of

all the fathers, and beginning with the Father Superior, after having successively kissed the hands of all the priests with profound humility and marked reverence for their sacred character, he desired to give them a cordial and most tender embrace, and with equally strong expressions of love he afterwards embraced all the brothers, one after another, saying to each a word so full of charity and humility, as to draw tears from the eyes of the bystanders, who were much touched and melted by the piety and devotion with which he accompanied these demonstrations of intense love towards them, which were truly an extraordinary comfort and edification to all. This ceremony being ended, he turned to two of them who were standing near, not being able to speak loud in consequence of the complaint in his throat, and said that if the comparison were not too presumptuous, he seemed at this moment to experience the same feeling as that holy man, Father Antonio Grassi, of the Congregation of Fermo did, when he said as he was dying, 'O what a great consolation to die a son of St. Philip!' It was then suggested to him, that on that day the death of St. John Chrysostom, and the conversion of St. Mary of Egypt, were united with the solemnity of the Cross, and he rejoicing in these happy remembrances, asked for the crucifix which had belonged to St. Philip, that he might entertain himself with the Image, till He whom it represented should come; and he prepared himself for His coming, not only interiorly, but by devout and audible

aspirations: 'Quemamodum desiderat cervus ad fontes aquarum—As the hart desires the fountains of waters,' &c., and other similar expressions; and as the Holy Viaticum approached, he was informed of the approach in the words of the Evangelist, 'Ecce Sponsus venit, exite obviam ei—Behold the Spouse comes, go forth to meet Him.' Then with a love yet more concentrated on his Spouse, he humbly awaited His visit. When the Holy Viaticum was borne into the room, he was most attentive to the prayers prescribed by the ritual. He repeated the Confiteor, and when the Superior brought the holy Eucharist to his bed-side, he burst into these passionate words: 'O my God, how ill have I treated Thee! O Lord!' Being encouraged to trust in the Blood of Jesus Christ, which would supply all his deficiencies, he showed that all his confidence was placed in Him, and received the Sacred Host most devoutly, after which these words of St. Augustine were suggested to him: 'Jam corpus ejus corpori meo conjunctum est et sanguis ejus ornavit genas meas: illi me tota devotione committo—Now His Body is joined with my body, and His Blood hath adorned my cheeks;' he modestly replied, 'Ipsi soli servo fidem—For Him alone do I keep my faith.' A father then said that he must go and say Mass, and that he would offer Mariano's will to the Lord in the chalice, that He might dispose of it according to His good pleasure. He replied with marked exultation of spirit, 'Yes, in time and eternity,' and having made this noble oblation of himself and

his will, he continued in sweet colloquy with his beloved Lord till dinner-time.

After dinner, the fathers sent to ask his Holiness, that he would condescend to give him his Apostolic benediction; this he greatly desired, in attestation, as he said, of the union of the members with their head; but he first would be assured that the request was not inconsistent with the humility of his state, that he might at once satisfy his modesty and his devotion. The benediction was brought him by Monsignor Sagrista and Monsignor Antonio Altoviti, and before receiving it F. Mariano, in a short but most sensible speech, showed how highly he valued that Apostolic benediction by saying, 'I could enjoy no earthly consolation greater than this, nor even so great, that the first personage in the world who is the representative of God upon earth, whom I revere, venerate, and adore as the Vicar of Christ, he to whom God has entrusted the treasures of His Church, should condescend to impart them to me in this his holy benediction, which I so greatly desired. I receive it with the highest esteem and veneration, and it is truly an indescribable consolation to me. Should the Lord God vouchsafe to show me mercy, and to bring me to a place of safety, my first care shall be to beseech His Divine Majesty to aid this good Pastor, whose pardon I humbly ask for the insufficient service which I have rendered him when he has been pleased to employ me, and I trust that the God of Heaven will confirm his benediction, which has been the last of my consolations.'

The Confiteor being recited, he received that sacred benediction in the attitude of the most profound veneration, which affected the bystanders to tears. He then asked Monsignor Sagrista, that as he had imparted the pontifical benediction to him, he would give him his own, and the worthy Prelate gratified him. He then said, 'Now I have nothing more to desire, and I seem able to say, *'Nunc dimittis servum tuum Domine,'* for indeed such is my wish.' Monsignor Altoviti then said, 'Now, Father Mariano, that you have received the pontifical benediction, give a blessing to me.' He refused to do this, but only expressed an especial regard and respect for that prelate, who while he held Mariano's hands over his head, said, 'Pray to St. Philip for me, that he will obtain of the Lord, that he may ever hold my head in his hands,' which the invalid heard with delight. Many other prelates, cavaliers, and persons of distinction, also asked for his blessing, but he always modestly declined giving it. To a priest of rank, who earnestly asked it, he replied, *'Major non debet a minore benedici—The greater should not be blessed by the less.'* He excused himself in the same way to Monsignor Bottini, saying, 'O, you fill me with confusion! This to a miserable creature like me!' However, pressing his hands many times on his head, he repeated, 'Paradise! Paradise! May we meet, Monsignor, in Paradise!' He showed the same reluctance to P. de los Velos, Procurator General of the Discalced Carmelite Fathers, in Spain, who most submissively asked his blessing, and

who said, on leaving his room, that he had never found a man, who had satisfied his spirit more than Mariano. He thus refused to bless the others, but either prayed for them, or with an angelic voice and countenance, gave them an augury of Paradise, commending himself to the prayers of all. To Signor Carlo Antonio Pucinelli, agent to Cardinal Piccolomini, Archbishop of Siena, after having welcomed him with marks of particular regard, he gave an injunction to salute the Cardinal, his former most kind lord, and to tell him that the true riches are those of Paradise, repeating this twice. He was in the same humble disposition as to giving his blessing even to his two nephews, Alessandro Abate Sozzini, and Pietro Berlingucci, the first of whom, on his entrance, kissing his hand, again and again besought him to give it him with many tears ; but he, with his wonted humility, excused himself, declaring himself unworthy to impart it ; but as he continued his entreaty, that he would at least give him some word for remembrance, he thus addressed him in very grave and serious words, with increased recollection, and in a truly ecclesiastical spirit : ‘Nephew, live as a good ecclesiastic, and do not plunge into state affairs ; for, “Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity ;” ’ and, contrary to his custom, he gave him many unusual caresses, pressed his head strongly, and added, ‘Now, farewell, till we meet in Paradise ; go, go ;’ and with these words of happy augury, he took leave of him, and Signor Pietro, his

great-nephew, by his sister's side, was immediately introduced, to whom, when he likewise asked his blessing, he replied, 'I am unworthy to give it, but should God make me a partaker of His glory, I will ask it for you of Him, and also for your mother and all her family;' and when Signor Pietro also asked for some remembrance, he pressed his head closely to him, saying, 'Nephew, remember that you have time to do the good which I have not been wise enough to do. Now, farewell till we meet in Paradise, where relationships are confirmed for ever;' and once more pressing his head, he took leave of him. Meanwhile, in order to prepare himself for the coming mercies of his Lord, he delighted in frequently imploring help from her who is the Mother of mercy; therefore, he would have the 'Ave Maris Stella' repeated many times to him in a loud voice with pauses, enjoying those epithets which the Church applies to the Mother of God; and once when it was ended, he said, 'It is truly beautiful,' and he loved to hear it repeated again and again.

Cardinal Rocci came to see him, and wishing that Father Mariano should either bless him or give him some instruction, the humble servant of God refused to do this, but recommended the converted heretics to him, preserving to his life's end that glowing zeal which he had felt during his whole life for the propagation of the Catholic faith, for which he would willingly have exposed himself to every danger; and to one who came from the college which he had in a

great measure erected by his industry and zeal, he said with much fervour, that he must maintain the holy faith, 'For which,' added he, 'let us, if necessary, shed our very blood.' In the evening, at about eleven, with the assistance of Cardinal Rocci and many religious, he with great devotion received the Holy Oil. He constantly held the lighted candle in his hand, desiring that it might burn till his death, causing that first to be burned which had been given in our Church, then one which was given him by the Arch-confraternity of the Most Holy Trinity of Pilgrims, and, lastly, that which was sent him by the most Reverend Father Oliva, of the Society of Jesus. He responded to all the prayers; and lay in such serenity, that he seemed to have made that sentence of St. Gregory his own, '*Cum tempus propinquæ mortis advenerit, de gloria retributionis hilarescit*—When the time of approaching death draws near, he rejoices in the glory of his reward.'

The ceremony being ended, the Cardinal said, that he hoped to see him again in Paradise. 'O blessed day for me,' replied he, 'should I be found worthy of it.' Just then his great friend, Father Bonfilii, a good servant of God, of the order of St. Dominic, addressed him, 'Father Mariano, cupio dissolvi et esse cum Christo—I desire to be dissolved and be with Christ.' 'O utinam—O I wish it,' replied he, and he conversed with that pious religious with such sentiments of reciprocal charity, that the latter left the chamber of the venerable sufferer with

such a conviction and esteem of his goodness, that he afterwards said, 'I thought I beheld St. Martin all intent on God, with that tranquillity of spirit, serenity, and patience in his countenance with which he bore his illness ; so that I could not look at him sufficiently.' Amongst his other requests to Mariano, one was, that he would pray to God soon to remove him from this world, and, if the conjecture be not too bold, the effect of this prayer was but too quickly seen ; this pious religious having passed from this life to a better, April 10th, 1681, by a death truly precious in the sight of the Lord, without any previous illness, after having that night assisted at matins, and whilst he was actually kneeling in prayer in his cell, in which attitude he was found dead. He used similar expressions of holy and sincere kindness to Father Tommasi, a Theatine, to whom he had said a few days previously, 'Pray for me to your uncle, Father Carlo,' (this was a man of holy life, who died in the year 1675, and who was in Mariano's closest confidence.) 'Pray for me to your uncle, Father Carlo, that he will prepare me a fair place in heaven, where he dwells.' He also used the same gladsome and charitable expressions to other seculars as well as religious, to all of whom he expressed his cordiality by gestures, being unable to speak much. In the night, at about the fourth hour, seeing some fathers who were assisting him, he begged them to give him a private commendation of the soul, in anticipation of that which he hoped in the

morning to receive from the Superior, with the attendance of all the fathers. This, however, was afterwards deferred till the evening of Monday.

On Sunday Cardinal Cybo was pleased to repeat the honour of his visit, which he made yet more gratifying and profitable by the devout feelings which he expressed, suggesting to the sick man various ejaculatory prayers, '*Recordare Jesu pie, quod sum causa tuæ viæ, &c. Maria Mater gratiæ, mater misericordiæ,*' &c. '*Iter para tutum, ut videntes Jesum, semper collætémur.*' He then assured him, that his soul should be accompanied by the help of the Holy Sacrifices and multiplied suffrages. He encouraged him with the hope of Paradise, where he trusted again to see him, and with expressions of great esteem and regard took his leave, leaving the spirit of the sufferer greatly consoled. He then caused the attendants to read the death of Gabriel Tana, a disciple of St. Philip, in which are related his grievous temptations, and the continual assistance of St. Philip, which rendered him entirely victorious; and whilst listening to this reading, he would continue to hold in his hand the palm of olive-branches, which is usually distributed on Palm Sunday, first devoutly kissing the cross, and then the leaves of the palm itself. Being questioned on the mystery of this ceremony, he said, 'The prayers of the Church, the triumph of Christ, symbol of mercy, symbol of victory;' and then added with great fervour, 'O Christ, be victo-

rious in this soul, that it may wear the palm in heaven; you may find all in the Missal, in the benediction of the palms;' signifying that what he had said was authorized by the Church in her prayers for that ceremony.

In the evening, following the example and counsel of St. Augustine, he heard with most serious attention the Seven Penitential Psalms recited aloud by two priests, and by various movements expressed the feelings which he experienced successively during the recital of those sacred verses. He took supper with some difficulty, and, raising a finger to heaven, showed that he aspired to a supper there, and not here, and after a Father had repeated these words to him, 'Ut edatis et bibatis super mensam meam in Regno meo; non nostris meritis, sed sola dignatione misericordiæ Dei—That you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom: not by our merits, but the sole condescension of God's mercy,' he showed especial joy at such hopes of happiness, which still continued to increase in him every time he called to mind the merits of the Blood of Christ, and the most powerful intercession of the Blessed Virgin. This great confidence was, however, accompanied by a profound humility, and on a priest's saying to him, that the Most Blessed Virgin and St. Philip took care of his children, and that he, therefore, should not fear, he showed what was his confidence, and, at the same time, his opinion of himself, by replying 'Yes, even of the untoward.'

On Monday it being suggested that St. Charles

before his death had caused himself to be covered with a hair-cloth and sprinkled with ashes, in token of penance, he showed his esteem for this protest and action of the Saint, for whom he had always entertained an especial veneration. But then, fearing to do something more apparent than real, he replied, that being a sinner, he did not wish to be reputed a false and hypocritical penitent. He, therefore, adopted the expedient of doing this in private, and with only the attendance of four priests, the cilice of St. Charles, preserved in our sacristy, was laid upon him, and he having been sprinkled with ashes, various prayers were recited for him, accommodated to the ceremony, and taken from devout books, with invocation of those Saints who had used that form before their death. Afterwards the stole of our holy Father was applied to him, the act being accompanied by invocation of the Saint, and then his face, pallid and discoloured by illness, was observed to become on a sudden bright and glowing, and to assume an unwonted and indescribable beauty.

The compunction which he displayed on these occasions was extreme, and when all was over he turned to one of the attendants, saying, "The usual consolations!" In the evening in the presence of Cardinal Rocci and Monsignor Archbishop Bottini, the Superior, together with the fathers and brothers, commended his soul to God. He was most attentive, and replied to all the prayers by various movements, according to his interior emotions in hearing them, and chiefly

in imploring the aid of St. Michael and the other holy Angels, with whom he had during life cultivated a particular and devout confidence, being every day accustomed to invoke them with various prayers drawn from the Holy Scriptures, which he concluded with these words: 'Ut ad beatos Ordines vestros prout divino amori placuerit, assumamur, Deum vobiscum in ævum amaturi et glorificaturi—That we may be assumed to your blessed choirs as it shall please the Divine Love, to love and glorify God with you for ever.' He found great difficulty in taking a little food, but tried to do so in obedience to the Infirmarians; and a Father saying afterwards, 'Beati qui ad cœnam nuptiarum Agni vocati sunt—Blessed are they who are called to the marriage-supper of the Lamb,' he expressed unspeakable joy at the happy augury.

On being told by Father Luca that the following morning was the 17th of September, the day of Cardinal Bellarmine's death, he immediately with both his hands made a sign that he must go, and when those near him replied, 'You wish to go to him in Paradise?' 'Yes, yes,' he replied. Don Mattia Peroni recollected that some months before he had, as was his habit when ill, caused the Life of the Cardinal to be read to him, and that when the reader came to his death, after having heard it read through, he asked twice on what day he died, and on being told that it was on the 17th of September, he replied, 'Good, good!' and said no more. The Father Superior, seeing the suffering which he endured,

especially from the affection of the throat, made signs of compassion, and spoke some words of comfort to him. 'O,' replied he, 'how precious are these days! I have never merited them.' And to another who expressed a similar sympathy, and encouraged him to endurance, he replied, 'A few sufferings and many rewards!' And acknowledging in the nature of the disease the justice of God in punishing his faults with suitable suffering, he humbly said, '*Peccata oris, peccata linguæ, peccata gulæ*—Sins of the mouth, sins of the tongue, sins of the taste;' as though the complaint in his mouth had originated in the faults which he feared to have committed either in eating or speaking; and the physician having ordered him to continue taking restorative broth, with a few drops of julep in it, he sighed and said, 'And what does all this avail me?' A Father replied, 'It helps you to do the Will of God;' on hearing which, he bowed his head and took it. When he made his confession the Father suggested to him to renew his firm resolution of never again offending God, when, with great energy, he exclaimed, 'Rather hell, rather a thousand hells, than ever offend God more!' At about nine o'clock they thought of giving him some slight refreshment, which caused him extreme pain, in consequence of the complaint in his throat, which Dr. Tiracorda thought to be something supernatural, since naturally, after so many evacuations, this complaint would not have continued on him, and he observed, 'Truly, God sends the suffering to one who knows how to bear

it, for these ulcers in the throat are a kind of martyrdom, on account of the intense pain which they occasion ;' and he declared himself much edified in seeing him bear such exquisite pain without a murmur. He showed how much he suffered in taking food, but was told that he must take it that he might be more conformed to the sufferings of Jesus Christ, when he took it without hesitation. He had lain down to rest, when suddenly turning round to one who was sitting by his side, he made signs that he was going. Many other fathers assembled and recited the Litanies and other prayers, to which he tried to reply, but being interrupted by his difficulty of breathing, he made a sign that he wished for a little quiet, and about eleven his difficulty of breathing increased, indicating the approach of death. He was assisted by various prayers, which were successively made, and to which he listened attentively, reciting them sometimes when he was able. He was then asked if he wished for a renewed absolution, to make an internal act of sorrow, and to give some sign if unable to speak ; but he, who had well settled the affairs of his soul, and wished to confide more in the Divine mercy than in his own diligence, replied, 'I am well as I am.' He was observed to express great signs of comfort when the attendants reminded him of the Blood of Jesus Christ, of the Blessed Virgin, and our holy Father, whom, together with his Angel, he had chosen as executors of his spiritual testament, as appears from these notes in his

own hand-writing, in which he thus devoutly disposes of himself:—

‘ Testamentum coram B. V. Angelo, &c.

A signo Crucis
Protestatio Fidei

Spes

Caritas in Deum

Gratiarum actio

Contritio

Venia data

Venia petita

Oblatio sui

Acceptatio morbi ac mortis

Omnimoda et irrevocabilis conformitas

Dissensus a quacumque tentatione ac motu

Contra Legem Dei

Donatio cordis, potentiarum, cogitationum,

affectuum, passionum

Sanctissimæ Trinitati

Et Christo Domino,

Virtualis petitio Sacramentorum

Executores B. V. Angelus, S. Pater.

Ipsi advocati ad tribunal Judicis ac tutores

Electio sepulturæ in corde Christi

Petitio precum ab Amicis.’

‘ My will before the B. Virgin, my Angel, &c.

By the sign of the Cross

Protestation of Faith

Hope

Charity towards God

Giving of thanks

Contrition

Pardon given

Pardon asked

Oblation of self

Acceptance of sickness and death

Utter and irrevocable conformity

Dissent from every temptation and motion against the Law
of God

Gift of heart, powers, thoughts, affections, passions,
 To the Most Holy Trinity
 And Christ our Lord
 Virtual petition of the Sacraments
 Executors, the B. Virgin, my Angel, the holy Father,
 They too the advocates at the tribunal of the Judge, and
 protectors
 Burial-place chosen in the Heart of Christ
 Petition for prayers of friends.'

He was then reminded of F. Pietro Conso-
 lini, who would come and conduct him to Para-
 dise, at which thought he expressed great delight.
 The good Father had previously desired to be
 buried at the feet of his beloved master, in the
 spirit, doubtless, of St. Maximus, Bishop of Turin,
 who persuaded people to obtain a burial near
 the bones of the Saints, saying to them, 'In
 nullo ab ipsis separari poterimus, si sociemur
 ipsis non tam religione quam corpore.' He had
 also in his modesty requested to be buried with-
 out a coffin, but in this the Fathers did not think
 fit to gratify him.

All of a sudden he was seen to fix his eyes
 as if in admiration, and having continued to do
 so for some time, the admiration changed into
 joy, and thus, gladdened by the foretaste of
 the Divine Mercy, he placidly closed his eyes
 and slept in the Lord, at a quarter past twelve
 (according to the Roman time,) on Tuesday, 17th
 of September, 1670, a day dedicated to the
 commemoration of the Sacred Stigmas of St.
 Francis, and on which was kept the Festival of
 the Holy Name of Mary, so that Father Mariane
 went to celebrate with her the Festival of that

Name which he had borne so faithfully and consistently on earth.

The body was borne into the Church, where a great number of persons assembled throughout the day, urged by their devotion, cutting the under part of his vestments, kissing his hands, and touching them with their coronas and rosaries. Cardinal Rocci, and also Monsignors Bottini, Motola, Buffi, Crescenzi, Caprara, and Odescalchi, desired to kiss his hands. The noviciate of the Regulars of St. Paul, Monsignor Manfroni, Dean of the Chamber, Padre Cottone, his great friend, the Procurator General of the Carthusians, Abate Michael Angelo Ricci, Father Benci, the Theatine, the Superior of the Mission, the Prior of St. Paul, some penitentiaries of St. Peter, and other religious and persons of note. There were Cardinals Ludovisio, Norfolk, and Rocci, who celebrated Mass in our Church for the repose of his soul, and his Holiness was pleased to do the same himself in his chapel, thus accompanying his soul to the presence of God by suffrages, and expressing an especial esteem for his memory among men.

The rumour of his death spread through all the provinces of Italy, and even beyond it, and was heard by all with deep grief for his loss, and extraordinary applause for his virtues.

At this time there lived in the city of Catanzaro, in Calabria, Francis Ledhù, a Genevese, who, having been converted in Rome by Father Mariano, had been placed by him in the service of Don Carlo Politi, a most exemplary Priest, who

had taken him from Rome to that city, his native place. Francesco heard the news of Mariano's death, which he felt most acutely, when having been taken ill of a simple tertian fever, a few days after he was heard on the sixth night to exclaim, 'Father ! Father !' His brother Giovanni, who was in a bed by his side, hearing him speak thus, asked him what had happened to him, when he said, 'Nothing, nothing,' and then immediately added, 'Come near, brother, I wish to say a word to you,' and took him by the hand. 'Brother,' said he, 'I am going, for I have been so warned ; in the meantime, be a good Christian, avoid bad conversation, be constant to the Catholic faith, because we must all die, and I die content, since God most Blessed has called me by His grace to the Catholic faith, I die content.' In the morning Giovanni related all that had passed to Don Carlo, who went to visit the invalid. The latter on his entrance, inquired if it were true that Father Mariano was dead ; and Don Carlo having replied that it was most true, Francesco instantly said, 'Then I shall die, and it will be useless to give me any but spiritual remedies, for during the past night that same Father Mariano has appeared to me, saying, 'As I have led thee to the true faith, and thou hast been obedient to me, so now I would have thee to be obedient still, and come with me.' Thinking that he wished to take me to Rome, I replied that I would willingly go, and after having given me many caresses, he disappeared. Now then give me the Sacraments, and I shall

die content.' Don Carlo thought the narration of the sick man so worthy of credit, that notwithstanding there was then no apparent danger in the illness, nor anything that threatened a fatal termination, he thought it right to yield to his earnest and devout entreaties, and caused the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist to be brought him that same morning, and the sickness increasing soon after, his death attested the truth of the prediction. He died with signs of great Christian piety, repeating many times as his agony approached, that he was sorry that he had not strength to make greater acts of the love of God. His death took place on the 6th of November, within the Octave of the Commemoration of the Dead; and on the 2nd of the same month there died at Frascati, Cardinal Bernardino Rocci of illustrious memory, to whom Father Mariano had frequently addressed these words, 'Farewell, till we meet in Paradise,' which his piety interpreted to be a presage of his approaching death, as in truth they were. God has not failed to continue to give by various graces proofs of His servant's sanctity. In the city of Siena, Mariano's native country, dwelt Margarita, widow of Pasquino Dati of Monterone, and on the 24th of April, 1681, she was attacked with a high fever, which the physicians thought dangerous. In the meantime they ordered her to be bled, and as the disease increased, they said on the following day that she should be confessed, as she had malignant fever, &c., and the pain had increased to such a degree, that Margarita lay in

bed in such utter prostration of strength, as to be unable to raise her hand to her mouth. At this crisis Ursula Faleri came to visit her, and finding her in such great prostration of strength, she with much charity gave her her food with her own hands, and then went to hear Mass in the Church of Santo Spirito, where she stayed about an hour, and then returned to visit the sufferer; but what was her amazement, to find that she had risen from her bed, having the free use of her hands and body, and to hear her exclaim, 'Signora Ursula, Signora Ursula, I am cured!' Ursula replied, 'This is a great miracle; whence is it, and how was it wrought?' Margarita answered with great delight, 'The Lord has cured me by means of a piece of a vest which belonged to Father Sozzini, a good servant of God, who has died in Rome. It was sent to me by the noble Lady Faustina Ghigi, the wife of Signor Galgano Sozzini, nephew of Father Mariano. On receiving it I kissed it and caused it to be placed on my head by Caterina, my daughter, and having invoked the assistance of the said Father, I suddenly found myself delivered from my great sufferings, which seemed to leave my body as though an inner garment had been taken off me. The fever and pain ceased, and now I am free, well, and in good health.'

In the monastery of St. Clare, in the same city, there was a nun named Sister Diodata Mangoni, who had had her wrist dislocated and the bones fractured by a fall, with exfoliation; and though her brother Carlo Mangoni, a surgeon, had for

three successive months applied remedies, she had not derived the desired benefit from them; neither could she use that hand in lifting weights or in anything laborious. In the meantime, her brother thought of applying the waters of Avignon, though he had little hope in this remedy, when one day, when she suffered more than usual, she was advised to have recourse to the intercession of Father Mariano Sozzini, who had died in Rome in great repute for virtue, and to procure from Signora Caterina Sozzini a small piece of his vest. As soon as she had obtained it, before applying it to the part affected, she wished to perform some preliminary devotion; and it being the Octave of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin, she confessed and communicated for this intention. Having done this, on the following evening, July 3rd, she begged the Mother Abbess to place the relic on the affected hand; but before doing so, the Abbess exhorted her to say three Paters and three Aves with her, in devotion to the Most Holy Trinity, that He would vouchsafe to grant the desired favour, through the merits and intercession of Father Mariano. This devotion being ended, the Abbess took the piece of the vest, folded as it was in paper, and bound it on the hand, and the invalid composing herself to rest, slept soundly during the whole night, which before she had been unable to do, as the pain only allowed her to take very interrupted rest, and on rising in the morning she found the hand free from swelling, and strong enough for lifting weights and for other labour. Full of joy, she

sent to tell her brother that he need not try to procure any Avignon water for her, as she was already cured, and had continued well and able to undertake the common labours of the monastery. The surgeon, her brother, coming afterwards to see her, and finding her thus healed and well, said, 'Thank God, for you have received a great grace.' A still more striking grace was granted in the month of September, 1681, to Catherine Accarigi, the wife of Signor Muzio Pecci, a noble Sienese. This lady suffered from dropsy, which was so far gone as to have produced by the swelling an evident deformity of the body, with general emaciation, and such prostration of strength as to make her almost incapable of moving. Signor Gio. Carlo Barbi, a physician of Siena, seeing her in such danger, resolved to begin at once with the proper remedies, since the disease occasioned oppression of the chest and swelling of the legs, preventing rest at night, so that she was obliged generally to be bolstered up in her bed, so great was the quantity of the water within her. The physician, therefore, fearing some sudden and unfavourable change, gave her new remedies to hasten the cure, and prevent her being found some morning dead in bed. Some days before, this lady had received from Signora Caterina Sozzini, a small piece of Father Mariano's vest, and she had been told by Signora Caterina to apply it to herself, and to commend herself to the same Father, as he had obtained other graces, as well in Siena as elsewhere, and that there was

the more reason to hope he would obtain one for her, as he was her mother's brother.

The sick lady received the relic with devotion, but shutting it up in an *escrutoire*, deferred the application. But, afterwards, on hearing from the physician and others the urgency of the case, she felt a strong desire to apply it, but to mark the favour more, she thought it well to delay till the nativity of the Blessed Virgin, on which day, as being a festival, she wished first to confess and communicate. With these dispositions she went to bed on the evening of the 8th of September, and with confidence placed the piece of the vest on her swollen body, with alternate feelings of confidence in the intercession of the servant of God, and of fear lest she should be unworthy of it. During the night she felt nothing, but on rising in the morning she found herself free from illness, the usual swelling of her body being gone, and her legs also free from swelling. She was so much astonished at the great favour which she had received, that she did not recover from her amazement during the whole day. The maid who dressed her, perceiving that she no longer had that tumour of the body, was also stupified, and inquired what she had done that she was so suddenly cured, when she showed her that piece of the vestment, saying, 'This has cured me,' and then told her from whom it came, and how she had applied it on the preceding evening. But the wonder increased, when on the following morning she found herself able to walk

the distance of half a mile, and to hear two Masses kneeling, whereas she had before been unable to keep that position even during the elevation. She continues well, nor has she felt any return of her former complaint; on the contrary, as her physician deposes, she is free from illness, her strength is restored, her colour revived, and all her limbs greatly invigorated. What manifests this to be a favour from heaven, is the fact, that she was cured without any natural evacuation; for the same physician declares, that by all the rules of art, this disease could not be cured without the application of remedies, but would in a short time have terminated her life. The physician wished to prescribe some medicine to remove the root of the disease, in case, as he said, there should be some latent remains of it, adding, that though God worked miraculously, we must also do our part; but Catherine, full of confidence in the assistance of the servant of God, replied, 'I have obtained the favour, I feel well, I wish to do no more. He who has done the greater thing, can also do the lesser.' Nor has her confidence deceived her, for, without the assistance of medicine, she has always continued well, though she has not even observed an exact regimen in her diet, as is usually done by those who have a tendency to similar infirmities. All these favours granted by God through the merits of His servant, are publicly authenticated under the hand of a notary, as may be seen from narratives and processes transmitted from the places in

which they occurred. These are the memoranda which I have thought it right to transmit to your Reverence for common consolation and encouragement; and in conclusion, I again, as at the beginning, borrow the words of the servant of God himself, using, like him, the language of the Apostle, '*Itaque consolamini invicem in verbis istis*—Therefore console one another with these words.' "

THE INSTRUCTIONS
OF THE
VENERABLE SERVANT OF GOD,
FATHER MARIANO SOZZINI,
OF THE CONGREGATION OF THE ORATORY OF ROME,
FOR A
PREFECT OF NOVICES.

COPIED FROM A MANUSCRIPT OF HIS, KEPT IN THE LIBRARY
OF THE VALLICELLA.

THE MASTER OF THE NOVICES.

VIRTUES WHICH ARE REQUISITE IN THE MASTER OF
THE NOVICES.

1. HUMILITY. 2. Gentleness. 3. Charity, like that of a mother in temporal matters, like that of a father in spirituals, and equal towards all. 4. Zeal. 5. Prayer. 6. Reading.

THE WISDOM OF THE NOVICE-MASTER.

1. He should be ready to take counsel with those who are advanced.

2. He should not too quickly believe a novice to be either already a Saint, or already hopeless.

3. He should make it his business to be beloved.

4. He should sometimes dissemble faults, and especially where there is not hope of their correction.

5. He should lead on by degrees, and not begin with things that are heroic.

6. He should find out the disposition of each one, even by means of his past life, his faults, his passions, &c., that he may know how to consult thereupon.

THE NEW BEGINNER

1. Should take to prayer and mortification with all his heart.

2. His master will from the first take care to make the novice feel kindly towards himself.

3. He should be instructed in the sacred reading necessary for the Institute, in singing, &c.

THE YOUTHFUL NOVICE

1. Should be more mildly reprov'd.

2. Should be admonished more frequently and with greater sweetness.

3. But little reliance should be placed on his youthful inconstancy: an account of his pursuits should often be demanded, nor should his promises be relied on.

4. His health should be taken care of, and the severity of discipline be tempered for him.

THE NOVICE MORE ADVANCED IN LIFE

1. Should be more strictly examined and more severely tried, as being one who has grown used to the world, &c. and become rooted in his faults, and hardened in his adherence to his own judgment and will.

2. He tries to secure for himself a more easy life, and to introduce it into the Institute, even at the expense of contention.

3. He should be spoken to apart and seriously, upon the subject of making a manly conflict, beyond those who are his juniors.

4. Great things should be set before him, and opportunities afforded him.

5. Let him not be a stranger to fervour. Let him also be encouraged; for oftentimes those who set out late outrun those who start before them.

THE NOVICE OF NOBLE BIRTH.

1. Take care that through him the strictness of the Institute be not slackened.

2. He should be treated gently where the customs of the Institute will permit it.

3. He should often be visited, his health both in soul and body should be made of great account, and he should be allured on to sanctity by sweetness.

THE NOVICE WHO HAS LEARNING

1. Should be made as a little one in the school of Christ, as one unlearned, &c., being

assured, that knowledge acquired, except under obedience, will be hurtful.

2. He should conceal his knowledge always, and everywhere.

3. He should actively set about mortifying his own judgment, and should be exercised in obediences contrary to his own judgment.

4. He should not presume to teach his fellow-novices who may privately consult him.

5. He should know, that in the house of the Lord piety alone is of value.

6. He should be trained with greater care, as being more fitted for promoting the glory of God and the salvation of his neighbour.

WISDOM IN DIRECTION.

1. Any one newly entered should be asked, whether his conscience is at peace, and whether he is troubled with remorse for anything; and if necessary, he should be recommended to make a general confession, that he may not put his hand to the plough with an uneasy mind, and then again look back.

2. He should examine into, and carefully weigh the peculiar spirit by which the novice is guided by God, and do his utmost to second it; for example, he should observe by what affection the novice feels himself most softened, moved to compunction, inflamed in the pursuit of virtues, and strengthened in temptations; as, for instance, whether it is by meditation on the last things, or by the infancy of Christ, or by

the Passion, or by some other mystery ; also, whether by changing or continuing the same meditation ; also, whether by ejaculatory prayers, &c., provided there be no delusion, which is discovered by the fruit. On which account it is sometimes useful to try a change. In like manner, he should examine into the natural qualities of the novice, his intellectual powers, capacity of loving, force of imagination, bodily health, predominant passions, and faulty habits.

3. When he has examined his natural and spiritual qualifications, he should determine what degree of active, or contemplative, or mixed duties, ought to be prescribed him ; community observances, to which all are equally bound, being ever kept whole and inviolate.

4. Above all things, he should observe discretion, and be very sparing in imposing burdens beyond the common observances.

WISDOM IN THE TRIAL OF THE NOVICES.

1. An office or employment may be entrusted to a novice, that thereby his obedience, humility, meekness, unchecked passions, &c., may be tried.

2. Some one should be asked to agree to try the novice in something that he has to do ; to see whether he show himself to be constant, truly obedient, ready to submit his intellect, &c.

3. Sometimes the novice-master should pretend to be angry, and speak harshly, &c., to the novice.

4. Sometimes he should enjoin things that seem unreasonable, and that are beyond the novice's powers.

5. Sometimes by an equivocation he will impute things to them that they have not done, to try their humility, &c.

7. Sometimes he may make them wait for an interview, or put off giving them an answer for a long time.

WISDOM WITH THOSE WHO ARE TEMPTED.

1. He should maintain a heroic patience, should labour indefatigably, should give him counsel, pray and offer sacrifice for him, console him, &c. He should not be surprised at him, nor give up hope, especially if the novice be in other respects good.

2. He should not add affliction to his affliction, but deal with him more gently, and more easily dispense him in something, &c.

3. He should teach him the way of resisting temptations; and in the case of a scrupulous person, he should enjoin him above all things to declare his ridiculous doubts publicly to his fellow-novices to be settled.

WISDOM IN RECREATION.

1. Nothing that can cause annoyance should on any account be said; but whatever may give pleasure, so that it be not worldly, should be freely spoken.

2. Faults should not be corrected at that time, unless for some grave cause, and then in very few words: mortification should be put off to another time.

3. Mirth, provided it is modest, should by all means be allowed.

4. Each novice should be permitted to be as merry as he pleases; and thus, when the reins are given to nature, the character and disposition of each will be easily seen.

WISDOM IN LEADING THE NOVICES ON TOWARDS
PERFECTION.

1. He should animate the novices to the chief duties which the Institute prescribes.

2. He should hear and help on each of them, if possible, every other day.

3. Every year an examen may be given them for the space of two or three days, that the predominant passion of each one, and the virtue which he stands most in need of, may be discovered, and that weapons wherewith to conquer may be provided for him for his whole life.

4. Some kind of mortification devised according to the novice's wish, may be enjoined him to practise habitually, yet with discretion.

5. Some short and useful rule may be laid down; for instance, subordination is of three kinds, to God, to oneself, and to one's neighbour: to God, by faith, hope, charity, contrition, the presence of God, and conformity; to oneself,

by self-denial, and custody of the eyes and of the tongue; to one's neighbour, by loving him, by giving way to him, by helping him, by being pleased at his good, &c.

6. A rivalry may be set on foot among the novices, in the exercise of some virtue for about a fortnight; the conqueror to be rewarded with a prize, a Mass, a Rosary, &c.

7. On the more solemn feasts, to excite more ardent acts of the virtues before the Blessed Sacrament.

8. The novices may agree together to ask for some particular virtue for some time, with great confidence, before the Blessed Sacrament, and their master might head them.

9. The prayer of the master is an eminent means towards the progress of the novices.

EXHORTATION.

The end of it should be to purify, enlighten, and perfect: also to impress them with a knowledge and esteem of the Institute.

The beginning from the purgative way, meditation on the last things, the mortification of the passions, faults, and of the reason; afterwards it should go on to the passion of Christ our Lord. The love of God is to be regarded as the end of mortifications, not yet as an exercise.

The Manner should be by the way of love rather than of fear, without harshness, without giving orders, or loud speaking, or the severity of a master. Sometimes he should excuse, some-

times dissemble, sometimes blame the fault and not the guilty one.

The Matter, love of the Institute, a sense of the importance of the smallest things, love of virtue, hatred of vice, observance of the rules, preparation for Festivals.

The Fruit, practice.

It is sometimes well to ask about the things they have heard in the exhortation, and about the fruit. They ought perhaps to be advised to note down the points that are most useful to themselves.

THINGS TO BE GUARDED AGAINST.

1. Want of confidence of the novices with their master.
2. The communication of temptations to each other.
3. Particular friendships.
4. Over great care of themselves and of their health.
5. A liking for, and taking part in, the performance of an office not their own.
6. License arising by occasion of their office.

EXERCISES OF THE NOVICES.

1. The exercise of some special virtue may be proposed at the beginning of each month, and as it were for rivalry.
2. Every week also different virtues may be assigned to each of the novices, according to each one's request.

3. They should prepare themselves for the more sacred feasts.

4. Each one should keep his room clean, and keep out of it every kind of singularity, which might offend the eyes of any one, and should make it his own care to turn his room into an oratory.

