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**The Life of
Blessed Henry
Suso by Himself.**

Heinrich Seuse





The Life of Blessed Henry Suso by Himself.

Author(s): Seuse, Heinrich (or Suso, Heinrich) [1295-1366]

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Description: Imagine bearing a cross to remind you of Christ's sacrifice. This is a common practice in Christianity -- contemplating the pain Christ bore for our sins. But now imagine bearing a cross, literally. This is what Henry Suso did for much of his life. Suso was so adamant about feeling Christ's pain and being reminded of his own ineptitude that he drove nails and needles into a wooden cross and strapped it to his back. This practice of self-harm for religious purposes is known as mortification, and Suso's autobiography profiles a perfect example of this unique custom. Along with many chapters on his suffering and how he made it through, Suso writes of his family, his conversion, and how God blessed his work. This autobiography is a provoking look into Suso's life, and the intensity of his faith and actions will spur many believers to reevaluate their lifestyle and perhaps make some changes. We don't all have to wear a literal cross, but Suso will inspire many to think of Christ's sacrifice in a new way.

Abby Zwart

CCEL Staff Writer

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THE LIFE
OF
BLESSED HENRY SUSO
BY HIMSELF
Translated from the original German
BY
THOMAS FRANCIS KNOX,
PRIEST OF THE ORATORY



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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

THE Blessed Henry Suso was born at Ueberlingen, near Constance, on St. Benedict's-day, A.D. 1300. He was of ancient and noble descent both on his father's and mother's side. Out of devotion to his mother, who was a person of eminent holiness, he called himself by her maiden name of Seuss, Latinised into Suso, instead of taking his father's sur name, Von Berg. His baptismal name was Henry; but many years later, when he had attained to great holiness, God changed his name into Amandus, or Beloved. The Blessed Henry did not make this known to any one so long as he lived, but a record of it was discovered among his papers after his death. At the age of thirteen he entered the novitiate of the Dominican Convent at Constance, where he was admitted to the vows of religion, and after some years was sent to the convent of his Order at Cologne, to pursue his studies at that University. While there he made such great progress in learning that he was about to be promoted to the degree of doctor in theology. But he was forbidden to accept this honour by a voice from God within him saying:—Thou knowest well enough already how to give thyself to God and to draw other men to Him by thy preaching. From that time forth he began to preach with great zeal and fervour, and to devote himself to the conversion of sinners and the guidance of souls along the highest paths of mystical perfection. At length, after many years of unceasing labours and sufferings, he died at Ulm, on the feast of the Conversion of St. Paul, A.D. 1365, and was buried in the cloister of the Dominican Convent in that city. Two hundred and forty-eight years after this, when Ulm had become Protestant, the B. Henry's body was accidentally discovered, A.D. 1613, by some workmen who were digging the foundations for a new building. It was quite incorrupt, and lay there clothed in the habit of the Order, and emitted a fragrant odour. The workmen went in alarm to inform the burgomaster, who bade them fill up the grave and say nothing about it; adding, that he had always heard that the dead should be allowed to rest in peace. Meanwhile, during the absence of the workmen, a devout person went down into the grave:—and cut off part of the black mantle and white scapular—portions of which were afterwards distributed as relics among different Catholics. One of these relics came into the possession of Henry Murer, who has given an account of the discovery of the body in his *Helvetia Sancta*, published at Luzern A.D. 1648. At a later period, when Ulm was occupied by the French during one of their campaigns, they caused excavations to be made in the hope of discovering the sacred remains, but without success. The Blessed Henry has never been formally beatified, but his feast is kept by the Dominican Order on March 2d, with the approbation of Gregory XVI., granted April 16, 1831.

Such are the main outlines of B. Henry's external life and history. The details of the picture must be sought for in the brief record which he has himself left, us of his experiences in the ways of God.



The following translation has been made from the edition of the *B. Henry Suso's Life and Works*, edited by Cardinal Diepenbrock, Prince Bishop of Breslau in 1828. The text of the life is based upon a manuscript of the end of the fourteen century from the Royal Library at Munich, which the editor carefully collated with the earliest printed copies published at Augsburg A.D. 1482 and A.D. 1512.

Surius, the Carthusian, translated the *Life and Works* from the German into Latin. The first edition, dedicated to the Venerable Abbot Blossius, appeared at Cologne A.D. 1535. The rendering is singularly graceful and accurate, so far as the different genius of the two languages and the occasional imperfections of the German text used by Surius, principally in the last nine chapters, would permit.

A French translation by the Carthusian Le Cerf was published at Paris in 1586, and an Italian one by the Dominican Del Nente at Rome in 1651. The latter has been frequently reprinted, but it does not in any sense merit the name of a translation, as it is nothing more than a mere epitome or condensed abridgment of the original. Cartier has recently translated Del Nente's work into French, under the title of *Œuvres du B. Henri Suso*. The second edition appeared in 1856.


As the chief object of the present translator has been to provide a book of spiritual reading for the devout, he hesitated for some time whether or not to omit the last nine chapters, which treat for the most part of deep points of mystical theology in language which, from its antiquated character and excessive conciseness, is sometimes obscure, and is always difficult to translate into intelligible English without indulging in paraphrase. Surius has relegated these chapters to another part of the volume, under the title of "Appendix of certain sublime questions." Still, as Cardinal Diepenbrock observes, they really belong to the *Life*, and form part of it in the earliest manuscript and printed editions. On the whole, it seemed better to include these chapters in the present translation. They contain several passages of wonderful beauty, which every one will read with pleasure. They are, moreover, a protest against the errors of pantheism and quietism, to which a spirit of false mysticism naturally tends, and against which the *B. Henry* often raised his voice in warning. Lastly, their absence would leave one side of the *B. Henry's* life wholly unrepresented. For they serve to remind us that if his personal and experimental acquaintance with mystical theology was great, he was no less conversant with it as a science, and could treat with learning and accuracy the many deep and subtle questions which it suggests.

The Oratory, London,

Feast of St. Richard, 1865.



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PROLOGUE.¹

THE following book speaks throughout in an instructive manner of the life of a beginner, and contains, for those who look beneath the surface, information respecting the proper way in which a beginner should order his outer and inner man so as to be in harmony with God's all-lovely will. And since good works are undoubtedly a better guide, and sometimes shed a brighter light into a man's heart than mere words, therefore the book recounts, as examples, many different holy actions, which really and truly took place just as they are related. The book also tells of a man's progress in holiness; that is, how, by avoiding things, by sufferings, and by exercises, he may break through his unmortified animal nature, and arrive at great and exalted dignity. Moreover, since there are some men who, with courageous hearts, strive to grasp at what is highest and best, and yet, from want of the necessary knowledge to discriminate, go astray and miss the road, therefore this book gives instruction how to distinguish rightly between a true and false use of reason in spiritual things; and it teaches the orderly and proper course by which a man may attain to the unalloyed truth of a blessed and perfect life.

It should be also mentioned, that the pages of this book lay for many years locked up in secret, awaiting the Servitor's death; for he was in very truth reluctant to disclose himself to any one by means of them, so long as he lived. At length, however, his reason told him that, in these days of the decline of the human race, it would be better and safer that the book, by God's permission, should be submitted to his superiors while he was still living, and could answer for its truth in all points, than after his death. And this, moreover, even though it should fall out that certain ignorant men, whose words are in no way worthy of account, should pass false and perverted judgments upon it, either because they would not regard the Servitor's good intention in the matter, or because they were unable, from want of spiritual refinement, to comprehend any thing higher than what they had experienced in themselves. Besides it was quite possible that the book might, after his death, come into the possession of lukewarm and unspiritual men, who would not give themselves the trouble to communicate it for God's glory to those who would receive it eagerly; and in this way the book might perish without fruit. Or again, it might chance to fall into the hands of men intellectually blind or morally bad, who from their sinful dislike of it might suppress it, as has often happened in other cases. Therefore, with the divine assistance, he took courage, and extracted from this book the sublimest thoughts and the most elevated teaching which it contains, and himself gave these extracts to a learned doctor, named Master Bartholomew,

¹ The following passages are taken from the Prologue prefixed by the B. Henry Suso to a manuscript copy of his Life and Writings. They contain all in it that relates to the Life. The Prologue is to be found in the ancient printed copies, and is quoted by Diepenbrock in his preface.

to read; a man richly endowed by God with virtues and graces, and of approved experience in spiritual science, and furthermore a Prelate with supreme jurisdiction over the order of Friars Preachers throughout Germany. The Servitor humbly gave him up the book, and he read it through with great satisfaction of heart, and pronounced that it was, all of it, as it were, a kernel of hidden truth drawn from Holy Writ for all clear-sighted men.

Afterwards, when the ordinary teaching had been added to it, in order that every man might find there what would suit him, and the Servitor was about to lay this part also before the Prelate, the good God withdrew from hence this noble Master. The Servitor, on hearing of his death, was exceedingly afflicted, for he knew not what to do. He therefore betook himself with great earnestness to the Eternal Wisdom, and prayed that it might be shown him what was the best thing to do in this affair. After a time his prayer was heard, and the aforementioned Master appeared to him in a bright vision, and told him that it was God's good will that the book should be henceforth communicated to all good-hearted men, who with a right intention and an eager longing might desire to have it.

He then who wishes earnestly to become a good and blessed man, and who longs after special intimacy with God, or who has received a token of God's love in heavy sufferings, as God's way is with His peculiar friends,—such a man will find this book a help and comfort. It will also serve as a guide for good-hearted men to divine truth, as well as teach men of reason the right road to supreme bliss.



**THE
LIFE OF BLESSED HENRY SUSO.**

CHAPTER I.

Introductory.

THESE was a Friar Preacher in Germany, by birth a Swabian,—may his name be written in the Book of the Living!—whose desire was to become and to be called a Servitor of the Eternal Wisdom. Now it happened that he became acquainted with a holy and illuminated person, who was in poverty and suffering as regards this world. This poor sufferer was a woman; and she used to beseech the Servitor to tell her something about suffering from his own experience, that her suffering heart might gather strength from it. And she acted thus towards him for a long time. When he came to see her, she drew from him by confidential questionings the manner of his beginning and progress in the interior life, as well as certain exercises and sufferings which he had passed through: all which he told her in spiritual confidence. As she found comfort and direction in these things, she wrote them down, to be a help for herself and others; and she did this by stealth, so that he knew not of it. Later on, when he found out this ghostly theft, he reprov'd her for it, and, forcing her to give up to him the writing, he burnt all of it that was there. When, however, the rest of it was given to him, and he was going to treat it in like manner, he was stopped by a heavenly message from God forbidding it. Thus what follows remained unburnt, for the most part just as she had written it with her own hand. Many good instructions were also added to it by him, after her death, in her name.



The first beginning of the Servitor's perfect conversion to God took place when he was in his eighteenth year. And though he had worn the religious habit for the five previous years, his soul was still dissipated within him; and it seemed to him, that if God only preserved him from weightier sins, which might tarnish his good name, there was no need to be over-careful about ordinary faults. Nevertheless, he was so kept by God the while, that he had always an unsatisfied feeling within him, whenever he turned himself to the objects of his desires, and it seemed to him that it must be something quite different which could bring peace to his wild heart, and he was ill at ease amid his restless ways. He felt at all times a gnawing reproach within, and yet he could not help himself, until the kind God set him free from it, by turning him. His companions marvelled at the speedy change, wondering how it had come over him; and one said this, and another that, but as to how it was, no one either guessed or came near to guessing it; for it was a secret illumination and drawing sent by God, and it wrought in him with speed a turning away from creatures.



CHAPTER II.

Of the preliminary combats of a beginner.

SOON after this impression had been made upon his soul by God, there began within him certain preliminary combats, in which the enemy sought to lead him astray from his salvation. The inward impulse, which he had received from God, urged him to turn away entirely from every thing which might be a hindrance to him. The tempter met this with the suggestion:—Bethink thee better. It is easy to begin, but it is hard to bring to completion. The voice within put forward God's might and aid. The opposing voice replied, that God's power was beyond doubt, but that His willingness was doubtful. This, however, was clearly proved to him; for the kind God has vouched for it in the good promise, which He uttered with His divine mouth, that He would verily and indeed help all those who should begin this work in His name.



When grace had gained the victory in him in this combat, there came a hostile thought in friendly form, counselling him thus:—It may be all right, that thou shouldst amend thy life; but do not set about it so impetuously. Begin with such moderation, that thou mayest be able to bring it to completion. Thou shouldst eat and drink heartily, and treat thyself well; and at the same time be on thy guard against sins. Be as good as thou pleasest within thyself, and yet with such moderation that the world without may not take fright at thee, as the saying is. Is the heart good, all is good. Surely thou mayest be merry with people, and still be a good man. Others too wish to go to heaven, and yet do not lead a life of exercises such as thine. These and the like temptations pressed him hard. But the Eternal Wisdom overthrew for him these deceitful counsels thus:—The man who tries to hold by the tail that slippery fish, the eel, and to begin a holy life lukewarmly, will be deceived in both cases; for when he thinks he has them, they will have slipped from him. He too, who seeks with tender treatment to get the better of a pampered and refractory body, wants common sense. He who would possess this world, and yet serve God perfectly, tries for what is impossible, and seeks to falsify God's own teaching. Wherefore, if thou art minded to forsake all, do so to good purpose. He tarried somewhat long in these thoughts; but at last taking courage, he turned himself away from every thing with all his might.



His untamed spirit had in the beginning to die many deaths in breaking away from frivolous companions. Sometimes nature overcame him, and he would go to them to cheer himself; but it commonly fell out, that he went to them merry, and left them sad; for their talk and sports were no pleasure to him, and his were unendurable to them. At times, when he came to them, they would try his patience with such words as these. One would say:—What strange ways thou hast taken up! Another would answer:—An ordinary life is the safest. While a third would add:—It will never come to a good end. Thus they passed



him on from one to another. But he kept silence, as one dumb, and he thought within himself:—Ah, gentle God! there is nothing better to be done than to flee from them. If thou hadst not heard these cruel words, they could have done thee no hurt.

One thing was a sore suffering to him. He had no one to whom he could pour out his grief, and who pursued the same end in the same way, that he had been called to pursue it. Therefore he went on his way in wretchedness, pining for love; and with mighty efforts he withdrew himself from creatures,—a practice which afterwards became very sweet to him.



CHAPTER III.

Of a supernatural rapture which befell him.

IT happened once in the time of his beginnings, that he came into the choir on St. Agnes day, after the midday meal of the convent was ended. He was there alone, and he stood at the lower stalls, on the right-hand side of the choir. It was, moreover, a time at which he was more than usually crushed down by a heavy weight of sorrow. Now it came to pass, that as he stood there all desolate, and with none to help or shield him, his soul was caught up in ecstasy, whether in the body or out of the body, and he saw and heard what no tongue can tell. It was without form or mode, and yet it contained within itself the entrancing delightfulness of all forms and modes. His heart was athirst, and yet satisfied; his mind was joyous and blooming; wishes were stilled in him, and desires had departed. He did but gaze fixedly on the dazzling effulgence, in which he found oblivion of himself and all things. Was it day or night, he knew not. It was a breaking forth of the sweetness of eternal life, felt as present in the stillness of unvarying contemplation. He said afterwards:—If this be not heaven, I know not what heaven is; for not all the sufferings, which a man could suffer here below, could ever merit for him in justice to possess a joy like this throughout eternity. This overpowering rapture lasted about an hour and a half; but whether his soul stayed in his body, or was parted from it, he knew not. When he came to himself again, he was altogether like a man who has come from another world. His body was in such anguish from the brief moment, that he had never deemed it possible to suffer so much in so short a time, even at death. He came to himself with a deep groan, and his body sank to the ground, in spite of him, as if he were in a faint. He cried aloud piteously, and, deeply groaning, exclaimed:—Woe is me, my God! Where was I? Where am I now? Adding:—Ah, Thou, who art my heart's good! I never can this hour pass from my heart! He went on his way in body, and no one saw, or took note of any thing in him outwardly; but his soul and mind were full within of heavenly marvels. The heavenly glances came again and again in his innermost interior, and it seemed to him as if he were floating in the air. The powers of his soul were filled full of the sweet taste of heaven; just as, when a choice electuary has been poured out of a box, the box still keeps the good flavour of it. This heavenly taste remained with him for a long time afterwards, and gave him a heavenly yearning and longing after God.

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CHAPTER IV.

How he spiritually espoused the Eternal Wisdom.

THE course of life, which he pursued for a long time after this, in regard to interior exercises, was a ceaseless striving after actual recollection in interior union with the Eternal Wisdom. How he first began this, may be learned from his Little Book of the Eternal Wisdom, in German and Latin, which God moved him to compose.

He had from youth up a loving heart. Now the Eternal Wisdom is represented in Holy Scripture under a lovely guise, as a gracious loving mistress, who displays her charms with the intent to please every one; discoursing the while tenderly, in female form, of the desire she has to win all hearts to herself, and saying how deceitful all other mistresses are, and how truly loving and constant she is. This drew his young soul to her; and it fared with him as with the wild beasts of the forest whom the panther attracts to itself with the sweet smell that it sends forth. In this winning way she full often wooed him to her spiritual love, especially in the books called the books of Wisdom. When these were read at table, and he listened to the endearing words as they were read out, his heart was right glad within him, and he began to feel a yearning in his loving soul, and thoughts would come to him like these:—Truly thou shouldst make trial of thy fortune, whether perchance this high mistress, of whom thou hast heard tell such marvels, will become thy love; for in truth thy wild young heart cannot long remain without a love.

In these things he observed her closely, and she pleased him well in heart and soul.

It happened, as he sat at table another morning, that she cried aloud in the person of Solomon, saying:—"Audi, fili mi!" &c. Hearken, my child, to the high counsel of thy father. Wilt thou pursue exalted love, then take thee for thy most sweet love the Eternal Wisdom; for she gives to all her lovers youth and virtue, nobility and riches, honour and profit, mighty power and an everlasting name. She makes him who loves her gracious to all; she teaches him courteous bearing, and secures him praise before the world, and fame among the multitudes. She makes him dear and of high esteem to God and men. By her the earth was created, the heavens were made fast, and the foundations of the abyss were laid. He who possesses her walks securely, sleeps quietly, and lives in safety ([Prov. i.-iv.](#)).

When he heard this beautiful discourse read out, straightway the thought came to his longing heart:—Ah me! what a love is this! Could she but become mine, I were indeed well off. These thoughts were met by contrary suggestions such as these:—Shall I love what I have never seen, nor even know what it is? A handful in possession is better than a houseful in prospect. They who raise lofty buildings and love venturesomely, have but a hungry time



of it. Truly this loving dame were a good mistress, did she let her servant treat his body well and tenderly. But far from this, she says:—He who seeks good food, strong wine, and long sleep, can never win Wisdom's love ([Prov. xxi. 17](#)). Was there ever a suitor subjected to such hard terms as these? A thought from God answered:—By ancient right, love and suffering go together. There is no wooer but he is a sufferer; no lover but he is a martyr. Therefore it is not unjust that he who aims so high in love should meet with some things repugnant to him. Remember all the mishaps and the vexations which earthly lovers suffer, whether with their will or against it. He was greatly strengthened to persevere by good inspirations of this sort. And the like of this often happened to him. Sometimes he had a good will, while at other times he would let his heart go after perishable love. Nevertheless, to whatever side he turned, he always found a something in every object which would not let him give his heart to it without reserve, and which drove him back from it.



One day, the reading at table was about Wisdom, and his heart was stirred and set on fire by it. Wisdom spoke thus:—As the lovely rose-tree is full of bloom, and the lofty uncut Libanus yields its fragrance, and the pure balsam sends forth its odours ([Ecclus. xxiv.](#)), even so I am a blooming, fragrant, and pure love, without anger and bitterness, a very abyss of loving sweetness. All other mistresses have sweet words, but a bitter recompense. Their hearts are deadly nets, their hands are manacles, their discourse honied poison, and their pastime infamy ([Eccles. vii. 27](#)). He thought:—How true is this! And then he said to himself joy fully:—Yes, it must be so. She must indeed be my love, and I will be her servant. And the thought came to him:—Ah God, if I might but once see my love! if I might but once converse with her! Ah! what is the form of my beloved, in whom so many delightful things lie hid? Is she God or of human kind? woman or man? art or cunning? or what can she be? While he thus strove to see her, so far as she could be seen with the soul's eyes in what Holy Scripture has made known concerning her, she showed herself to him in this wise. She floated high above him in a choir of clouds; she shone like the morning star, and her radiance was dazzling as the rising sun; her crown was eternity; her vesture bliss; her words sweetness; her embrace the fulness of every delight; she was far, yet near; high, yet lowly; she was present, yet hidden; she forbade not to converse with her, yet no one can comprehend her. She reaches above the summit of the heavens, and touched the depths of the abyss; she spreads herself from end to end mightily, and disposes all things sweetly. When at one moment he thought he saw in her a beautiful maiden, forthwith she appeared to him as a noble youth. Sometimes she showed herself as one rich in wisdom; at other times as overflowing with love. She drew nigh to him lovingly, and greeted him full smilingly, and sweetly said to him:—*"Praebe, fili mi, cor tuum mihi! Give me thy heart, my child!"* ([Prov. xxiii. 26](#).) Thereupon he bowed himself to her feet, and thanked her from his inmost heart out of the depths of his lowliness. This was what was then granted to him, and no more than this could he obtain.



Afterwards, when he dwelt in thought upon the all-lovely one, he used commonly to put this question to himself, and ask his love-sick heart:—Ah, my heart! from what source do all love and graciousness flow? Whence come all tenderness, beauty, joyousness, and loveableness! Comes it not all from the outbursting fountainhead of the pure Godhead? Up then, my heart, my senses, my mind; up, then, and cast yourselves into the fathomless abyss of all lovely things. Who shall keep me from Thee now? Ah! I embrace Thee still to-day with the longings of my burning heart. And then there pressed itself as it were, into his soul, the primal outflow of all good, and in it he found in spiritual fashion all that is beautiful, lovely, and desirable, for all was there in a way in effable.



Thus it grew into a habit with him, whenever he heard songs of praise, or the sweet music of stringed instruments, or lays, or discourse about earthly love, immediately to turn his heart and mind inwards, and gaze abstractedly upon his loveliest love, whence all love flows. It were impossible to tell how often with weeping eyes, from out the unfathomable depths of his outspread heart, he embraced this lovely form, and pressed it tenderly to his heart. And thus it fared with him as with a sucking child, which lies encircled by its mother's arms upon her breast. As the child with its head and the movement of its body lifts itself up against its tender mother, and by these loving gestures testifies its heart's delight, even so his heart many a time leapt up within his body towards the delightful presence of the Eternal Wisdom, and melted away in sensible affections. At such moments the thought would come to him:—Ah, Lord! were only a queen my spouse, it would make my heart rejoice. All me! and Thou art now my heart's empress, Thou, the giver of every grace! In Thee I have wealth enough, and all the power I want. As for what earth contains, I wish for it no longer. Amid these contemplations his countenance became all joyous, his eyes godlike, and his heart full of jubilee, while all his interior senses sang "Super salutem," &c. ([Wisd. vii. 10](#)). Above all good fortune, and above all beauty art Thou, O my heart's good fortune and beauty; for good for tune has followed me with Thee, and I possess with Thee and in Thee every good.



CHAPTER V.

How he inscribed upon his heart the gracious Name of Jesus.

AT this season there came down into his soul a flame of intense fire, which made his heart all burning with divine love. Now one day that this feeling was strong within him, and he was suffering exceedingly from the torments of divine love, he went into his cell to his place of retirement, and, rapt in loving contemplation, spoke thus:—Ah, sweet Lord! would that I could devise some love-token, which might be an everlasting sign of love between me and Thee, as a memorial that I am Thy beloved, and Thou art my heart's only beloved; a sign which no oblivion might be ever able to efface. In this fervour of devotion, he threw back his scapular, and, baring his breast, took in his hand a style; then, looking at his heart, he said:—Ah, mighty God! give me to-day strength and power to accomplish my desire; for Thou must be burnt to-day into my very inmost heart. There upon he set to work, and thrust the style into the flesh above his heart, drawing it backwards and forwards, up and down, until he had inscribed the Name of Jesus upon his heart. The blood flowed plentifully out of his flesh from the sharp stabs, and ran down over his body into his bosom; but this was so ravishing a sight to him through the ardour of his love, that he cared little for the pain. When he had finished, he went thus torn and bleeding from his cell to the pulpit under the crucifix, and kneeling down said:—Ah, Lord! my heart and soul's only love! look now upon my heart's intense desire. Lord, I cannot imprint Thee any deeper in myself; but do Thou, O Lord, I beseech Thee, complete the work, and imprint Thyself deep down into my very inmost heart, and so inscribe Thy holy Name in me, that Thou mayest never more depart from my heart.

Thus he bore upon him for a long time love's wound, until at length it healed up; but the Name of Jesus remained upon his heart, as he had wished, and the letters were about the breadth of a smooth stalk of corn, and the length of a joint of the little finger. In this way he bore the Name upon his heart until his death, and at every beat of his heart the Name moved with it. When newly made, it was very visible. He bore it secretly, so that no one ever saw it, except a companion of his, to whom he showed it in spiritual confidence. Thenceforth, when any trouble befell him, he used to look at the love-token, and his trouble became lighter. It was his wont also at times to say within himself fond words like these:—See, Lord, earthly lovers write their beloved's name upon their garments; but I have written Thee upon the fresh blood of my heart.

Once upon a time, after matins, when he had finished praying, he went into his cell, and sitting down upon his chair, he placed the book of the lives of the ancient Fathers under

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his head for a pillow. Thereupon he was rapt in ecstasy, and it seemed to him that a light streamed forth from his heart; and as he looked, there appeared upon his heart a cross of gold, and there were worked into it in noble fashion many precious stones, which gave forth in brilliant light the Name of Jesus.

Then the Servitor took his mantle, and drew it over his heart, intending, if he could, to cover up the bright light which streamed from it, so that no one might behold it. But the fiery radiance shone forth so ravishingly that all his attempts to hide it were of no avail against the power of its loveliness.



CHAPTER VI.

Of the foretaste of divine consolations, with which God sometimes allures beginners.

IT was his custom to go into his chapel after matins, and sitting down upon his chair to take a little rest. He sat there but a short time, until the watchman announced the break of day; when, opening his eyes, he used to fall at once on his knees, and salute the rising morning star, heaven's gentle queen, with this intention that, as the little birds in summer greet the daylight, and receive it joyously, even so did he mean to greet with joyful longings her, who brings the light of the everlasting day; and he did not merely say these words, but he accompanied them with a sweet still melody in his soul.

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Once at this time, while he sat thus at rest, he heard within him something which rang so tenderly, that his whole heart was stirred by it. The voice sang in tones sweet and loud, as the morning star uprose, these words:—"Stella maris Maria hodie processit ad ortum: Mary the morning star has risen to-day." This strain resounded in him with such unearthly sweetness, that it filled his whole soul with gladness, and he sang with it joyously. After they had thus sung together, he was embraced in a way ineffable, and it was said to him at the time:—The more lovingly thou embracest me, and the more spiritually thou kissest me, so much the more ravishingly and lovingly shalt thou be embraced by my glory. Upon this he opened his eyes, and, the tears rolling down his cheeks, he saluted the rising morning star according to his custom. When this first salutation was ended, he next saluted with a *venia*¹ the gentle Eternal Wisdom in the words of the prayer, beginning "Anima mea desideravit te, "&c. This was followed by a third salutation, with another *venia*, which he addressed to the highest and most fervent of the Seraphim, even to the one who flames upwards in hottest and fieriest love towards the Eternal Wisdom, and this he did with the intention that the spirit should so inflame his heart with divine love, that he might both be on fire himself and enkindle the hearts of all men with his loving words and teaching. These were the salutations which he made every morning.

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One night in the carnival time, when he had prolonged his prayer until the watchman's horn announced the daybreak, the thought came to him:—Sit a little longer, before thou greetest the bright morning star. Thereupon, his senses being thus for a short time lulled to rest, it seemed to him that the heavenly spirits began with loud voice to intone the beautiful responsory, "Surge et illuminare, Jerusalem ([Isaias lx. 1](#)): Arise and be illuminated, Jerusalem;"

1 A monastic term, which means to kneel down and kiss the ground.

and it rang with exceeding sweetness in his soul. They had scarcely sung a little, when his soul became so full of the heavenly strain, that his frail body could bear no more, and, opening his eyes, his heart overflowed, and the burning tears streamed down his cheeks.



Once at this time, as he was sitting thus, it seemed to him in a vision that he was carried into another land, and that his angel stood there before him full tenderly at his right hand. The Servitor sprang up at once, and, embracing his dear angel, clung round him, and pressed him to his soul as lovingly as he could, so that there was naught between them, as it appeared to him. Then in sorrowful accents and with weeping eyes he exclaimed out of the fulness of his heart:—O my angel, whom the faithful God has given me for my consolation and guard, I pray thee, by the love thou hast for God, not to leave me. The angel answered him and said:—Canst thou not trust God? Behold, God has so lovingly embraced thee in His eternity, that He will never leave thee.

It came to pass once, after the time of his sufferings was over, that early one morning he was surrounded in a vision by the heavenly spirits. Whereupon he besought one of the bright princes of heaven to show him the manner of God's secret dwelling in his soul. The angel answered thus:—Cast, then, a joyous glance into thyself, and see how God plays His play of love with thy loving soul. He looked immediately, and saw that his body over his heart was clear as crystal, and that in the centre of his heart was sitting tranquilly, in lovely form, the Eternal Wisdom; beside whom there sat, full of heavenly longing, the Servitor's soul, which, leaning lovingly towards God's side, and encircled by God's arms, and pressed close to His divine heart, lay thus entranced and drowned in love in the arms of the beloved God.



CHAPTER VII.

How one, who had begun well, was drawn onward in his search after divine consolation.

HE had made anew for himself certain bands, with which he was accustomed to chastise his body. Now, on the night before the feast of All Angels, it seemed to him in a vision that he heard angelic strains and sweet heavenly melody; and this filled him with such gladness that he forgot all his sufferings. Then one of the angels said to him:—Behold, with what joy thou dost hear us sing the song of eternity; even so, with like joy, do we hear thee sing the song of the venerable Eternal Wisdom. He added further:—This is a portion of the song which the dear elect saints will sing joyously at the last day, when they shall see themselves confirmed in the everlasting bliss of eternity. At another time, on the same festival, after he had spent many hours in contemplating the joys of the angels, and daybreak was at hand, there came to him a youth, who bore himself as though he were a heavenly musician sent to him by God; and with the youth there came many other noble youths, in manner and bearing like the first, save only that he seemed to have some preëminence above the rest, as if he were a prince-angel. Now this same angel came up to the Servitor right blithely, and said that God had sent them down to him, to bring him heavenly joys amid his sufferings; adding that he must cast off all his sorrows from his mind and bear them company, and that he must also dance with them in heavenly fashion. Then they drew the Servitor by the hand into the dance, and the youth began a joyous ditty about the infant Jesus, which runs thus:—“In dulci jubilo,” &c. When the Servitor heard the dear Name of Jesus sounding thus sweetly, he became so blithesome in heart and feeling, that the very memory of his sufferings vanished. It was a joy to him to see how exceeding loftily and freely they bounded in the dance. The leader of the song knew right well how to guide them, and he sang first, and they sang after him in the jubilee of their hearts. Thrice the leader repeated the burden of the song, “Ergo merito,” &c. This dance was not of a kind like those which are danced in this world; but it was a heavenly movement, swelling up and falling back again into the wild abyss of God’s hiddenness. These and the like heavenly consolations were granted to him innumerable times during these years, but especially at the times when he was encompassed with great sufferings, and they made it all the easier for him to bear them.

Once upon a time it was shown in a vision to a certain holy person, when the Servitor had gone to the altar to say Mass, how that he was gloriously arrayed with a vestment of resplendent love, and that divine grace kept dropping upon his soul like dew, and that he was one with God. Behind him there were seen standing at the altar a multitude of kindly-

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looking children with burning candles, one behind the other. The children stretched out their arms, each one severally, and embraced him as lovingly as they could, and pressed him to their hearts. The person in amazement asked who they were, and what they meant. They answered:—We are your brethren, and we praise God with joy in eternal bliss, and are beside you and take care of you at all times. The holy person said to them in the vision:—Dear angels, what mean you by embracing this man so lovingly? They answered:—He is so very dear to us, that we have much to do with him; and know this; God works unspeakable marvels in his soul, and whatever he asks of God earnestly, God will never deny him.



CHAPTER VIII.

Of certain visions.

HE had at this time very many visions of future and hidden things, and God gave him an experimental knowledge, so far as was possible, of how things were in heaven, hell, and purgatory. It happened to him commonly, that many souls appeared to him upon their leaving this world, and told him how it had fared with them, what sins were the cause of their purgatory, how they could be helped, or what was[^] their reward from God. Among others there appeared to him the blessed Master Eckart, and the holy brother John der Fucrer of Strasburg. The Master signified to him, that he was in exceeding glory, into which his soul was quite transformed, and made godlike in God. Upon, this the Servitor besought him to tell him two things. The first was, the manner in which those persons dwell in God, who with real and genuine detachment have sought to rest in the supreme Truth alone? To this he answered, that no words can tell the way in which these persons are taken up into the modeless abyss of the divine essence. The second thing was; what exercise is most calculated to help forward him, whose earnest desire is to arrive at this state? The Master replied, that he must die to himself by deep detachment, receive every thing as from God and not from creatures, and establish himself in unruffled patience towards all men, however wolfish they may be.



The other brother, John, also showed him in a vision the ravishing beauty with which his soul was glorified, and of him too he asked the explanation of another point. The question was:—which among all spiritual exercises is the most painful, and at the same time the most profitable? The brother answered, that there is nothing more painful, and yet more profitable for a man, than, when forsaken by God, to go out of himself by patience, and thus to leave God for God.



The Servitor's own father, who had led a very worldly life, appeared to him after death, and with a woful aspect showed him his agonising purgatory, and the chief sins for which he had incurred it, and explained to him distinctly how he was to help him. The Servitor did this; and afterwards his father appeared to him, and told him that he had been set free. His holy mother also, in whose heart and body God worked many marvels in her lifetime, appeared to him in a vision, and made known to him the great reward which she had received from God. The like happened to him in the case of numberless other souls; and it was a source of pleasure to him, and during a long time it gave him instruction and support in the course which he was then pursuing.

CHAPTER IX.

Of the way in which he went to table.

WHEN the time came for him to go to table, he used to kneel down in loving contemplation before the Eternal Wisdom, and beseech Him very earnestly to go with him to table and eat with him, saying:—Most sweet Jesus Christ, I invite Thee with the longing desire of my heart, and I pray Thee, even as Thou dost bountifully feed me, to grant me also to-day Thy gentle presence. Then, on sitting down to table, he would place opposite to him, as his table-companion, the dear guest of pure souls, and he would look at Him very tenderly, and often bow himself towards Him on the side of His heart. At each course that was set before him, he used to lift up the plate towards his Divine host, that He might give His holy blessing to it, and he would often say to Him, with a loving familiarity:—O my Lord, bless what is before us, and eat with Thy servant. Such were the words of tenderness with which he would address Him. Again, before he drank he would lift up the goblet and ask Him to drink first of it. At table he used to drink five draughts, and he drank them out of the five wounds of his dear Lord; and because water and blood flowed from the Divine side, he drank the last draught in two. He ate the first and the last mouthful in union with the love of the most loving heart which earth could possibly produce, and with the hottest love of the high est of the seraphim, desiring the while that his heart might have a full share in this love. He used to dip the food which he disliked into the wounded heart of his beloved, in firm trust that it could then no longer hurt him.

He had a fondness for fruit, but God would not let him indulge it. He had once a vision, in which it seemed to him that some one offered him an apple, saying:—Take this; it is what thou art so fond of. He answered:—Nay! all my fondness is for the lovely Eternal Wisdom. The other replied to him that this was not true, seeing that he took too much delight in fruit. This made him feel ashamed of himself, and for two years he ate no more fruit, much though he longed for it all the time. When the two years were ended, and the next year the fruit crop had failed, so that the convent was with out any, the Servitor, having now after many combats gained the mastery over himself, and wishing to be no longer singular at table about fruit, besought Almighty God, if it was His will that he should eat fruit, to supply the whole convent with it. And it came to pass accordingly; for when it was morning, an unknown person arrived with a large quantity of new pennies for the convent, and desired that fresh apples might be bought up every where with them. This was done, and thus the convent had fruit enough for a long time, and the Servitor began again to eat fruit with thankfulness.

He used to divide the large fruit into four parts; three of which he ate in the Name of the Holy Trinity, and the fourth in union with the love with which the heavenly Mother gave her gentle child Jesus a little apple to eat. This last part he ate without cutting it, because

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little children usually eat it in this way, uncut. From Christmas Day, for many days following, he did not eat the fourth part, but he offered it in contemplation to the gentle Mother, praying her to give it to her dear little Son, for whose sake he would meanwhile go without it.

If sometimes he began eating or drinking too eagerly, the presence of his venerable companion would make him ashamed of himself, and he would give himself a penance for it.

Once there came to him from another city a good person, who told him that God had said these words to him in a vision:—If thou wouldest learn how to conduct thyself at table as is meet, go to my Senator and bid him tell thee all his ways.



CHAPTER X.

How he began the New Year.

IT is the custom in certain parts of Swabia, his native country, for the young men to go out in their folly on New-Year's Night, and beg for May wreaths: that is to say, they sing ditties and recite pretty verses, and do all they can, with such like courtesies, to make their sweet hearts give them garlands. Now, when he heard of this, the thought came at once to his young and loving heart, that he too would go on that same night to his Eternal Love, and beg a May wreath. Accordingly, before break of day he went to the image of the most pure Mother, which represents her holding in her arms, and pressing to her heart, her gentle Child, the beautiful Eternal Wisdom; and, kneeling down before it, he began with the sweet voiceless melody of his soul to sing a sequence to the Mother, praying her leave to beg a garland from her Child, and, should he fail to obtain this, that she would help him in his suit. And so earnest was his prayer, and so little could he restrain himself from weeping, that the hot tears kept rolling down his cheeks. When his song was ended, he turned him to his heart's love, the Eternal Wisdom, and bowing down at His feet, greeted Him from the very bottom of his heart, and praised and celebrated Him as one who far surpasses all this world's fairest maidens in comeliness, nobility, virtue, gentleness, and freedom, united with everlasting majesty. And this he did with songs and words, with thoughts and longings, as best he could; and much he wished that he could be, in a spiritual sense, the fore runner of all lovers and loving hearts, and the inventor of all tender thoughts, words, and sentiments, that the most worthy One might be lauded with due love by His unworthy Servitor. Then at length he broke forth into words like these:—Ah, my beloved! Thou art indeed an Easter Day of joy to me. Thou art the bliss of summer to my heart, and the hour of my delight. Thou art the loved One, whom alone my young heart loves and thinks upon, and for whom it has scorned all earthly love. Let this avail me now, my heart's beloved, and let me obtain a garland from Thee to-day. Ah, gentle heart! do this for Thy divine virtue's sake, and for Thy innate goodness, and let me not depart from Thee with empty hands this New Year's Day. Ah! how well this will beseem Thee, O sweet sweetness! Remember that one of Thy dear servants has told us of Thee, that in Thee there is not nay and yea, but only yea and yea (2 Cor. i. 19). Therefore, my heart's beloved, say to me to-day a loving yea in regard to Thy heavenly gift, and as foolish lovers obtain a garland from their loves, so let my soul receive to-day, as a New Year's gift, some special grace, or some new light from Thy fair hand, my own sweet love, O Divine Wisdom. These and the like prayers he used to offer up there, and he never went away thence with his prayer ungranted.



CHAPTER XI.

Of the words “Sursum corda.”

HE was once asked what was the subject of his contemplation when he sang mass and in toned the words “Sursum corda,” at the beginning of the preface before the Canon. Now these words mean in the vulgar tongue, “Lift up all hearts on high to God;” and they came forth from his mouth with such an expression of ardent desire, that it may well have moved to peculiar devotion those who heard them. He answered this question with a deep sigh, saying:—When I sing these adorable words in the holy mass, it usually happens that my heart and soul are melted with a yearning and longing after God which carry away my heart out of itself at that moment; for three different intentions commonly present themselves to me then, and lift me up on high—sometimes one alone, sometimes two, and sometimes all three together—and they bear me upwards into God, and with me all creatures.



The first intention, that darts like a ray of light into my mind, is this:—I place before my inward eyes myself with all that I am—my body, soul, and all my powers—and I gather round me all the creatures which God ever created in heaven, on earth, and in all the elements, each one severally with its name, whether birds of the air, beasts of the forest, fishes of the water, leaves and grass of the earth, or the innumerable sand of the sea, and to these I add all the little specks of dust which glance in the sun beams, with all the little drops of water which ever fell or are falling from dew, snow, or rain, and I wish that each of these had a sweetly-sounding stringed instrument, fashioned from my heart’s inmost blood, striking on which they might each send up to our dear and gentle God a new and lofty strain of praise for ever and ever. And then the loving arms of my soul stretch out and extend themselves towards the innumerable multitude of all creatures, and my intention is, just as a free and blithesome leader of a choir stirs up the singers of his company, even so to turn them all to good account by inciting them to sing joyously, and to offer up their hearts to God. “Sursum corda.”



His second intention, he said, was this:—I put before myself in thought my own heart and the hearts of all men, and I consider on the one hand what joy and pleasure, what love and peace they enjoy who give their hearts to God alone; and, on the other, what hurt and suffering, what sorrow and unrest perishable love brings to those over whom it rules; and then I cry out with earnest desire to my own heart, and the hearts of all men, wheresoever they be, from one end of this world to the other:—Come forth, ye captive hearts, from the strait bonds of perishable love! Come forth, ye sleeping hearts, from the death of sin! Come forth, ye frivolous hearts, from the lukewarmness of your slothful and careless lives! Lift yourselves up by turning wholly and unreservedly to the living God. “Sursum corda.”



His third intention was a friendly call to all well-disposed but undetached men, who go astray in their interior life, and cling closely neither to God nor to creatures, because their hearts are distracted and drawn to one side or the other at every moment. These men, and myself among their number, I then invite to make a bold venture of ourselves, by turning away entirely from ourselves and every creature unto God. Such was the subject of his contemplation in the words "Sursum corda."

CHAPTER XII.

How he kept the feast of Candlemas.

FOR three days before our Lady's feast of Candlemas, he used to get ready with prayer a candle for the heavenly Mother; and he formed the candle of three twisted tapers in this manner:—The first taper was in token of her stainless and virginal purity; the second, of her unfathomable humility; and the third, of her maternal dignity;—three prerogatives which are hers alone above all creatures. And he made ready this spiritual candle every day with three magnificats. Now when the day of the blessing of the candles was come, he went early in the morning, before any one had gone into the church, to the high altar, and waited there in contemplation the coming of the august Mother with her heavenly treasure. When she drew nigh the outer gate of the city, he ran to meet her with the multitude of all souls that love God, and he outran them all with the longings of his heart. Then running in front of her in the street, he prayed her to tarry a while with her attendants until he had sung something in her honour. Thereupon, with a spiritual voice less melody, so that his lips moved, but no one heard him, he began to sing as lovingly as he could the prose, "Inviolata," &c. (O spotless one, &c.), and he bowed himself down before her as he sang, "O benigna, O benigna!" (O gracious one! O gracious one!) and he prayed her to show forth her gracious kindness to wards a poor sinner. Then rising up, he followed her with his spiritual candle in the desire that she would never permit the burning flame of divine light to be extinguished in him. After this, on coming up to the multitude of all-loving souls, he began to sing "Adorna thalamum," &c. (Make ready the bridal bed, &c.), and he called upon them to receive the Saviour with love, and fervently to embrace His Mother; and thus he led them with songs of praise as far as the temple. Then drawing near to the Mother before she entered in and gave the Saviour to Simeon, he knelt down in front of her, and with uplifted hands and eyes prayed her to show him the Child, and to suffer him also to kiss It. When she kindly offered It to him, he spread out his arms to the boundless quarters of the wide world, and received and embraced the Beloved One a thousand times in one hour. He contemplated Its beautiful little eyes; he looked upon Its little hands; he kissed Its tender little mouth; and he gazed again and again at all the infant members of the heavenly treasure. Then lifting up his eyes, he uttered a cry of amazement in his heart that He who bears up the heavens is so great and yet so small, so beautiful in heaven and so childlike upon earth; and as the Divine Infant moved him so did he act towards It,—now singing, now weeping, with other spiritual exercises, until at last he gave It back to Its Mother, and, going in with her into the temple, remained there till all was fully accomplished.

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CHAPTER XIII.

How he spent the Carnival time.

WHEN the Carnival was close at hand, on the evening that the Alleluias are left off,² and the foolish people of this world begin to abandon themselves to merriment, he set about keeping in his heart a heavenly carnival, in this wise:—In the first place he considered how short-lived and hurtful the pleasure of this earthly carnival is, and how some persons with a momentary joy purchase for themselves long suffering; and then he said a “Miserere” to the adorable God for all the sins and the dishonour which would be offered to Him at this time of dissipation. This carnival he called the peasants carnival, as be fitting those who knew nothing better. His other carnival consisted in a contemplation of that which is the prelude of eternity; namely, how God makes merry with His chosen friends, while still clothed in this mortal body, through the heavenly consolations which He gives them; and he recounted with praises and thanksgiving those which he had himself received, and he was full of joy in the Almighty God.

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At this same season of his beginnings, God once gave him a spiritual carnival, and it was in this wise. It was the carnival time, and he had gone before compline into a warm little room to warm himself, for he was miserably cold and hungry, and yet this did not cause him so much pain as the thirst from which he suffered. Now when he saw them eating meat there and drinking good wine, while he was hungry and thirsty, he was so affected by it interiorly that he soon went out again and began to lament himself, and to sigh from the very bottom of his heart. That same night it seemed to him in a vision that he was in an infirmary, and that outside the room he heard some one singing a heavenly song, and the tones rang so sweetly that no earthly harp ever sent forth the like; and it was as if a little schoolboy of twelve years old was singing there alone. The Servitor forgot all about the body's food as he listened to the sweet melody, and he exclaimed with longing heart:—Ah me! what is it that is singing there? Never on earth heard I tones so sweet. A noble-looking youth, who stood by, answered him and said:—Thou shouldst know that this Boy who sings so well is singing for thee, and that thou art the object of His song. The Servitor replied:—Alas! God help me! Ah, heavenly youth, bid Him sing more. The Boy sang again, so that it resounded high in the air, and he sang about three heavenly canticles from the beginning to the end. When the song was ended it seemed as though the same Boy who sang so sweetly came through the air to the little window of the room, and presented the youth with a pretty basket filled with red fruit, like ripe red strawberries, and they were large

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² The eve of Septuagesima Sunday, when the Alleluias are left off in the divine office, They are not resumed until Easter.

in size. The youth took the basket from the Boy, and offered it joyfully to the brother, saying:—Look, comrade and brother! this red fruit is sent thee by thy friend and heavenly Lord, the delightful Boy, the Son of the heavenly Father, who has been singing to thee. Ah, how very dear thou art to Him! At this the brother's face became all on fire and red with joy, and he received the basket longingly, saying:—Ah, it is well with me. This is indeed a lovely gift for me from the delightful heavenly Boy. My heart and soul shall ever rejoice in this. Then he said to the youth and the other heavenly beings who were there:—Ah, dear friends, is it not meet that I should be enamoured of this heavenly Boy, who is so full of graces? Yes, verily, it is meet that I should be enamoured of Him, and whatever I shall know to be His dearest will that I will always do. Then turning to the aforementioned youth, he said:—Tell me, dear youth, am I not right? The youth smiled sweetly, and said:—Yes, thou art right. It is meet for thee to be enamoured of Him; for He has regarded and honoured thee more than many other men. Therefore love Him very dearly; and I tell thee thou must also suffer more than many other men. Wherefore make thyself ready for it. The Servitor answered:—Ah, this I will do right gladly; but, I pray thee, help me to see Him and to thank Him for His beautiful gift. The youth replied:—Go then to the little window and look out. The Servitor opened the window, and there he saw standing before the window the tenderest and loveliest little boy that eye has ever seen; and when he tried to force himself through the window to get at Him, the boy turned lovingly towards him, and inclining Himself sweetly to him, with a friendly blessing, vanished from his sight. Thus the vision departed, and when the Servitor came to himself again, he thanked God for the good carnival which He had bestowed upon him.



CHAPTER XIV.

How he began the month of May.

IT was his custom on May-day Eve to set up a spiritual May-bough, and to do it honour every day for a long space of time. Among all the beautiful branches that ever grew he could find none more like to a lovely May-bough than the delightful bough of the Holy Cross, which is more blooming with graces, virtues, and ornaments of every kind than any May-bough that ever was. Under this May-bough he made six prostrations (*venias*), and at each prostration he desired in his contemplation to adorn the spiritual May-bough with some one of the love liest things which the summer might bring forth; and he sang before it inter-iorly the hymn, “*Salve crux sancta,*” &c., in this wise; Hail, heavenly May-bough of the Eternal Wisdom, on which has grown the fruit of everlasting bliss! First, I offer thee to-day as an eternal adornment, in place of all red roses, a heartfelt love; secondly, for every little violet, a lowly inclination; thirdly, for all tender lilies, a pure embrace; fourthly, instead of all the beautifully-coloured and brilliant flowers, which heath or down, forest or plain, tree or meadow has brought forth this lovely May, or which have ever been or will be brought forth, my heart offers thee a spiritual kiss; fifthly, for the songs of all the blithesome little birds which ever sang merrily on any a May-day flight, my soul offers thee praises without end; sixthly, for every ornament with which a May-bough has ever been adorned my heart magnifies thee to-day with a spiritual song; and I pray thee, blessed May-bough, to help me so to praise thee in this short time of life that I may feed upon thy living fruit throughout eternity. Thus it was that he began the month of May.



CHAPTER XV.

Of the sorrowful way of the Cross, which he made with Christ when He was being led forth to death.

AT first for a long time the Servitor was, as it were, spoiled by God with heavenly consolations; and he was so eager after them, that all subjects of contemplation which had reference to the Divine nature were a delight to him; whereas, when he should have meditated upon our Lord's sufferings, and sought to imitate Him in them, this seemed to him a thing hard and bitter. He was once severely rebuked by God for this, and it was said to him:—Knowest thou not that I am the door through which all true friends of God must press in, if they would attain to true bliss? Thou must break thy way through My suffering Humanity, if thou wouldst verily and indeed arrive at My naked Divinity. The Servitor was struck with consternation at this, and it was a hard saying to him; nevertheless he commenced meditating upon it, much though it went against him, and he began to learn what till then he knew not, and he gave himself up to practise it with detachment.

He now began every night after matins at his usual place, which was the chapter-room, to force himself into a Christlike feeling of sympathy with all that Christ, his Lord and God, had suffered for him. He stood up and moved from corner to corner, in order that all sluggishness might leave him, and that he might have throughout a lively and keen sensitiveness to our Lord's sufferings. He commenced this exercise with the Last Supper, and he accompanied Christ from place to place, until he brought Him before Pilate. Then he received Him after He had been sentenced at the tribunal, and he followed Him along the sorrowful way of the cross from the court-house to beneath the gallows. The following was the manner in which he made the way of the cross:—On coming to the threshold of the chapter-house, he kneeled down and kissed the print of the first step which the Lord took, when, on being sentenced, He turned Him round to go forth to death. Then he began the psalm which describes our Lord's passion, "Deus, Deus meus, respice," &c. (*Ps. xxi.*), and he went out by the door into the cloister, repeating it. Now there were four streets through which he accompanied Him. He went with Him to death along the first street, with the earnest desire and will to go forth from his friends and all perishable goods, and to suffer, for Christ's glory, misery without consolation, and voluntary poverty. In the second street he proposed to himself to cast aside all perishable honour and dignity, and voluntarily to despise this present world, considering how the Lord had become "a worm and the outcast of the people." At the beginning of the third street he kneeled down again, and, kissing the ground, willingly renounced all needless comfort, and all tender treatment of his body, in honour of the pains of Christ's tender body: and he set before his eyes, what is written in the psalm, how that all Christ's strength was dried up, and His natural vigour brought nigh to death, as they

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drove Him onwards thus pitiably; and he thought how fitting it is that every eye should weep and every heart sigh on account of it. When he came to the fourth street, he knelt down in the middle of the road, as if he were kneeling in front of the gate through which the Lord must pass out; and then falling on his face before Him, he kissed the ground, and crying out to Him, prayed Him not to go to death without His servant, but to suffer him to go along with Him. Then he pictured to himself as vividly as he could that the Lord was obliged to pass quite close to him, and when he had said the prayer, "Ave, rex noster, fili David!" (Hail, our King, son of David!), he let Him move onwards. After this he knelt down again, still turned towards the gate, and greeted the cross with the verse, "O crux ave, spes unica!" (Hail, O cross, our only hope!), and then let it go past. This done, he knelt down once more before the tender Mother Mary, heaven's queen, as she was led past him in unfathomable anguish of heart, and he observed how mournfully she bore herself, and noted her burning tears, sad sighings, and sorrowful demeanour; and he addressed her in the words of the "Salve Regina" (Hail, O Queen!), and kissed her footsteps. Then he stood up and hastened after his Lord, until he came up with Him. And the picture was some times so vividly present to his mind, that it seemed to him as if he were in body walking at Christ's side, and the thought would come to him, how that when King David was driven from his kingdom his bravest captains walked around him and beside him, and gave him loving succour (2 Kings xv.). At this point he gave up his will to God's will, desiring that God would do with him according to His good pleasure. Last of all, he called to mind the epistle, which is read in Holy Week, from the prophecy of Isaias, beginning, "Quis creditit auditui nostro" (Is. liii.), and which so exactly describes how the Lord was led forth to death, and meditating upon it, he went in by the door of the choir, and so up the steps into the pulpit, until he came beneath the cross, and then he besought the Lord that neither life nor death, weal nor woe, might separate his servant from Him.

There was another mournful way of the cross that he used to make, and it was in this wise:—While the "Salve Regina" was being sung at compline, he contemplated in his heart the pure Mother as at that moment still standing beside her dear Child's grave, with all a mother's grief for her buried child, and that it was time for her to be led home again, and that he was to lead her home. Accordingly, he made three prostrations (*venias*) in his heart, and with them he led her home again in his contemplation. The first was at the sepulchre. As soon as the "Salve Regina" began, he bowed down his soul before her, and supporting her in spiritual fashion with his arms, bewailed her tender heart, which was at that time so full of bitterness, outrage, and deadly sorrow, and he sought to comfort her by reminding her that on account of all this she was now a queen in dignity, our hope and our sweetness, as it stands in the hymn. Then, when he had brought her under the gate way into Jerusalem, he went on before her into the street, and looking back upon her, as she came along in wretchedness, all blood-stained with the hot blood which had dropped upon her, as it

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streamed forth from the bursting wounds of her pierced Son, he marked how forsaken she was and bereaved of all her consolation. Then he received her again with a second interior prostration, at the words, “Eia ergo advocata nostra!” (Hail then, our advocate!), meaning by them that she should be of good cheer, since she is the worthy advocate of us all; and he besought her with that love which shone forth amid her anguish to turn to him her merciful eyes, and to grant him, when this miserable life is over, lovingly to behold her august Son, according to the wish expressed in the prayer. He made the third interior prostration before the door of her mother St. Anne’s house, whither he had led her in her sorrows, and, as he did this, he commended himself to her gentleness and loving sweetness, in the devout words, “O clemens, O pia, O dulcis Virgo Maria!” (O gentle, O pious, O sweet Virgin Mary!), and he prayed her to receive his wretched soul at its last passage, and to be its guide and defender from its evil enemies, through the gates of heaven to everlasting bliss.



CHAPTER XVI.

Of the useful virtue called silence.

THE Servitor had an interior drawing to strive after true peace of heart, and it seemed to him that silence would be of service towards attaining it. He therefore kept so strict a guard over his mouth, that for thirty years he never broke silence at table, except once, when he was returning from a chapter with many other brothers, and they ate on board ship. On that occasion he broke it. In order to have greater mastery over his tongue, and to stop himself from giving way too readily to talk, he made choice in his mind of three masters, without whose special leave he resolved never to speak, and these were the holy patriarchs St. Dominic, St. Arsenius, and St. Bernard. Whenever he wished to speak he went in thought from one to the other, and asked leave, saying, “Jube, domne, benedicere” (Bid me, O master, speak); and if it was the right time and place to speak, he received permission from the first master; and if there was no external reason to prevent him speaking, he had leave from the second; and if it was not likely to do him an injury interiorly, he considered that he had leave from all three; and after that he spoke; but if it was not so, it seemed to him that he ought to keep silence. Whenever he was called to the door of the convent he applied himself to these four things:—first, to receive every one with kindness; secondly, to despatch the matter with brevity; thirdly, to send the person away consoled; fourthly, to go back again free from attachment.



CHAPTER XVII.

Of the chastisement of his body.

HE was in his youth of a temperament full of fire and life; and when this began to make itself felt, and he perceived what a heavy burden he had in himself, it was very bitter and grievous to him; and he sought, by many devices and great penances, how he might bring his body into subjection to his spirit. He wore for a long time a hair shirt and an iron chain, until the blood ran from him; so that he was obliged to leave them off. He secretly caused an under garment to be made for him; and in the under garment he had strips of leather fixed, into which a hundred and fifty brass nails, pointed and filed sharp, were driven, and the points of the nails were always turned towards the flesh. He had this garment made very tight, and so arranged as to go round him and fasten in front, in order that it might fit the closer to his body, and the pointed nails might be driven into his flesh; and it was high enough to reach upwards to his navel. In this he used to sleep at night. Now in summer, when it was hot, and he was very tired and ill from his journeyings, or when he held the office of lecturer, he would some times, as he lay thus in bonds, and oppressed with toil, and tormented also by noxious insects, cry aloud, and give way to fretfulness, and twist round and round in agony, as a worm does when run through with a pointed needle. It often seemed to him as if he were lying upon an ant-hill from the torture caused by the insects; for if he wished to sleep, or when he had fallen asleep, they vied with each other in biting and sucking him. Sometimes he would cry to Almighty God out of the fulness of his heart:—Alas! gentle God, what a dying is this! When a man is killed by murderers or strong beasts of prey, it is soon over; but I lie dying here under the cruel insects, and yet cannot die. The nights in winter were never so long, nor was the summer so hot, as to make him leave off this exercise. On the contrary, in order that he might get still less rest amid these torments, he devised something further. He bound a part of his girdle round his throat, and made out of it with skill two leather loops, into which he put his hands, and then locked his arms into them with two padlocks, and placed the keys on a plank beside his bed, where they remained until he rose for matins and unlocked himself. His arms were thus stretched upwards, and fastened one on each side his throat, and he made the fastenings so secure, that even if his cell had been on fire about him he could not have helped himself. This practice he continued until his hands and arms had become almost tremulous with the strain, and then he devised something else.

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He had two leather gloves made for him, such as labourers usually wear when they gather briers, and he caused a brazier to fit them all over with sharp-pointed brass tacks, and he used to put them on at night. This he did in order that, if he should try while asleep to throw off the hair under-garment, or endeavour in any other way to relieve himself from the gnawings of the vile and hateful insects, the tacks might then stick into his body. And so it came to pass. If ever he sought to help himself with his hands in sleep, he drove the sharp tacks into his breast, and tore himself, making horrible rents, as if a bear had torn him with its sharp claws, so that his flesh festered at the arms and about the heart. When after many weeks the wounds had healed, he tore himself again and made fresh wounds. He continued this tormenting exercise for about sixteen years. At the end of this time, when his blood was now chilled, and the fire of his temperament destroyed, there appeared to him in a vision on Whit-Sunday a messenger from heaven, who told him that God required this of him no longer. Whereupon he discontinued it, and threw all these things away into a running stream.



CHAPTER XVIII.

Of the sharp cross which he bore upon his back.

ABOVE all his other exercises, he had a longing desire to bear upon his body something which might betoken a sensible sympathy with the painful sufferings of his crucified Lord. To this end he made for himself a wooden cross, in length about a man's span, and of corresponding breadth, and he drove into it thirty iron nails, intending to represent by them all his Lord's wounds and love-tokens. He placed this cross upon his bare back between his shoulders on the flesh, and he bore it continually day and night in honour of his crucified Lord. After wards, in the last year, he drove into it besides seven needles, so that their points passed a long way through the cross, and remained sticking in it, while the other ends were broken off close to the wood. He bore the wounds made by these pointed needles in honour of the piercing anguish of God's pure Mother, by which her heart and soul were wounded through and through so utterly at the hour of her Son's agonising death. The first time that he stretched out this cross upon his back his tender frame was struck with terror at it, and he blunted the sharp nails very slightly upon a stone. But very soon repenting of this unmanly cowardice, he pointed and sharpened them all again with a file, and placed the cross once more upon him. It furrowed his back, where the bones are, and made it bloody and seared. Whenever he sat down or stood up, it was as if a hedgehog-skin lay upon him. If any one touched him unawares, or pushed against his clothes, it tore him. To make this painful cross more bear able, he chiselled on the back of it the saving Name of Jesus. For a long time he took two disciplines every day with this cross, in the following manner. He struck behind him with his fist upon the cross, and thus drove the nails into his flesh, and made them stick in it, so that he had to take off his clothes to get them out again. He used to strike these blows upon the cross so secretly that no one could have observed it. He took the first discipline on arriving in his contemplation at the pillar where our beautiful Lord was so barbarously scourged, and he prayed our Lord to heal His servant's wounds with His own. He took the second discipline when he had come in contemplation beneath the cross, and the Lord had been nailed to it, and then he nailed himself to his Lord, never more to part from Him. He did not take the third discipline every day, but only when he had been too indulgent with himself, or had given way to inordinate pleasure in eating and drinking, or such like.

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Once upon a time he had been so much off his guard as to take into his hands the hands of two maidens, who were sitting beside him in a public assembly, though without any bad intention. He soon repented of this unguardedness, and he considered that this inordinate pleasure must be atoned for by penance. As soon as he left the maidens, and had come into his chapel to his place of privacy, he struck himself upon the cross for this misdeed, so that the pointed nails stuck into his back. He moreover laid himself under an interdict for this

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fault, and would not allow himself to go after matins into the chapter-room, his usual place of prayer, to meet the heavenly spirits, who were wont to appear to him there during his contemplation. At length, desiring, to atone completely for the misdeed, he summoned courage, and fell at the Judge's feet, and took a discipline in His presence with the cross; and then going round and round on every side before the saints, he took thirty disciplines, till the blood ran down his back. In this way he atoned very bitterly for the inordinate pleasure which he had allowed himself.

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After matins had been sung, he went into the chapter-room, to his place of privacy, and kissed the ground a hundred times prostrate with outstretched arms, and a hundred times kneeling; each time with a special object of contemplation. This caused him very great pain on account of the cross. For as it was fastened tightly upon him, and driven closer to his body than a hoop is to a cask—such being his custom at this period—each time that he flung himself on the ground in making the hundred prostrations the nails stuck into him through the fall. When he got up again he writhed them out of him. But at the next fall they stuck into fresh holes, and this was a sore pain to him. If, however, they stuck into the same holes it was endurable.

There was another penitential exercise which he had previously practised. It was this: He made for himself a scourge out of a leather thong, and had it fitted with pointed brass tacks as sharp as a style, in such a way that the ends of each tack stood out on either side of the thong, and each of the ends had a triple point, which caused wounds in whatever part of the body they struck. Such was the kind of scourge which he made for himself; and he used to get up before matins, and go into the choir in front of the Blessed Sacrament, and there discipline himself with it severely. He practised this penance for a long time, until at last the brothers became aware of it, upon which he discontinued it.

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Once, on St. Clement's day, at the beginning of winter, he made a general confession, and that same evening, when it became dusk, he shut himself up in his cell, and stripping himself naked to his horsehair under-garment, he took out the scourge with the pointed tacks, and struck himself with it over the body and about the arms, till the blood ran down just as when one is cupped. The chief cause of this was a bent tack on the scourge, in shape like a little hook, which tore away all the flesh on which it caught. He struck himself so hard, that the scourge broke into three pieces, and while one little piece remained in his hand, the rest with the points flew against the walls. As he stood there all covered with blood, and looked at himself, the spectacle which he presented was a most miserable one, and he resembled in some degree Christ, our Lord, when He was barbarously scourged. Thereupon, being moved to pity for himself, he began to weep from his very heart, and kneeling down

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all naked and bleeding in the frosty cold, he besought God so to blot out all his sins that His merciful eyes might no more behold them.

Another time, on Quinquagesima Sunday, he went, as he had done before, into his cell, when the brothers were at table; and after having stripped himself naked, he gave himself very cruel blows, so that the blood streamed down his body. But just as he was about to strike himself still harder, there came thither a brother, who had heard the noise, so that he was obliged to leave off. Then he took vinegar and salt, and rubbed them into his wounds, that the pain might be rendered greater.

On St. Benedict's feast, the day on which he was born into this miserable world, he went at breakfast-time into his chapel, and making fast the door, stripped himself as before, and taking out the scourge, began to strike himself with it. A blow fell on his left arm, and hit the vein called mediana, or another vein near it. And as the stroke was a very severe one, the blood burst forth, and ran down in a stream upon his foot between the toes, and lay in a pool upon the pavement. His arm immediately swelled up to a great size, and turned blue; and this so frightened him, that he did not dare to go on striking. Now at this very time, and at the selfsame hour in which he thus struck himself, there was at another place in a certain castle a holy maiden, named Anna, praying, who seemed to herself to be carried in a vision to the spot where he was taking the discipline. And when she saw the hard blows which he was giving himself, it so moved her to compassion that, going up to him just as he had raised his arm, and was on the point of striking, she intercepted the blow, and received it on her own arm, as it seemed to her in the vision. When she came to herself again, she found the mark of the blow on her arm in black wales, as if she had been hit by a scourge. These marks remained visible upon her for a long time, and they were accompanied with great pain.

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CHAPTER XIX.

Of his bed.

AT this same period the Servitor procured an old castaway door, which he placed upon his bedstead in his cell, and he used to lie upon it at night without any bed-clothes to make him comfortable. He also made for himself a very thin mat of rushes, which he laid upon the door, and which reached only to his knees. He put under his head for a bolster a small sack filled with pea-stalks, and upon it a very small pillow. He had no bed-covering over him, and he lay at night just as he was clothed during the day; except only that he took off his shoes, and wrapped a thick cloak round him. He thus secured for himself a most miserable bed; for the hard pea-stalks lay in lumps under his head, the cross with the sharp nails stuck into his back, his arms were locked fast in bonds, the horsehair under-garment was round his loins, and the cloak too was very heavy, and the door hard. Thus he lay in wretchedness, afraid to stir, just like a log. Whenever he attempted to turn, the pain it caused him was very great; and if he fell back at all heavily upon the cross when asleep, the nails ran into his bones; and he would then send up many a sigh to God.

In winter he suffered very much from the frost, for if he stretched out his feet in sleep, as people do, they lay quite bare upon the door, and froze with the cold; and if he drew them in again, and kept them gathered up, the blood became all on fire in his legs, and this was great pain to him. His feet were full of sores; his legs swelled, as if they were growing dropsical; his knees were bloody and seared; his loins were covered with scars from the horsehair under garment; his back was wounded by the cross; his body wasted from excessive austerity; his mouth parched with intense thirst; and his hands tremulous from weakness. Amid these torments he spent his days and nights; and he endured them all out of the greatness of the love which he bore in his heart to the Divine and Eternal Wisdom, our Lord Jesus Christ, whose agonising sufferings he sought to imitate.

After a time he gave up this penitential exercise of the door, and instead of it he took up his abode in a very small cell, and used the bench, which was intended for a seat, as his bed. This bench was so narrow and short that he could not stretch himself out upon it. In this hole, and upon the above-mentioned door, he lay at night, in his usual bonds, for about eight years. It was also his custom during the space of five-and-twenty years, provided he was staying in the convent, never to go after compline in winter into any warm room, or to the convent-stove to warm himself, however cold it might be, unless he was obliged to do so for other reasons. Throughout all these years he never took a bath, either a water or a sweating bath; and this he did in order to mortify his comfort-seeking body.



For a long time he only ate once a day, both in summer and winter; and he not only fasted from meat, but also from fish and eggs. He practised during a long time such rigid poverty that he would neither receive nor touch a penny either with leave or without it. For a considerable space of time he strove to attain to such a high degree of purity that he would neither scratch nor touch any part of his body, save only his hands and feet.



CHAPTER XX.

How he broke himself from drink.

ANOTHER afflictive exercise, which he once adopted, was to limit himself to an exceedingly small measure of drink; and that he might not transgress this measure either at home or abroad, he caused a little cup to be made of the exact size, and carried it with him whenever he went out. In times of great thirst it was no more than enough to cool his parched mouth, just like what is given to refresh a sick person in a burning fever. For a long time he drank no wine at all, save only on holy Easter-day, and he drank it then in honour of the high festival. On one occasion, after he had long endured great thirst, and from a spirit of mortification was resolved not to quench his thirst with water or wine, he looked upwards to God in the excessive anguish of his soul, upon which God answered him interiorly in this wise:—Mark and see how thirsty I was in My death-agony, with nothing but a little vinegar and gall to drink; and yet all the cool fountains upon this earth were Mine, for I have created them all, as well as all things else, and ordained them all for man's support. Wherefore thou also must endure patiently privation and want, if thou wouldst imitate Me.

It happened once before Christmas that the Servitor had utterly renounced and put from him all bodily comforts, and moreover had taken upon himself three penitential exercises in addition to the ordinary practices which he had long pursued. The first of these was, that he remained after matins until daybreak standing on the bare stones before the high altar, and this too at a time when the nights were at the longest, and the bell for matins rang very early. The second practice was, that he avoided going to any warm place, either by day or night, and never warmed his hands over the chafing-dish at the altar;³ in consequence of which his hands became horribly swollen, because the cold at that time was exceeding great. When compline was ended, he used to go, all cold as he was, to sleep upon his bench, and after matins he stood before the altar on the bare stones till daybreak. The third practice was to abstain altogether from drinking during the day, however great his thirst might be. He only drank in the morning at table, and at that time he was not thirsty. When, however, it drew towards evening, his thirst became so excessive that his whole frame panted for drink; nevertheless he bore it all perseveringly, though the pain of it was bitter and intense. His mouth, inside and out, was as dry as that of a sick person in a distemper, and his tongue was so cracked that for more than a year afterwards it would not heal. When he stood in choir at compline thus parched with thirst, and the holy water was sprinkled around according to custom, he would eagerly open his parched mouth, and gape wide towards the

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³ It was the custom to place a chafing-dish upon the altar when the cold was very great, in order that the priest might warm his fingers at it.

sprinkling-brush, in the hope that a little drop of water might fall upon his dried-up tongue and cool it a little. Again, when he used to push away the wine from him at the supper-table, all athirst though he was, he would sometimes lift up his eyes and say:—Ah, heavenly Father, receive this cool drink as an offering of my heart's blood, and give Thy Child to drink of it in that thirst wherewith He thirsted in His death-agony upon the cross. Sometimes also, when he was very thirsty, he would go opposite the fountain and gaze at the tinkling water in the tinned basin, and then he would look upwards to God and sigh deeply. At other times he was so utterly overcome by his sufferings that he would cry out from the depths of his heart:—Alas, O everlasting Good, how hidden are Thy judgments! Ah me! that the broad lake of Constance is so nigh, and the clear Rhine flows all around me,⁴ and yet one single drink of water is too dear for me to purchase! This is indeed a misery.

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This state of things continued until the time when the Gospel was read at Mass about how our Lord God changed water into wine. That same Sunday night he sat in misery at table, for through excess of thirst he had no desire to eat. As soon as grace was read he hurried quickly to his chapel, for he was so overcome with agony that he could no more contain himself, and, bursting into a flood of bitter tears, he exclaimed:—O God, Thou alone knowest what sorrow and anguish of heart are. Wherefore was I born into this world so utterly poor and destitute that in the midst of all abundance I must endure such grievous need! While he was uttering these lamentations, it seemed to him as though a voice spoke within his soul, saying:—Be of good courage; God will soon rejoice and comfort thee. Weep not, brave knight; bear thyself well. These words brought fresh life to his heart, so that he stopped lamenting, and tried to leave off weeping altogether. But the pain he suffered would not let him feel quite joyful, and his tears continued falling, though something inwardly forced him to smile, as though at some pleasant adventure close at hand which God would ere long send him. In this state he went to compline. His mouth sang while his heart trembled, and it seemed to him the while that he should soon be recompensed for all his sufferings. And so it came to pass not long afterwards, and even that very night he received part payment in the following manner: It appeared to him in a vision as though our dear Lady, God's Mother, came to him with the little Child Jesus in the form He wore on earth when seven years old. The Child carried in His hand a small goblet of fresh water. The goblet was glazed all over, and was a little larger than one of the convent-mugs. Then our dear Lady took the goblet in her hand, and gave it to the Servitor to drink. He received it with great eagerness, and quenched his thirst to his heart's content.

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4 The Dominican Convent in which Blessed Henry Suso lived stood on a small island at the point where the Rhine flows out of the lake of Constance. It is now a manufactory.

One day as he was walking in the country, he happened to meet, on a narrow pathway, a poor, respectable woman; and when the woman drew near him, he gave up to her the dry path, and went himself into the wet at the side, in order to let her go by. The woman, turning round, said to him:—Dear master, how comes it that you, a gentleman and a priest, give way so humbly to me, a poor woman, who ought much more fittingly to have given way to you? He replied:—Ah, dear woman, it is my custom to pay willing deference and honour to all women for the sake of the gentle Mother of God in heaven. At this she lifted up her eyes and hands to heaven, and spoke thus:—I beseech this same august Lady that you may not depart this world until you have received some special grace from her whom you honour in all of us women. He answered:—May the pure Maiden Mary in heaven obtain me this.

It happened soon afterwards that, though there was abundance of every kind of drink before him, he left the table, according to his custom, with a thirsting mouth. That same night, when he lay down to rest, there came and stood before him, in a vision, a beautiful heavenly form, which thus addressed him:—It is I, the Mother, who gave thee to drink from the little goblet the other night; and, since thou art so exceeding thirsty, I will in pity give thee once more to drink. To this the Servitor made answer very wisely:—Ah, purest one! but thou hast nothing in thy hand out of which to give me drink. She replied:—I will give thee to drink of that healthful drink which flows from my heart. He was so terrified at this that he could not answer her, for he knew well how unworthy of it he was. Then she said to him, with great kindness:—Inasmuch as Jesus, the treasure of heaven, has come down so lovingly into thy heart, and since thy parched mouth has so dearly earned this grace, I will bestow it on thee for thy special consolation; and it is not a corporeal drink which I will give thee, but a healthful, spiritual, and excellent drink of real and true purity. Then he let it be as she had said, and he thought within himself:—Thou shalt now drink thy full, and be able to quench thy great thirst. When he had well drunk of this heavenly drink, there remained something in his mouth like a little soft lump. It was white, and of the nature of manna; and he kept it in his mouth for a long time, as a voucher for the truth of what had taken place. Afterwards, he began to weep from his very heart, and he thanked God and His dear Mother for the great grace that they had vouchsafed him.

That same night our dear Lady appeared to a holy person in another town, and said:—Go and tell my Child's Servitor from me what is written of the great doctor, John Chrysostom of the golden mouth, how that one day, when he was still a scholar, as he was kneeling before an altar, on which the heavenly Mother was represented in carved wood giving the Child in her arms to drink, as mothers do, the image of the Mother bade her Child stop awhile, and allowed the afore-named scholar likewise to drink from out her heart. This same grace the Servitor also has received from me in a vision, and as a voucher for its truth, mark this: that from this time forth the teaching which will proceed from his holy mouth will be much

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more fervent and pleasanter to hear than it has ever been before. When the Servitor heard this, he lifted up his hands, heart, and eyes, saying:—Praised be the vein of the outflowing Godhead, and praised beyond praise be the sweet Mother of all graces by me, poor worthless man, for this heavenly gift.

The same holy person made answer, saying:—One thing more I have to tell you. Know, then, that our dear Lady, with her dear Child, appeared to me last night in a vision, and our Lady had in her hand a beautiful drinking-vessel of water. The Child and the Lady spoke loving words about you, and then she held the vessel of water to the Child, and prayed Him to pronounce His blessing over it. He pronounced His holy blessing upon the water, and immediately the water became wine; and He said:—It is enough. My will is that the brother should no longer mortify himself by abstaining from wine. Let him henceforward drink wine for his wasted frame's sake. From that time forth, now that God allowed it to him, the Servitor drank wine as he had done before.

At this same period, when the Servitor had become very ill, owing to the excessive burden of the afore-mentioned exercises which he had so long practised, our dear Lord appeared to a holy friend of God, holding in His hand a box. She said to him:—Lord, what meanest Thou by the box? He answered:—I mean to cure my Servitor with it, for he is sick. Then our Lord went to the Servitor with the box, and opened it, and in the box there was fresh blood. He took out some of the blood, and spread it over the Servitor's heart, so that it became all bloody, and after that He spread it over his hands and feet and all his limbs. Upon this, she said to Him:—Ah, Lord! why dost Thou mark him thus? or is it Thy will to impress upon him Thy five love-marks? He answered:—Yes. I will lovingly mark his heart and all his frame with sufferings, and I will heal him, and restore him to health, and I will make of him a man after My whole heart.

At length, after the Senator had led, from his eighteenth to his fortieth year, a life of exercises, according to the outer man—such as have been in part described above—and when his whole frame was now so worn and wasted that nothing remained for him except to die or leave off these exercises, he left them off; and God showed him that all this austerity and all these practices were nothing more than a good beginning, and a breaking through his uncrushed natural man; and he saw that he must press on still further in quite another way, if he wished to reach perfection.



CHAPTER XXI.

How he was directed to the rational school, in which the art of true detachment is taught.

ONE day the Servitor was sitting on his bench after matins, and while he was absorbed in meditation his bodily senses became abstracted, and it seemed to his inward vision that a noble youth came down from above, and, standing before him, addressed him thus:—Thou hast been long enough in the lower schools, and hast exercised thyself sufficiently in them, and art now foil-grown. Up then with me. I will take thee to the highest school which is to be found in this world; and thou shalt diligently learn there the highest of all crafts, which shall establish thee in divine peace, and bring thy holy beginnings to a blissful end. The Servitor was rejoiced at this, and stood up; upon which, the youth took him by the hand and carried him, as it appeared to him, into a land above the ken of sense. There was a beautiful house there, which looked as if it were the abode of religious men, and those who practised the afore-named craft dwelt in it. When he entered the house, they received him kindly and greeted him lovingly, and then they went in haste to the Master Superior, and told him that one had come who also wished to be his disciple, and to learn the craft. He answered:—I will look at him and see how he pleases me. When he saw the Servitor, he smiled upon him very kindly, and said:—Be assured that this stranger may become an excellent professor of this high craft, if he will patiently submit to the strait stocks, in which he must be inwardly confined. But the Servitor understood not these obscure words; so he turned him to the youth who had brought him thither, and asked him, saying:—Tell me, dear comrade, what is the highest school, and what is the craft taught there of which thou spokest to me? The youth answered:—The highest school, and the craft which is taught there, consist simply in an entire and perfect detachment from self; that is to say, how a man may attain to such an abiding spirit of self-renunciation, that, no matter how God treats him, either directly by Him self, or indirectly through creatures, or how he feels, whether joyful or sad, the one object of his strivings shall ever be to continue always the same by a perpetual giving up of self, as far as human frailty will allow, and to make God's honour and glory his sole aim, just in the way that the dear Christ acted towards His heavenly Father. When the Senator heard this, he was well pleased at it, and he resolved to study the craft, and it seemed to him that he could meet with no difficulties so great as to make him turn aside from this intention. Moreover, he wished to build a house there, and to undertake much active work. The youth prevented him from doing this, saying:—This craft requires a complete cessation from activity. The less a man does here, the more he has really done.⁵

5 He alluded in this to that mode of acting in which a man is a hindrance to himself, and does not seek God's honour purely.

Immediately after this discourse the Servitor came to himself again, and he continued to sit still as before. Then he began to reflect deeply upon this discourse, and he observed that it was the same pure and simple truth which Christ Himself has taught. Thereupon he proceeded to hold converse with himself interiorly, saying:—Look inwards, friend, and thou wilt find thyself still really there, and wilt perceive that, notwithstanding all thy outward practices, in which thou didst of thy own choice exercise thyself, thou art still undetached from self in what relates to contradictions at the hands of others. Thou art still like a timid hare, which lies hidden in a thicket, and is terrified at every rustling leaf. Even so is it with thee too. Thou art terrified every day at the sufferings which come upon thee. The sight of thy enemies makes thee lose colour. When thou shouldst let thyself be humiliated, thou takest to flight. When thou shouldst expose thyself to the blow, thou hidest. When thou art praised, thou laughest. When thou art blamed, thou mournest. It may well be true that thou needest a higher school. Then sighing inwardly, he looked up to God, and said:—O God, how nakedly has this truth been shown me! Woe is me! When shall I ever become a truly detached man?



CHAPTER XXII.

How painful it is to die interiorly.

NOW that the Servitor had been released by God from exterior penances of the kind described above, by which his life had been imperilled, his worn-out frame was so rejoiced at this, that he used to weep for joy whenever he called to mind his penitential bonds, and all the cruel sufferings and combats which he had passed through. And he said within himself:—Henceforth, dear Lord, I will lead a quiet life and enjoy myself. I will quench my thirst fully with wine and water, and I will sleep unbound on my straw bed. Oh! how often and how earnestly I have longed that this comfort might be mine before I died! I have been long enough wearing myself away. Henceforth the time is come for me to rest. Such were the presumptuous thoughts and fancies which then floated before his mind. Alas! he knew not yet what God had decreed concerning him.

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When he had spent several weeks very pleasantly in these agreeable thoughts, it happened one day that, as he was sitting according to custom on the bench which was his bed, he began to contemplate that true saying of the suffering Job, “Militia est vita hominis super terram” (Job vii. 1),—The life of man in this world is nothing else but a knight’s life of warfare. As he meditated on these words, his senses became abstracted, and it seemed to him that there came in a comely youth, of very manly form, who brought him a pair of knight’s shoes, of excellent quality, with other clothing such as knights are wont to wear. The youth went up to the Servitor, and vested him in the knight’s attire, saying:—Hearken, Sir Knight. Hitherto thou hast been a squire: God wills thee now to be a knight. The Servitor looked at himself in the knight’s shoes, and marvelling greatly in his heart, exclaimed:—Wonderful, O God! What has happened to me? What have I become? Must I be a knight? I had much rather lead a comfortable life than this. Then he said to the youth:—Well, since God wills me to be a knight, if only I had been made one gloriously in a battle, I should have preferred it. The youth turned half aside, and, with a laugh, answered:—Be not anxious. You shall have fighting enough. He who resolves to bear himself undauntedly as God’s knight in this spiritual warfare will meet with much harder conflicts than ever fell to the lot of the famed heroes of olden time, whose knightly prowess the world loves to recount in song and tale. Thou fanciest that God has taken thy yoke off thee, and that He has cast away thy bonds, so that thou canst now attend to thy comfort. But it is not so, as yet. It is not God’s will to take thy bonds from off thee. He will only change them, and make them far heavier than they ever were before. The Servitor was struck with terror at this, and said:—Alas, my God! what art Thou about to do with me? I fancied that all was at an end, just as it is going to begin. My straits are only now commencing, as it seems to me. Ah, Lord of Heaven! what mean Thy dealings with me? Am I alone a sinner, and are all other men just, that Thou dost

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in this wise use Thy rod on me, poor wretch, and sparest many others? Thou hast acted thus with me since my child hood's days, when Thou didst crucify my youthful frame with heavy and weary sicknesses. I fancied that I had had enough by this time; He answered:—No! it is not yet enough. Thou must be tried and proved to the very bottom in all things, if it is to go well with thee. The Servitor said:—Lord! show me how much suffering I have still before me. He answered:—Look upwards at the heavens above thee, and if thou canst count the countless multitude of the stars, thou canst count also the sufferings which still await thee; and as the stars seem small, and yet are great, even so thy sufferings are small in seeming to the eyes of unexercised men; while, judged of by thy own feelings, they will prove great for thee to bear. The Servitor said:—Ah, Lord! show me the sufferings beforehand, that I may know them. He answered:—No! it is Letter for thee not to know them, lest thou shouldst lose heart beforehand. Nevertheless, among the countless sufferings which await thee, I will tell thee three.



The first is this. Hitherto thou hast struck thyself with thy own hands, and left off striking when thou wouldst, and hast had pity upon thyself. But now I will myself take hold of thee, and give thee over quite defenceless into the hands of strangers, and thou shalt suffer publicly the loss of thy good name, through the means of certain blinded men. This will press upon thee more painfully than the sharp cross on thy wounded back did; for in thy former exercises thou wast held in high repute among men, whereas now thou shalt be beaten down and brought to naught in the sight of all.

The second suffering is this. Many as have been the bitter deaths which thou hast inflicted on thyself, nevertheless this has always remained to thee by God's providence, that thy disposition is an affectionate and love-seeking one. Now it shall befall thee, that in those very quarters where thou shalt look for special love and faithfulness thou shalt meet with great unfaithfulness, sufferings, and affliction. And this shall happen in such manifold ways, that those who shall continue more than ordinarily true to thee will have to suffer with thee from compassion.



The third suffering is this. Hitherto thou hast been like an unweaned sucking child, and thou hast floated in divine sweetness, as a fish in the sea. I will now withdraw this from thee, and let thee starve and wither; and thou shalt be forsaken both by God and the world, and be openly despised by friends and foes. In a word: whatever thou shalt take in hand in order to delight or comfort thee, shall come to naught.

The Servitor was struck with such consternation at these words that his whole frame trembled; and springing up impetuously, he fell down upon the ground in the form of a cross, and calling upon God with a cry of agony from his very heart, besought Him by His

kind fatherly goodness to take away from him, if it were possible, this great misery; or, if this could not be, to let the heavenly will of His eternal ordinance be accomplished in him.

After he had lain a good while in this extremity of anguish, something spoke within him thus:—Be of good cheer. I Myself will be with thee, and I will aid thee graciously to overcome in all these unusual trials. There upon he arose, and gave himself up entirely into God's hands. Now when it became morning, and he was sitting sorrowfully in his cell after Mass, thinking over these things, and frozen with cold, for it was winter, he heard a voice within him saying:—Open the window of the cell, and look out and learn. He opened the window, and looked out, and he beheld a dog running about in the middle of the cloister with a worn-out foot-cloth in its mouth. The dog was acting very strangely with the foot-cloth, for he kept tossing it up and down, and tearing holes in it. Thereupon the Servitor looked up to heaven, sighing deeply, and it was said to him:—Even so shalt thou be in thy brethren's mouths. Then the thought came to him:—Since it cannot be otherwise, resign thyself to it; and, as the foot-cloth suffers itself to be maltreated in silence, even so do thou. He went down into the cloister, and, taking up the foot-cloth, preserved it for many years as a jewel most dear to him; and as often as he felt inclined to break out into impatience, he used to bring it forth, that he might recognise himself in it and keep silence in regard to all men. If it sometimes happened that he half turned away his face in anger from some of those who persecuted him, he was inwardly rebuked for it, and it was said to him:—Remember that I, thy Lord, turned not away My beautiful face from those who spat upon Me. Then he would bitterly repent of what he had done, and turn himself to them again very lovingly.

In the beginning, when he met with any suffering, the thought would come to his mind:—O God, that this suffering were at an end, that I might have done with it! Thereupon the Child Jesus appeared to him in a vision on our Lady's feast of Candlemas, and rebuked him, saying:—Thou dost not yet know how to suffer; but I will teach thee: Behold! when thou art in any suffering, thou shouldst not look onwards to the end of that suffering, fancying that thou wilt then be at rest; but so long as the suffering lasts, thou shouldst be getting thyself ready to accept with patience another suffering, which is sure to follow in its train. Thou shouldst do like a maiden picking roses. When she has picked one rose from the rose-bush, this does not satisfy her, but she resolves to pick many more from it. Even so do thou. Make up thy mind for this beforehand, that, when one suffering comes to an end, another will forthwith meet thee.

Among other friends of God who foretold to him the new sufferings which were hanging over him, there came to him a person of eminent sanctity, who said that, on the Angels festival, after matins she had prayed to God for him with exceeding earnestness; and that it seemed to her in a vision that she was carried to the place where he then was, and that she



beheld a beautiful rose-tree grow up over him, and spread itself on all sides far and wide. It was of a ravishing form, and full of lovely red roses. On looking up to heaven it seemed to her that the sun rose all beautiful, without a cloud, and with much splendour. Now there stood in the sun's radiance a lovely Child in the form of a cross; and she saw a ray come forth from the sun to the Servitor's heart, and it was so mighty that it set on fire all his veins and limbs. But the rose-tree bowed itself between, and did its best with its thick boughs to shut out the sunshine from his heart. Nevertheless it could not succeed in this, for the out-streaming rays were so powerful, that they pierced through all the boughs and shone down right into his heart. Then she saw the Child come forth from the sun, and she said to him:—Dear Child, whither art Thou going? He answered:—I am going to My beloved Servitor. Upon which she said:—Sweet Child, what means the sun's brightness in Thy Servitor's heart? He replied:—I have made his loving heart thus bright and glorious, that the reflection of its radiance, streaming forth from out his heart, may draw lovingly the hearts of all men to Me. The thick rose-tree, which represents the manifold sufferings that await him, cannot hinder this, but right nobly it shall be accomplished in him.

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Inasmuch as seclusion is profitable to a beginner, the Servitor resolved to remain for more than ten years secluded in his monastery from all the world. When he went from table he used to shut himself up in his chapel and remain there. He refused to hold any long conversations at the convent-door or elsewhere with women, or even with men, nor would he look at them. He fixed a short limit for his eyes, beyond which he suffered them not to look; and the limit was five feet. He remained always at home, and would never go out either into the town or the country. His one aim was to practise solitude. All this watchfulness, however, served him nothing; for during these years there fell upon him exceeding grievous sufferings; and they crushed him down so heavily that he became an object of pity to himself and others.

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In order that his prison-house might be more agreeable to him during the ten years which he had resolved to spend in voluntary confinement in his chapel, he directed a painter to draw for him the holy fathers of olden time with their sayings, as well as other devout pictures, calculated to encourage a sufferer to patience under afflictions. But God would not let this be according to his wish; for when the painter had sketched out the ancient fathers with charcoal on the chapel-walls, his eyes became so bad that he could no longer see to draw. He therefore begged permission to depart, saying that the work must wait until he got well again. The Servitor turned to the painter, and inquired how long it would take him to get well. The painter answered:—Twelve weeks. Upon this the Servitor told him to set up again the ladder, which he had taken down, against the outlines of the ancient fathers

on the wall; and when this was done, he mounted the ladder, and, after rubbing his hands upon the pictures, stroked the painter's suffering eyes, saying:—In the might of God, and through the holiness of these ancient fathers, I bid you, master, come back here to morrow morning with your eyes quite cured. Early next morning the painter came back joyous and well, and he thanked God and the Servitor for his cure. The Servitor, however, did not ascribe it to himself, but to the ancient fathers, on whose pictures he had rubbed his hands.

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During this same period it seemed as if God had given leave to the evil spirits and to all men to torment him. Innumerable were the sufferings which he then endured from the evil spirits, who, in horrible assumed forms and with savage cruelty, caused him so much pain and grief, day and night, awake and asleep, that his sufferings from this source were exceeding great.

Once upon a time he was tempted with a great longing to eat meat, for he had passed many years without touching meat. Now, after he had eaten the meat, and had scarcely finished satisfying his longing, there came and stood over against him, in a vision, a monstrous hellish figure, who, after repeating the verse, “Adhuc escae eorum erant in ore ipsorum, et ira Dei descendit super eos” (Ps. lxxvii. 30; Numb. xi. 33),—As yet the morsel was in their mouth, and the wrath of God came down upon them,—cried out in a barking voice to those who stood by:—This monk is guilty of death, and I will execute the sentence on him. But when they would not suffer this, he drew forth a horrible auger, saying:—Since I may not do any thing else to thee, I will at least torture thy body with this auger; and I will bore it into thee through thy mouth in such a manner, that the anguish which thou shalt suffer will be as great as the pleasure thou didst take in eating the meat. And having said this, he drove the auger in cruel fashion against the Servitor's mouth. Whereupon immediately his chin-bones and teeth swelled up, and his mouth became so swollen that he could not open it; and for three days he could not eat meat or any thing else, except only what he could suck up through his teeth.

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CHAPTER XXIII.

Of interior sufferings.

AMONG his various sufferings, there were three interior ones which caused him great torment. One of these was impious imaginations against the faith. Thus, there would come into his mind the thought:—How was it possible for God to become man, with many other thoughts of that kind. The more he fought against them, the more perplexed he became. God suffered him to remain under these temptations about nine years, during which he ceased not with wailing heart and weeping eyes to cry to God and all the Saints for help. At last, when God deemed that the time was come, He set him entirely free from them, and bestowed upon him great steadfastness and clearness of faith.

The second interior suffering was an inordinate sadness. He had such a continual heaviness of spirit, that it was as if a mountain lay upon his heart. A partial cause of this was, that his turning away from creatures to God had been carried out with such excessive speed and severity, that his bodily frame had suffered greatly from it. This trial lasted for eight years.

The third interior suffering was a temptation which assailed him, that it would never be well with his soul hereafter, but that he must be damned eternally, no matter how rightly he should act, or how many spiritual exercises he should practise; for all this would be of no avail to place him among the saved, and it all seemed to him lost labour from the beginning. His mind was saddened with this thought day and night; and when he had to go into choir, or to do any other good work, the temptation presented itself:—What does it profit thee to serve God? Then he would say to himself, very mournfully:—Surely there is nothing but a curse for thee. Never will it be well with thee. Give it all up, then, betimes. Thou art lost, do what thou wilt. Then he would think within himself:—Alas, utterly wretched that I am, whither shall I betake myself? If I quit the Order, hell will be my lot; and if I remain in it, nothing but misery awaits me. Alas, Lord God! was there ever a man worse off than I am? Sometimes he would stand deep sunk into himself, and groan many times heavily, while the tears ran down his cheeks. Then he would beat his breast and say:—Alas, O God! am I then never to be saved? Oh! what a mournful thing is this! Must I be miserable here and hereafter? Woe is me, that I ever came forth from my mother's womb.

This temptation fell upon him through an inordinate fear. It had been told him that his admission into the Order had been connected with the bestowal of temporal goods, and from this comes the sin called simony, which consists in the purchase of something spiritual with something temporal. What he heard sunk deep into his heart, until at length he was quite overpowered by the anguish that it caused him.



After this terrible suffering; had lasted about ten years, all which time he never looked upon himself in any other light than as one damned, he went to the holy Master Eckart, and made known to him his suffering. The holy man delivered him from it, and thus set him free from the hell in which he had so long dwelt.



CHAPTER XXIV.

How he went forth to succour and to save his neighbour.

AFTER he had spent many years in attending to his interior life, God urged him, by manifold revelations, to apply himself also to the salvation of his neighbour. The great sufferings which befell him in this work were beyond number and measure. But how many souls were succoured by him was once shown by God to one of His chosen friends named Anna, who was, more over, a spiritual daughter of the Servitor. She was one day rapt in ecstasy at prayer, and she saw the Servitor saying Mass upon a lofty mountain. An innumerable multitude of children were hanging in and on him, but each differently from the rest; for the more any one had of God, the more firmly he rested on the Servitor; and the more inwardly he was drawn into the Servitor, the more perfectly God turned Himself to him. She saw, moreover, that the Servitor was praying earnestly for them all to the ever lasting God, whom he held in his priestly hands. Upon this, she besought God to make known to her what the vision meant. And God answered her in this wise:—The innumerable multitude of children who hang upon him are all those who are his penitents or disciples, or are in other ways bound to him by ties of special love and faithfulness. All these he has commended to Me in such sort, that I will guide their life to a good end, and they shall never be parted from My gladsome countenance. What ever heavy sufferings may on this account be fall him, shall be all fully made up to him by the joys which I will give him.

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Before the above-named noble maiden be came acquainted with the Servitor of the Eternal Wisdom, she had received from God an interior drawing and desire to see him. Now it happened once that she was rapt in ecstasy, and in the vision a voice bade her go to the place where the Servitor then was, and see him. She answered:—I do not know him among the multitude of the brothers. The voice replied:—It is easy to know him among the others. He has around his head a green ring, entwined round and round with red and white roses, like a garland of roses. The white roses signify his purity, and the red roses his patience amid the manifold sufferings which he must endure; and just as the ring of gold, which it is the custom to paint round the heads of Saints, represents the everlasting bliss which they now possess in God, even so the ring of roses indicates the multiplicity of sufferings which God's dear friends must bear while they are still serving Him in this world with knightly exercises. Then the angel led her in the vision to where he was, and she soon recognised him by the ring of roses which was round his head.

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During this same period of suffering, the Servitor's greatest interior support came from the continual help which the holy angels gave him.

Once upon a time, when his outward senses were absorbed in ecstasy, it seemed to him in a vision that he was carried to a place in which there was a very great number of the angelic host, and that one of those who stood nearest to him said:—Put forth thy hand and look. He put forth his hand and looked; and out of the middle of his hand there sprung up a beautiful red rose, with lovely green leaves. The rose was so large that it covered his hand to his fingers, and it was so beautiful and resplendent that it gave great pleasure to his eyes. He turned his hand round outside and inside, and on both sides it was ravishing to look at. Greatly marvelling in his heart at this, he said:—Dear comrade, what means this vision? The youth answered:—It means sufferings upon sufferings, and over again sufferings upon sufferings, which God intends to give thee. This is what is signified by the four roses on thy two hands and thy two feet. The Servitor, with a deep sigh, said:—Alas, gentle Lord! it is a singular ordinance of God that sufferings should cause such pain to men, and yet be so beautiful an adornment to them spiritually.



CHAPTER XXV.

Concerning manifold sufferings.

ONCE upon a time he came to a small town, and near the town there was a wooden image, a crucifix, which stood in a little house, as the custom is; and it was the popular belief that many miracles were wrought there, on which account people used to bring thither wax figures and much wax in honour of God. When he arrived opposite the crucifix, he went up and knelt before it; and then, after he had spent some time in prayer, he arose and proceeded with his companion to the inn. This kneeling and praying of his before the crucifix had been seen by a little girl, a child of seven years old. Now, the night following, there came thieves to the image, and they broke open the doors, and stole all the wax which they found there. As soon as it was day, the news came into the town, and was carried to the citizen who had the charge of the image. He inquired into the matter, in order to discover who had committed this great robbery. Upon which, the abovementioned child said that she knew well who had done it. And when she was pressed to make it known, and to point out the villain, she said:—No one is guilty of the crime except the brother, meaning by this the Servitor; for, she added:—I saw him yesterday kneel before the image, and then go into the town.



The citizen took these words of the child as truth, and repeated them on all sides, so that the calumny concerning the brother spread through the town, and he was charged with the crime on these slight grounds; and many an evil judgment was passed upon him, how that he ought to be killed, and, as a wicked man, to be put out of the world.

When the Servitor heard all this, he was filled with consternation, though he well knew that he was guiltless, and, with a deep groan, he said to God:—Alas, Lord! since it is my lot to suffer, and I must needs suffer, if Thou wouldst but give me ordinary sufferings, such as would not bring me to disgrace, I would bear them joyfully; but by destroying my good name Thou dost strike me to the heart in those things which of all others are the sorest to me. He remained in this town until the people ceased to talk about it.



It came to pass, in another town, that there arose a great outcry concerning him, so that the whole town and neighbourhood was full of it. There was a monastery in this town, in which there was a stone crucifix, of the exact size, it was said, of Christ Himself. Now, one day during Lent, fresh blood was observed on the crucifix, just beneath the wound on the side. The Servitor ran thither with the others to behold the wonder, and when he saw the blood, he went up and received it on his finger, in the sight of all who stood around. The concourse of people from every part of the town soon became very great, and they forced him to stand forward before them all, and relate what he had seen and touched. He did this,

adding at the same time the caution, that he pronounced no judgment about the matter, whether it was from God or man, but that he left this to others.

This story resounded far and wide through the country, and each person added to it what he pleased, and it was given out that the Servitor had pricked himself in the finger and rubbed the blood upon the crucifix, in order that it might be supposed that the crucifix had bled of itself, and that he had devised this through covetousness, with a view to draw a crowd of people thither, that he might plunder them of their property. The same evil report was spread abroad about him in other towns also.

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As soon as the citizens of the town heard this calumnious tale, there was nothing left for him but to escape by night out of the place, and they pursued him, and would have killed him, if he had not got away. They even offered a large sum of money to whoever would bring him in alive or dead. Evil rumours of this kind were circulated in abundance concerning him; and wherever these tales reached, they were received as truth, and his name was greeted with many revilings and curses, and many an unjust judgment was passed upon him. Some persons, indeed, who knew him, were more reasonable; but, if they ventured to assert his innocence, they were so savagely put down, that they were forced to hold their peace, and let him perish in the world's esteem.

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An honourable lady, a citizen of the town, when she heard all the marvellous sufferings which the poor innocent man had undergone, came to him out of compassion, in the midst of his distress, and advised him to procure from the town a sealed testimonial of his guiltlessness, that he might take it with him wherever he went, for every one in the town knew well that he was innocent. He replied:—Ah, dear lady! if this were my only suffering, and if it were God's intention to lay no other affliction upon me but this, I would apply for the testimonial; but as things are, so much suffering of this kind falls to my lot every day, that I must leave it to God and bear it.

At another time he set forth on a journey to the Netherlands, to be present at a chapter, and he found sufferings ready waiting for him on his arrival, for there came thither to attack him two persons of high position in the Order, who were very active in their endeavours to bring Mm into great trouble. With quaking heart, he was put upon his trial, and many things were laid to his charge, among which was the following:—They said that he had written books containing false doctrine, which had defiled the whole country with heretical filth. In consequence, he was harshly and severely reprimanded, and he was threatened with heavy punishment, though God and the world knew that he was guiltless in the matter.

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These crushing trials did not satisfy God, but He made their number still greater. He sent the Servitor a sickness on his journey home, and caused him to be attacked by a violent

fever. Besides this, a dangerous abscess gathered inwardly, close to his heart; so that, what with interior anguish and outward sufferings, he came so near to death that his companion often looked at him to see whether the moment had not come for his soul to take its departure.

As he lay thus utterly wretched in a strange convent in bed, and could not sleep at night from the straits to which his grievous sickness had reduced him, he began to enter into account with God in this wise:—Woe is me, O just God, that Thou hast so exceedingly overburthened my sick frame with bitter suffering, and wounded my heart through and through with the great dishonour and shame that has been done me, and that I am thus encompassed with bitter anguish from without and from within! When wilt Thou cease afflicting me, O gentle Father? When wilt thou deem it enough? Then he set before his mind the death-agony which Christ endured on the Mount of Olives, and while contemplating this, he crawled from his bed to the bench which stood beside it, for he could not bear to lie down, owing to the abscess.



While he sat thus in misery, it seemed to him in a vision that there came into the chamber a great company of the heavenly host to comfort him, and that they began to sing one of the songs of heaven, which rang so sweetly in his ears that his whole being was transformed by it. As they sang thus joyously, and the sick Servitor sat there so full of sorrow, a youth came to him, and said very lovingly:—Wherefore art thou silent? Why singest thou not with us? And yet thou knowest right well the song of heaven. The Servitor, with a sigh from his sorrowful heart, made answer, saying:—Alas! seest thou not how full of woe I am? When ever did a dying man rejoice? Do you want me to sing? I am singing now the wail of suffering. If I have ever sung joyously, that is all over now, for I am waiting only for the hour of my death. To this the youth replied right joyfully:—“Viriliter age.” Be of good cheer. Be joyous. Nothing of this kind shall befall thee. Thou shalt yet sing in thy lifetime such a song that God in His eternity shall be glorified, and many a sufferer consoled by it. Upon this, his eyes ran over, and he burst into tears, and at the same instant the abscess within him broke, and departed from him, and he was restored to health upon the spot.



Afterwards, when he reached home, there came to him a blessed friend of God, saying:—Dear sir, though it is true that on this journey you were more than a hundred miles away from me, nevertheless, what you suffered during it was quite present to me. I saw one day with my soul’s eyes the Divine Judge sitting upon His throne, and, by His permission, two evil spirits were let loose, who persecuted you by means of the two prelates who caused your sufferings. Then I cried to God, saying:—Alas, gentle God! how canst Thou bear to let Thy friend be in such great and bitter suffering! Upon which God answered me in this wise:—It is for this end that I have chosen him for Myself, that by means of these sufferings

he may be fashioned after the image of My only-begotten Son. Nevertheless, My justice must avenge the great wrong that has been done him, by the speedy death of the two who have tormented him. This came to pass in very truth soon afterwards, and in such a way that many persons became aware of it.



CHAPTER XXVI.

Of the great suffering which befell him through his sister.

THE Servitor had a sister who was under the obedience of the religious life. Now, it happened that, while the brother was living elsewhere, she began to throw aside restraint and attach herself to evil company. On one occasion, when she had gone out with these companions, she went astray and fell into sin, and then, through grief and wretchedness at what had befallen her, left her convent, and ran away he knew not whither.

When he returned home, the miserable tale was being whispered about, and some one came and told him what had taken place. On hearing it, he became like a stone from sorrow, and his heart died within him, and he went about like one out of his mind. He asked where she was, but no one could tell him where. Then the thought came to him:—A new suffering is quite right, but that it should be here! Well! lose not heart. See whether thou mayst not be able to bring back again the poor ruined soul, and offer at once the sacrifice of thy worldly honour to the merciful God. Cast aside all human shame, and spring into the deep gulf to her and lift her up.

When the brothers stood in the choir at office, and he had to pass up through the choir, all his colour left him, and he felt as if his hair was standing on end. He had not courage to go up to any one, for all were ashamed of him, and those who had formerly been his companions fled from him. If he sought counsel of his friends, they turned away their faces from him contemptuously. Then he called to mind poor Job, and said:—Well! the compassionate God must needs comfort me, since I am abandoned by all the world.

He inquired on all sides whither he should go, that he might bring speedy help to the forsaken soul. At last he was directed to a certain place, and he set out for it. It was St. Agnes's Day, and the weather was cold, and there had been a pouring rain throughout the night, so that the brooks were much swollen. On trying to jump over a brook, he fell into it from weakness. He got up as soon as he could, but his inward distress was so excessive that he heeded little this outward mishap. After he had gone some distance further, his sister was pointed out to him in a small cottage. He went up to it in anguish of soul, and going in, found her there. As soon as he saw her, he sank down upon the bench on which she was sitting, and twice his senses left him. "When he came to himself again, he began to cry aloud piteously, and to lament and weep and beat his hands together above his head, saying:—Alas, my God, how hast Thou forsaken me! Then his eyes failed him, and his mouth became fixed, and his hands stiffened, and he lay thus unconscious for a while in a faint. But as soon as he came to himself again, he took his sister into his arms, and said:—Alas, my child! Alas,

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my sister! What have I lived to see in thee? Alas, gentle maiden, Saint Agnes, how bitter has thy feast-day become to me! And then he sank down again, and his senses left him.

Upon this, his sick sister stood up and fell at his feet, with great and bitter tears, and in a voice of lamentation addressed him thus:—Alas, my lord and father! what a sad day was that which brought me into the world, since I have lost God and caused you such great suffering. Alas, true brother and rescuer of my lost soul! though I am not worthy that you should speak to me or answer me, still take me to your true heart, and call to mind that in nothing can you be more true to God and act more like Him than in what you do for a cast-away sinner and an overburdened heart. Since God has made you full of pity for all pitiable things, how will you refuse to pity me, a poor cast-away sinner, who am become an object of pity to God and all the world, now that my grievous sin has so speedily and thoughtlessly made me vile in the eyes of every one? What all reject and disdain, you seek out. When all are justly ashamed of me, you go openly to the cause of your suffering and disgrace, and seek me out. Oh! I beseech you with an anguish of heart which knows no rest, prostrate and bowed clown beneath your feet, reverence God in me, poor fallen sinner, and forgive me altogether this crime and wrong which I have done you, to the hurt of my poor soul. Call to mind, I pray you, that if in this world I have lessened your honour and harmed your person and life, you will receive instead singular honour and consolation in eternity; and refuse not to pity me, for I am the poor maid who has fallen into the snare, and I must bear this loss in time and eternity in heart and soul for evermore, and, besides all, be a burden to myself and every one. Oh! let me then be your poor needy child in this world and the next. Nothing higher does my heart desire than that I may have no longer the right to be, or to be called, your sister. Only let me in pity be your lost sister, and by right your found and well-earned needy one. This comes so truly from the very bottom of my heart, that when any one calls me your sister, or points me out as such, it is a peculiar bitterness to my heart; and I pity you when you are where you see me in your presence and must needs suffer from it, for I know that you cannot help suffering all the shame which a heart naturally feels at such times. Any thing further in common between us there neither ought to be henceforth, nor do I desire it, for your eyes and ears must be filled with shame and horror at me. All these painful things I will endure, and offer them up to God for my shameful sin, in the hope that you will mercifully pity me, poor sinner, and faith fully satisfy for me, and help my poor soul to find grace again before God.

When the brother came to himself again, he answered her sorrowful lament in this wise:—Alas, ye hot tears, burst forth from a full heart which can no longer contain itself for anguish! Alas, my child! thou, my heart and soul's only joy from my childhood up, in whom I had dreamed to find joy and comfort throughout life, come hither and let me press thee to this dead heart of thy wretched brother. Let me water my dear sister's face with the bitter

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tears of my eyes. Let me wail and weep over my dead child. Oh, a thousand deaths of the body, how slight a woe! Oh, the death of the soul and of honour, how great a woe! Oh, sorrow and sufferings of my wretched heart! O God, merciful God, what have I lived to see! O my child! come hither to me. Since I have found my child, I will weep and lament no more; and I will receive thee to-day with the same grace and pity with which I pray the merciful God to receive me, a sinful creature, at my departure; and I will gladly forgive thee altogether the exceeding pain and sorrow which I have suffered through thee, and must go on suffering to my life's end; and I will help thee with all my might to expiate and correct thy sin in the sight of God and of the world.



All those who saw and heard these lamentations of the two were so moved to pity thereby, that they could none of them restrain themselves, but were forced to weep. Thus, by his sorrowful bearing and his loving consolations, he so softened her, that she became willing to return at once to religious obedience.

Later on, after he had with unspeakable shame, and great toil and labour, brought back in his arms to the merciful God this lost sheep, God so ordered it that she was received into a far more satisfactory place than where she was before. And her earnestness in God's service became so great, and her holy and well-guarded manner of life showed such perseverance in all virtues until her death, that the brother was well repaid in the sight of God and of the world for all the pain and suffering which he had ever had on her account.

When the true-hearted brother saw that his affliction had turned out so exceeding; well, it gave him pleasure and joy, and he called to mind how God secretly orders all things so that they turn to good for the good; and then he looked up to God with great thankfulness, and his heart melted within him in praise of God.



CHAPTER XXVII.

Of a grievous suffering which befell him through a companion.

ONCE upon a time, when he was about to set forth upon a journey, there was assigned to him for his companion a lay-brother who was not quite right in his head. He received this brother very reluctantly, for he had continually before his mind the sufferings which he had on former occasions undergone through the ill-behaviour of his companions. Nevertheless, he submitted himself, and took the brother with him.

Now, it so happened that they arrived before breakfast at a village in which an annual fair was being held on that day, and a very great number of people of all sorts were collected together. The Servitor's companion, having been wet with the rain, went into a house to a fire, and declared that he would not go about with him any where, adding that the brother must do whatever he had to do without him, and that he would wait for him there. The brother had scarcely left the house when his companion rose up, and seated himself at table with a set of rough fellows and dealers who had travelled to the fair. When these men perceived that the wine had got well into his head, and he had left the table, and was standing under the yard-door gaping about him, they set upon him, saying that he had stolen a cheese from them. Now at that very moment, when these wicked people were treating him in this cruel manner, there came up four or five good-for-nothing soldiers, who also fell upon him, exclaiming that the scoundrel monk was a poisoner; for it was just then that there was the outcry about poisoning. Upon this, they laid hold of him, and made a great uproar, so that there was a general rush to the place.

When the lay-brother saw what course things had taken, and that he was a prisoner, he wished very much to get free, and, turning round, he said to them:—Stop a moment. Only stand still and let me speak, and I will confess it all to you, and tell you how things are. They stood still, and every body listened; upon which, he began thus:—Look at me now; you cannot help seeing that I am a fool and a witless man, and no one makes any account of me; but my companion is a man of consummate wisdom, and the Order has intrusted him with little bags of poison to throw into the wells between this place and Alsace, whither he is now journeying; and his intention is to defile every place to which he comes with vile poison. But see that you make haste and seize him, or he will have done a murderous deed which can never be healed; for he has just now taken out a little bag of poison and cast it into the village well, that all those who have come here to the fair and shall drink of the well may die without fail. This is why I stayed behind, and would not go out with him, for it is a great grief to me. And as a voucher that I speak the truth, you must know that he has a great bag for books, full of little bags of poison and a quantity of florins, which he and the Order have received from the Jews for carrying out this murderous design.

When the wild crew, and all those who had forced their way into the house, heard these words, they became mad with rage, and with loud yells they shouted out:—Quick after the murderer, that he escape us not! And one seized a pike, and another a battle-axe, each one taking what he could, and they rushed about in a state of frenzy, forcing open the houses and the closets, where they fancied they might find him, and stabbing with their naked swords through the beds and the straw, until the whole fair ran together, on account of the uproar.

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Among the crowd there were strangers from other districts, honourable men, who knew the Servitor well, when they heard his name. These persons came forward and told the others that they were wronging him, for that he was a very pious man, who would be very sorry to commit such a crime. At length, as they could not find him, they gave over the search, and carried his companion as a prisoner to the village magistrate, who ordered him to be shut up in a cell.

The Servitor knew nothing of all this trouble; but when he thought the time for breakfast had come, and that his companion had quite dried himself at the fire, he set out for the inn, intending to breakfast there. When he reached the inn, they began to tell him the sad news, and related to him all that had happened. Upon which, he ran straightway in terror to the house where the magistrate and his companion were, and besought the magistrate to release him. The magistrate replied that this could not be, for that he intended to confine him in a tower as a punishment for his offence. This seemed hard and unbearable to the Servitor, and he ran hither and thither seeking help; but he could find no one to aid him in this matter. After he had busied himself in this way for a long time, he at length, with much shame and bitterness, obtained his companion's release, though at great cost to himself.

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He now fancied that his sufferings were at an end; but they were only just beginning. For he had no sooner got free from the authorities with trouble and loss, than his life was exposed to imminent danger. When he left the magistrate, about vesper-time, a cry was raised among the common people and the mob that a poisoner was there; and they yelled at him as at a murderer, so that he dared not pass along in front of the village. They pointed at him, saying:—That is the poisoner. He shall not escape us. He must be killed. We will not let him off for money, like the magistrate. When he tried to escape by slipping away into the village, they yelled still more fiercely after him. Some of them said:—We ought to drown him in the Rhine; which ran past the village. The others answered:—No; the filthy murderer will defile all the water: we should burn him. A huge peasant, in a sooty jerkin, snatched up a pike, and, forcing his way through to the front, cried out:—Hear me, my masters, all of you. There is no more shameful death to which we can put this heretic than if I run him through with this long pike, just as we spit a poisonous toad. Even so in like manner let me

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spit this poisoner naked on this pike, and then lift him up backwards, and drive him so firmly into this stout fence that he will not be able to fall off. There let his foul carcass be dried by the winds, that all who go by may have a view of the murderer, and curse him after his vile death; that so his misery may be the greater in this world and the next, for richly has this utter miscreant deserved this fate.

The Servitor heard these words with such terror that he groaned deeply, and the great tears rolled down his face from anguish.

All those who stood round the ring and saw him wept bitterly; and some beat their breasts through pity, and struck their hands together above their heads; but no one dared to say any thing in presence of the infuriated people, for they were afraid of being attacked themselves.

When night began to fall, he went up and down with weeping eyes entreating that some one, for God's sake, would pity him and give him shelter; but they repulsed him cruelly. Some kind-hearted women would have gladly taken him in, but they dared not. At length, when the wretched sufferer was thus in the straits of death, and all help from man had failed him, and they were only waiting for the moment to fall upon him and kill him, he sunk down beside a fence through anguish and fear of death, and, lifting up his miserable and swollen eyes to the heavenly Father, exclaimed:—O Father of all pity, when wilt Thou bring me help to-day in my great need? O kind heart, how hast Thou forgotten Thy great kindness towards me? O Father, O true, kind Father, help me, poor wretch, in these great straits! I cannot resolve in my heart, which is already dead, whether it be more tolerable for me to be drowned, or to be burned, or to die upon a pike, for one of these deaths must now be mine. I commend my wretched spirit to Thee to-day, and I pray Thee to show me pity in my miserable death, for they are nigh unto me who are resolved to kill me.

This sorrowful plaint was overheard by a priest, who, running thither, snatched him by force out of their hands, and brought him home into his house; and, after keeping him during the night, that nothing might happen to him, set him on his way next morning early, safe out of all his troubles.

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CHAPTER XXVIII.

Of a murderer.

ONCE upon a time, when the Servitor was returning from the Netherlands, his road lay up the Rhine. He had with him a companion who was young, and a good walker. Now, it happened one day that he could not keep up with his swift companion, for he had become very tired and ill, and in consequence the companion had gone ahead of him about half-a-mile.⁶ The Servitor looked back to see if any one was following in whose company he might go through the forest, at the skirts of which he had arrived, for it was late in the day. The forest, moreover, was extensive, and of ill repute, for many persons had been murdered in it. The Servitor therefore stopped at the out skirts of the forest, and waited to see whether any one was coming.



At length two persons approached, at a very rapid pace; the one was a young and pretty woman, the other a tall ferocious-looking man, carrying a spear and a long knife, and he had on a black jerkin. The Servitor was struck with dread at the terrible appearance of the man, and he looked round to see if there was any one following; but he saw no one. He thought within himself:—O Lord! what kind of people are these? How am I to go through this great forest, and how will it fare with me? Then he made the sign of the cross over his heart and ventured it. When they were already deep in the forest, the woman came forward to him, and asked him who he was and what was his name. As soon as he had told her his name, she answered:—Dear sir, I know you well by name. I pray you to hear my confession. Then she began to confess, saying: Alas, worthy sir! it is with sorrow I tell you my sad lot. Do you see the man who follows us? He is by trade a murderer, and he murders people here in this wood and elsewhere, and takes from them their money and clothes. He never spares any one. He has deceived me, and carried me off from my friends, who are persons of good repute, and I am forced to be his wife.



The Servitor was so terrified by these words that he nearly fainted, and he cast a very sorrowful look all round him, if haply there were any one in sight or hearing, or any mode of escape. But there was no one to be seen or heard in the dark forest coming after them, except the murderer. Then he thought within himself:—If, weary as thou art, thou triest to flee, he will soon overtake and kill thee; and if thou criest out, no one will hear thee in this wilderness, and death again will be thy lot. He looked upwards very wofully, and said:—O my God, what is to become of me to-day? O death, how nigh thou art to me!

6 A German mile is about four English miles and a half.

When the woman had finished confessing, she went back to the murderer, and besought him privily, saying:—Come now, dear friend, go forward, and make thy confession also; for it is a pious belief among my people that whoever confesses to him, however sinful he may be, will never be abandoned by God. Do it, then; that God may help thee, for His sake, at thy last hour.



While the two were thus whispering to each other, the Servitor's terror knew no bounds, and the thought came to him:—Thou art betrayed! The murderer was silent, and went forward. Now, when the poor Servitor saw the murderer advancing upon him, spear in hand, his whole frame quivered with dread, and he thought with in himself:—Alas, now thou art lost! For he knew not what they had been talking about. At this point it happened that the Rhine ran close to the wood, and the narrow path lay along the bank. Moreover, the murderer so contrived it that the brother was forced to walk on the side next the water, while he walked next the wood. As the Servitor went along in this manner with trembling heart, the murderer began to confess, and revealed to him all the murders and crimes which he had ever committed. Especially he spoke of a horrible murder, which struck terror into the Servitor's heart, and which he thus described:—I came once into this wood to rob and murder, as I have done to-day, and meeting with a venerable priest, I confessed to him, while he was walking beside me at this very spot, just as you are doing; and when the confession was over, I drew forth this knife and ran him through with it, and then thrust him from me over the bank into the Rhine.



These words, and the gestures with which the murderer accompanied them, made the Servitor turn pale, and terrified him so exceedingly that the cold sweat of death ran down his face upon his breast, and he shook with fear, and became speechless, and all his senses failed him, and he kept looking every moment at his side, expecting that the same knife would be thrust into him, and that he would then be pushed over into the river. Now just as he was on the point of falling down through agony of mind and utter inability to advance a step, he cast an exceeding piteous look all round him, like a person longing to escape death. The murderer's damsel caught sight of his woe-stricken face, and running up received him in her arms, as he was falling, and holding him fast, said:—Good sir, be not afraid. He will not kill you. The murderer added:—Much good has been told me concerning you, and you shall have the benefit of it to-day, for I will let you live. Beg of God to help and favour me, a poor criminal, at my last hour, for your sake.



In the mean time they had come out of the forest, and the Servitor's companion was sitting there under a tree waiting for him. The murderer and his partner passed on. But the Servitor, crawling to his companion, sank down on the ground, while his heart and his whole body trembled, as in an attack of ague, and he lay thus motionless for a long time. At length

on recovering himself, he rose up and went on his way; and he besought God earnestly and with deep inward sighings for the murderer, that He would let him have the benefit of the pious confidence which he had conceived towards the Servitor, and not suffer him to be damned at his last hour. God gave the Servitor such an inward assurance of this, that it was impossible for him to doubt that the murderer would be saved.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Of perils by water.

ON one occasion when he had travelled to Strasburg, according to his custom, and was on his return home, he fell into a great stream of water, caused by an overflow of the Rhine, and he had with him the new little book which he had just finished, and with which the foul fiend was very wrath. As he was being swept helplessly along by the current, at the peril of his life, the faithful God so ordered it, that at that very moment there came up by chance from Strasburg a young newly-made Prussian knight, who venturing into the turbid and raging water saved the Servitor and his companion from a miser able death.

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Once upon a time he set forth on a journey under obedience, when the weather was cold; and after travelling on a carriage the whole day through until evening without food in the cold wind and frosty weather, he arrived at a troubled piece of water, which was deep and rapid, owing to the great quantity of rain which had fallen. The man who drove him went too near the bank through carelessness, and the carriage turning over, the brother was shot out of it and fell into the water on his back. The carriage fell over on him, so that he could not turn himself in the water either to this side or to that, nor yet help himself at all; and in this state he and the carriage floated down for some distance towards a mill. The driver and others ran thither, and jumping into the water seized hold of him, and tried their best to draw him out; but the heavy carnage lay upon him and pressed him down. When at last they, succeeded with great labour in lifting the carriage off him, they drew him out to land dripping wet, and he had not been long out of the water before his clothes froze upon him from the excessive cold. He began to tremble with cold, so that his teeth chattered, and in this miserable plight he stood still for a long time, and then looking up to God exclaimed:—O my God, what am I to do? what course am I to adopt? It is late and night is at hand, and if there is no town or village near, where I can warm and refresh myself, I must die; and what a wretched kind of death this will be! He looked around on all sides, until at last he espied far away upon a hill a very small hamlet. He crawled thither, all wet and frozen as he was, and by the time he reached it night had set in. He went up and down begging for shelter in God's name; but he was driven away from the houses, and no one would take pity on him. Then the frost and fatigue began to attack his heart, and put him in fear for his life; upon which he cried with a loud voice to God:—O Lord! O Lord! it would have been better hadst Thou let me be drowned, for then there would have been an end of it, instead of my being frozen to death in this street.

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These words of lamentation were overheard by a peasant, who had before this driven him away, but who now touched with compassion took him in his arms and brought him into his house, where he spent a miserable night.

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CHAPTER XXX.

Of a short interval of rest which God once granted him.

GOD had accustomed him to this, that as soon as one suffering left him another was ready at hand to take its place; and in this way God played with him unintermittingly. Once only He allowed him an interval of rest; but it did not last long.

During this season of inaction he came to a nunnery, and, being asked by his spiritual children how things went with him, he replied:—I fear they are going very ill with me at present, and for this reason. It is now four weeks since any one has attacked me in my person or my good name, quite unlike what used to happen to me; so that I fear lest God has forgotten me. Now he had not sat long with them at the grate when there came a brother of the Order, who called him out, and said:—I was a little while ago at a castle, and the lord of it asked after you, where you were, and he did this very savagely. And then he lifted up his hands, and swore before every one that wherever he found you, he would run a sword through you. The same thing was also done by several fierce soldiers, his kinsmen, and they have been searching for you in different monasteries round about in order to execute their evil designs upon you. Be warned, therefore, and take care of yourself, as you love your life.

The Servitor was struck with terror at these words, and said to the brother:—I should be very glad to hear what I have done to deserve the penalty of death. He answered:—The lord of the castle has been told that you have misled his daughter, as well as many other persons, into a particular kind of life, to which the name of spirit is given, and that those who follow it are called spirits; and he has been assured that they are the most abandoned set on the face of the earth. But more than this. There was another ferocious man there, who said of you:—He has robbed me of a dear wife. She draws her veil down now, and will no longer look at me. She will only look inwards. He is the cause of this, and he shall pay for it.

When the Servitor heard this tale, he replied:—Praised be God! and hastening back immediately to the grate, said to his daughters:—Be of good cheer, my children. God has been mindful of me, and has not forgotten me. Then he told them the cruel tale, how that men were seeking to return him evil for the good that he had done.



CHAPTER XXXI.

How he once entered into a loving account with God.

DURING this season of the Servitor's sufferings, and in the places where he then lived, if he sometimes happened to go into the infirmary to give a little refreshment to his sick body, or if he sat silent at table according to his custom, he was sorely tried by mocking discourse and unseemly words; and this at first was a great suffering to him, and made him feel such pity for himself that the hot tears would often run down his cheeks, and force their way with what he ate or drank into his mouth. At such times he used to look up silently to God, and, groaning inwardly, exclaim:—Alas, O God! art not Thou content with the misery which I suffer day and night? Must even my scanty food at table be mingled with great persecutions? This happened to him oftentimes and abundantly.

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Once on leaving table he could restrain himself no longer, and, going into his place of privacy, he said to God:—Dear God, Lord of the whole world, be gentle and gracious to me, poor man, for I must enter into account with Thee to-day. I cannot help doing it; and though in truth Thou owest no man aught, and art bound to no one by reason of Thy high sovereignty, nevertheless it well beseems Thy infinite goodness graciously to suffer a fall heart to seek refreshment in Thee, when it has no one else to whom it can make its plaint or who can comfort it. O Lord, I call Thee to witness, who knowest all things, that from my mother's womb all my life through I have had a tender heart. I never yet saw any one in pain or sadness but I had a heartfelt pity for him; and I never willingly gave ear to talk which would grieve any one, whether behind his back or in his presence. All my companions must allow that it has been seldom heard of me that I ever by my words made worse the case of any brother, or of any one else, either to the prelate or to others; but I made every one's case better, so far as I was able; and when I could not do this, I was silent, or I fled away that I might not hear it. Out of pity I showed all the more friendship towards those who were wounded in their honour, that they might more easily recover their good repute. I was called the faithful father of the poor. I was a special friend of all God's friends. All who ever came to me in sorrow, or aggrieved, always received some good counsel from me, which made them leave me joyful and consoled; for I wept with those who wept, and I sorrowed with those who were in sorrow, until, like a mother, I brought them round again. No one ever caused me any suffering however great, but if he only smiled kindly on me afterwards, it was all past and over in God's name, as if it had never been. O Lord, I will say no more about mankind, for I could not even see or hear the needs and sorrows of all the little birds and beasts and other creatures of God without being pierced to the heart thereby, and I used to pray the kind Lord of all to help them. Whatever lives on earth met with favour and tender treatment from me. And yet Thou, O kind Lord, sufferest some, of whom dear Paul speaks, calling

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them false brethren, to behave to me so exceeding cruelly, as Thou knowest well, O Lord, and it is manifest enough. Alas, kind Lord! look at this, and console me for it with Thyself.

After he had spent a long time in thus refreshing his heart with God, there came upon him a stillness of repose, and he was inwardly illuminated by God in this wise:—The childish account which thou hast entered into with Me comes from this, that thou dost not always keep before thee the words and ways of the suffering Christ. Thou must know that God is not satisfied with the mere kindness of heart which thou professest; He wants still more from thee. What He wants is, that when thou art openly ill-treated by any one in words or behaviour, thou shalt not only bear it patiently, but shalt die to self so utterly as not to go to sleep that night until thou hast sought out thy persecutor, and, as far as possible, calmed his incensed heart with thy sweet words and ways; for with such meek lowliness thou wilt take from him sword and knife, and make him powerless in his malevolence. See, this is the old and perfect way which the dear Christ taught His disciples, when He said, “Behold, I send you as lambs among the wolves” ([Luke x. 3](#)).

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When the Servitor came to himself again, this perfect way seemed to him too burdensome, and it was grievous to him to contemplate it, and still more grievous to follow it. Nevertheless he submitted himself thereto, and began to learn it.

Now it happened one day after this that a lay brother spoke very insolently to him, and abused him openly. The Servitor bore it patiently in silence, and he would gladly have let it rest there. But he was inwardly admonished that he must do something better than this. Accordingly, when it became evening, and the brother was eating in the infirmary, the Servitor went and stood in front of the infirmary, waiting for him to come out. As soon as he came out, the Servitor fell on his knees before him, and addressed him in words of humble entreaty:—I pray thee, dear worthy father, honour God in me, poor man, and if I have troubled you, for give me, for God’s sake. The brother stood still, and, looking up in amazement, exclaimed, with a loud cry:—Ah me! what a marvellous thing you are doing! and yet you never injured me, nor any one else. It is I who have openly outraged you by my villanous words. You must indeed forgive me, I entreat you. In this way his heart was stilled and restored to peace.

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Once upon a time, as he sat at table in the guest-house, a brother insulted him with scornful talk. Upon which the Servitor turned to wards him very lovingly, and smiled upon him, as though he had just received a precious jewel from him. The brother was so moved by this, that he became silent, and turned his face again in kindness towards the Servitor. When the meal was ended, the brother spoke of it in the town, saying:—I have never been so grossly insulted as I was to-day at table; for, after I had treated the Servitor with open

rudeness at table, he bowed his face towards me so very sweetly, that I became red with shame; and it shall always be a good lesson to me.



CHAPTER XXXII.

How his sufferings once brought him nigh to death.

IT happened to him once during many nights, that the moment he awoke from sleep something began to repeat in him the psalm of our Lord's sufferings, "Deus, Deus meus, respice in me" (Ps. [xxi.](#)). This psalm was spoken by Christ on the gallows of the cross, when He was forsaken in His distress by His Heavenly Father and by every one. The Servitor was struck with consternation at this continual interior whispering when he awoke, and weeping bitterly, he cried to Christ upon the cross in these words:—Alas, my Lord and my God! if it be meet and necessary that I should once more suffer a new crucifixion with Thee, accomplish, I beseech Thee, Thy pure and innocent death in me, poor man, and be with me, and help me to come forth victorious over all my sufferings.

When this cross arrived, as had been foreshown him, sufferings of no ordinary kind, and of whose nature nothing is here said, began to increase continually upon him, and to multiply from day to day, until at last they became so great, and weighed down the sick man so heavily, that they brought him to the very extremity of death. One evening when he was away from the monastery, and had gone to his bed to rest, there fell on him such an utter prostration of strength, that he thought he must now inevitably die of faintness, and he lay there quite motionless, so that there was no pulse in any of his veins. When this was observed by a faithful and good-hearted man who tended him, and whom he had won to God at great cost to himself, the man ran to him in bitter grief, and pressed his hand against his heart, to try whether there was still life there. But his heart was without movement, and beat no more than that of a dead man would. At this he sank to the ground in great sorrow, and while the tears streamed down his face, he cried aloud with piteous lamentations:—O God! alas for this noble heart, which many a day has borne Thee, O merciful God, so lovingly within it, and has told of Thee so pleasantly by word and writing, in every land, to so many erring men for their consolation—how has it perished to-day! O what evil tidings is it that this noble heart must rot, and cannot live a long time yet for Thy glory and the consolation of many! Thus piteously lamenting with streaming eyes, he bent over the Servitor and touched his heart and mouth and arms, to see whether he still lived or was dead. But there was no motion there. His face was deadly white, his mouth black, and all sign of life had vanished, as from a dead man laid out upon his bier. This lasted as long as it would take to walk a mile. Mean while the object of his soul's contemplation, while he lay thus in seeming death, was naught else but God and the Godhead, the True and the Truth, in indwelling everlasting oneness. It happened, indeed, that before he became so very weak, and was carried out of himself in ecstasy, he began to speak in his heart fond words to God in this wise:—Ah, everlasting Truth, Thy deep abysses are hidden from every creature. I, Thy poor Servitor,

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see clearly that there is now an end of me, as my departed strength be tokens. I speak now at my life's verge to Thee, mighty Lord, whom no one can deceive, because all things are manifest to Thee. Thou alone knowest how things stand between me and Thee. Therefore I seek grace of Thee, faithful heavenly Father; and wheresoever, alas, I have broken out into unlikeness and deflection from the supreme Truth, I grieve for it, and repent me of it with all my heart, and I beseech Thee to blot it out with Thy precious Blood, according to Thy graciousness and my necessity. Remember that all the days of my life I have celebrated and exalted as highly as I could Thy pure and innocent Blood, and it must now at my departure wash me clean from all my sins. Oh, kneel down, I entreat you, all ye Saints, especially thou, my kind and gracious lord, St. Nicholas, and lift up your hands and help me to beseech the Lord for a good end. O pure, gentle, kind Mother Mary! reach me thy hand to-day, and at this my last hour graciously receive my soul beneath thy shelter, for thou art my heart's joy and consolation. O Lady and Mother mine, into thy hands I commend my spirit. O dear Angels, be mindful that, all my life through, my heart has ever laughed within me, when I only heard you named, and forget not how often you have brought me in my sorrows heavenly joys, and guarded me from my foes. O gentle Spirits, it is only now that my greatest straits are come, and that I most need your help. Aid me, then, and shield me from the horrible sight of my foes, the evil spirits. O Lord of heaven, I praise Thee for having bestowed on me at my death-hour such entire consciousness; and I go hence in the full Christian faith without a doubt and without fear; and I forgive all those who have ever made me suffer, as Thou upon the cross forgavest those who slew Thee. Lord, Lord, Thy divine sacramental Body, which I received to-day at Mass, ill though I was, must be my guardian and my convoy to Thy divine countenance. My last prayer which I make now at this my end, gentle Lord of heaven, is for my dear spiritual children, who whether by special bonds of faithfulness, or by confession, have lovingly attached themselves to me in this miserable world. O merciful God, as Thou at Thy departure didst commend Thy dear disciples to Thy Heavenly Father, even so in that self-same love let these be commended to Thee, and grant them also a good and holy end. And now I turn myself away altogether from all creatures, and I turn me wholly to the pure Godhead, the primal fountain-head of everlasting bliss.

After he had held much discourse within his heart in this fond loving fashion, he was transported out of himself in ecstasy, and fell into the faint described above. At length, when he and others fancied that he must have departed, he came to himself again, and his affrighted heart began to revive, and his sick limbs to recover strength, and he got well and returned to life again, as before.



CHAPTER XXXIII.

How a man should offer up his sufferings to the praise and glory of God.

WHEN the suffering Servitor had deeply meditated upon this long and weary warfare, and moreover had come to see in it God's hid den marvels, he turned one day to God, sighing inwardly, and said:—Alas, Lord, these sufferings are in their outward aspect like sharp thorns which pierce through flesh and bone. Therefore, gentle Lord, cause some sweet fruit of good instruction to issue forth from these sharp thorns of sufferings, that we, poor men, may suffer more patiently, and be better able to offer up our sufferings to Thy praise and glory.

After he had continued for a long time earnestly beseeching God for this, it came to pass one day that he was rapt in ecstasy, and his bodily senses being abstracted, it was sweetly said to him within his soul:—I will show thee to-day the high nobility of My life, and how a sufferer should offer up his sufferings to the praise and glory of the loving God.

At these sweet interior words his soul was melted within him, and his bodily senses being stilled in ecstasy, the arms, as it were, of his soul stretched themselves forth, out .of the unfathomable fulness of his heart to the far-off ends of the universe, even to heaven and earth; and he thanked God with a boundless heartfelt yearning, saying:—Hitherto, O Lord, I have praised Thee in my musings with the aid of all that is pleasant and delightful in all creatures; but now I must joyously break forth into a new song, and a strange kind of praise, which I knew not before, since I have only now come to know it by suffering. And it is this: I pray from my heart's bottomless depths that all the sorrow and pain winch I have ever suffered, as well as the woes and agonies of every human heart, the smarts of all wounds, the anguish of all the sick, the groans of all sad souls, the tears of all weeping eyes, the misery of all the oppressed, the distress of all needy widows and orphans, the pining want of all the poor and hungry, the out poured blood of all martyrs, the crushing of self-will in all who are young and blooming, the afflictive exercises of all God's friends, and all the secret and open pains and sorrows, which I or any other poor sufferer ever endured in body, goods, or honour, in weal or woe, or which any one will ever have to suffer from now to doomsday,—all these I pray may be an everlasting source of praise to Thee, O Heavenly Father, and an eternal honour to Thy only-begotten suffering Son from everlasting to everlasting. And I, Thy poor Servitor, desire to-day to be the faithful representative of all sufferers who perchance have been unable to turn to full account their sufferings, by patient thanksgiving and praise of God for them; and I wish in their place to offer up their sufferings in praise of God, however they may have borne them; and I now offer them up to Thee in their stead, just as if I myself alone had suffered them all in my body and in my heart, as it is my heart's wish to do; and I tender them all this day to Thy only-begotten suffering Son, that they may be an everlasting

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praise to Him, and that the sufferers may be comforted, whether they are still here in this vale of sorrow, or in the next world in Thy hand.

O all ye who suffer with me, look at me and give ear to what I say to you! We, poor members, ought to console ourselves and rejoice in our venerable Head, God's lovely only-begotten Son, that He has suffered for us, and never passed one pleasant day on earth. Behold! if there is only one rich man in a poor family, the whole family rejoices in him. Ah, venerable Head of us all, Thy members, be gracious to us, and where through human frailty true patience fails us in any affliction, do Thou make it up for us before Thy Heavenly Father. Be-think Thee how Thou earnest once to the help of one of Thy servants, and when his courage was all but failing him through suffering, Thou saidst to him:—Be of good cheer and look at Me. I was noble and poor; I was tender and in misery; I was born from out the fulness of all joys, and yet I was full of sorrow. Therefore, as valiant knights of our imperial Lord, let us not lose heart; as noble followers of our venerable Leader, let us be of good cheer, and rejoice to suffer; for if there were no other profit and good in suffering, than that we became more like the fair bright mirror Christ, the more closely that we copied Him in this, our sufferings would be well laid out. It seems to me in truth, that even if God meant to give the same reward hereafter to those who suffer and to those who do not suffer, we ought still to choose suffering for our lot, were it only to be like Him; for love produces likeness and devotion to the beloved, so far as it can and may. But oh! how dare we presume to take upon ourselves that we ought to resemble Thee, O noble Lord, in our sufferings! Thy sufferings and our sufferings how unlike they are! O Lord, Thou alone art the sufferer who hast never deserved to suffer. But where is he, alas, who can pride himself that he has never given cause for sufferings? For if on the one hand he is guiltless in that for which he suffers, on the other he deserves punishment on other counts. Therefore we place ourselves, I mean all we who have ever suffered, in a great wide ring round and round; and we place Thee, our dear gentle Lover, in the midst of us, even in the ring of us suffering mortals, and we spread out far and wide our thirsty veins with great longing towards Thee, the rich outbursting fountain of all grace. Behold and marvel. Just as the earth which is most cracked with drought takes in best the stormy streams of watery rain, even so we heavily-laden men, the more guilty we are towards Thee, the more closely do we clasp Thee to us with outspread hearts, and our longing desire is that, come what may, according to the promise of Thy divine mouth, we may be washed in Thy streaming and trickling wounds, and be set free thereby from every sin; for all which Thou shalt receive everlasting praise and honour from us, and we shall obtain grace from Thee, since all unlikeness will be removed from us by Thy almightiness.

After the Servitor had remained sitting with out movement for a long time, during which all this was revealed to him with great solemnity in the innermost interior of his soul, he rose up joyfully and thanked God for the grace which he had received.



CHAPTER XXXIV.

Of the joys with which God recompenses in this present life those who suffer for Him.

ON a joyful Easter-day the Servitor was once in very blithesome mood, and as he sat for a short time, according to his custom, in the repose of contemplation, he desired earnestly to hear from God what meed of delights they shall receive from Him in this life who have borne manifold sufferings for His sake. Whereupon, being rapt in ecstasy, a light shone into his soul from God to this effect:—Let all who suffer with detachment rejoice, for their patience shall be gloriously rewarded; and as they have been here below an object of pity to many, even so shall many rejoice eternally at the deserved praise and everlasting honour which shall be theirs. They have died with Me, and they shall also rise again with Me in gladness. Three special gifts I will give them, so precious that no one can reckon up their value. First, I will give absolute power to their wishes in heaven and on earth, so that whatever they wish shall come to pass. Secondly, I will give them My divine peace, which neither angel, nor devil, nor man, nor any other creature can take away from them. Thirdly, I will so inwardly kiss them through and through, and so lovingly embrace them, that I in them and they in Me, and we together, shall abide eternally, one undivided unity for ever. And since long waiting and praying are painful to restless hearts, this love shall not be withheld from them during this short present hour of life, which lasts but for a moment, but it shall begin even now, and be enjoyed eternally, so far as man's mortal nature can in each case more or less support it.

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These glad tidings filled the Servitor with joy; and when he came to himself again, he sprang up, and began to laugh so heartily that the chapel in which he was reechoed to the sound, and he said within himself joyously:—Let him who has suffered come forward and complain. God knows, I can declare that as to myself, methinks I have never had any thing at all to suffer. I know not what suffering is; but I know well what joy and bliss are. Power to wish and to obtain is given me; a thing which many erring hearts must be without. What want I more? Then he turned his thoughts to the eternal Truth, and said:—Ah! eternal Truth, show me now this hidden mystery, so far as words can tell it, for it is a truth of which many blinded men are altogether ignorant.

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This mystery was inwardly manifested to him thus:—Mark those who have paid due attention to the breaking away from creatures,—in other words, to that death to self and all things with which a man must begin. Alas! there are not many such. The mind and thoughts of these men have so passed away into God, that they know nothing, as it were, of themselves,

save only that they view themselves .and all things in their primal fountain-head; and therefore they have the same pleasure and complacency in each several thing which God does, as if God stood by unconcerned with it and inactive, and it were granted to them to carry out each thing according to their own mind; and thus it is that their will is absolute in might, for heaven and earth serve them, and every creature is subject to them, in what each does or leaves undone. Such persons feel no sorrow of heart about any thing; for I only call that pain and sorrow of heart which the will with full deliberation wishes to be freed from. Externally, indeed, they have a sense of pleasure and pain like other people, and it is more intense perhaps in them than others, because of their great tenderness; but in their inmost souls it finds no abiding-place, and exteriorly they remain firm against impatience. They are filled to the full even in this life, so far as this is possible, owing to their detachment from self, and hence their joy is complete and stable in all things. For in the divine essence, into which their hearts have passed away and become merged,—that is, supposing they have not gone astray from the right path,—neither pain nor sorrow finds place, but only peace and joy. If, however, thy own frailty entices thee to commit sin, from which pain and sorrow justly spring up for the sinner, and if thou committest sin, then, and then only, thou wilt find a flaw in thy happiness. But if thou avoidest sin, and goest out of thyself in this respect, and passest away into that in which thou canst have neither suffering nor sorrow—since pain is not pain to thee there, nor suffering suffering, but all things are unmingled peace—then it is well with thee in very truth. And all this comes to pass because their self-will is lost and gone. For these persons are of themselves driven onward with a longing thirst towards God’s will and His justice; and they find such a sweet savour in God’s will, and they so delight in it, and take such pleasure in all that He ordains concerning them, that they have no wish nor desire for any thing else. This, however, must not be understood as if they were forbidden to ask things of God and to pray to Him; for it is God’s will that we pray to Him. But it is to be understood of the due and rightful going forth out of our own judgment into the will of the supreme God head, as has been said. Now there lies in this a hidden difficulty, against which many stumble, and it is this. Who knows, they say, whether it is God’s will? See now. God is a super-essential good, and He is more interiorly present to every individual thing than that thing can be to itself; and against His will nothing can happen, nor can any thing exist for an instant. Therefore they must be miserable who are always struggling against God’s will and desiring to do their own will, if they could. They have the kind of peace which is in hell, for they are always in sadness and heaviness. On the contrary, a soul stripped of self has God and peace at all times present to it, in adversity as well as in prosperity; for if He is truly there who does all and is all, how can the sight of their own sufferings be grievous to them, since in them they see God, find God, make use of God’s will, and know nothing of their own will? not to speak of the consoling illuminations and heavenly delights with which God often secretly sustains His suffering friends. These persons

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are, as it were, in heaven. What happens to them or does not happen to them, what God does in all creatures or does not do, all turns to their advantage. And thus he who can bear suffering well receives in this world a portion of the reward of his sufferings; for he finds peace and joy in all things, and after death everlasting life awaits him.



CHAPTER XXXV.

Of the Servitor's spiritual daughter.

"FILIA confide,"—Be of good heart, daughter ([Matt. ix. 22](#)). The Servitor had at this time a spiritual daughter, of the Order of Friars Preachers, in an enclosed convent at Tosse.⁷ Her name was Elizabeth Staglin, and she lived a very holy life exteriorly, and was of an angelic disposition within. The noble and energetic way in which she turned herself with her whole heart and soul to God set her free entirely from all those vain things which cause so many persons to neglect their eternal salvation. All her diligence was directed towards obtaining spiritual instruction, that she might thus be guided to a blessed and perfect life, the one end and object of all her wishes. She wrote down whatever she met with that pleased her, and seemed calculated to aid herself and others in the acquisition of divine virtues; and she acted in this like the industrious bees, which bring back sweet honey collected from many different flowers.

In the convent where she lived among the sisters as a mirror of every virtue, she composed, notwithstanding her bodily infirmities, a large book, containing, among other things, an account of the blessed lives which the deceased holy sisters had led, and the great marvels God had wrought in them. It is a book well suited to excite good-hearted persons to devotion.⁸

This blessed daughter came to hear of the Servitor of the Eternal Wisdom, and God inspired her with great devotion to his manner of life and teaching. She drew from him secretly the way in which he broke through created things to arrive at God, and she wrote it down, as has been already related.

At the first beginning of her conversion to God she came across a great many deep intellectual views regarding the pure Godhead, the nothingness of all things, detachment from self, abstraction of the mind from all sensible forms, and such-like high things; and they were clothed in beautiful language, and were very pleasant to reflect upon. But there lay concealed beneath them something hurtful to simple-minded beginners like her; for she was quite ignorant of the necessary distinctions which ought to be made, inasmuch as the words were capable of being taken in a spiritual or a natural sense, according to the disposition of those who used them. These doctrines were good in themselves; but they were insufficient for her instruction. She therefore wrote to the Servitor, asking him to help her, and

⁷ Thöss, near Winterthur, in Switzerland.

⁸ Henry Murer has extracted many of these lives from the Chronicles of the convent at Thoss, and inserted them in his *Helvetia Sancta*.

guide her along the right path. Nevertheless, as she had already tasted of the pleasure which is to be found in these doctrines, she prayed him to pass over the common ordinary kind of instruction, and to write to her something about the abovementioned high subjects.

The Servitor answered her thus:—Good daughter, if thou askest me concerning high things through curiosity, in order to become acquainted with them, and to be able to talk well about spiritual matters, what I have to say to thee will need but a few words. Take not too much pleasure in them, for they may easily lead thee into dangerous errors. True bliss lies not in beautiful words, but in good works. If, however, thou askest about these things in order to put them in practice, my answer is, Let alone for the present these deep questions, and attend to those only which are suitable for thee. Thou seemest to me to be as yet a young unexercised sister, and therefore it will be more profitable to thee, and the like of thee, to hear about the first beginnings of the spiritual life, both how it ought to be begun and what exercises are appropriate to it; and also about good and holy examples, as, for instance, how this and that friend of God, who began in the same way, first of all exercised themselves in imitating Christ's life and sufferings; what kind of things they had to suffer continually; how they bore themselves in their sufferings interiorly and exteriorly; whether God drew them onwards by sweetness or by severity; and when and how they were set free from sensible forms and images. This is the way in which a beginner is spurred on and guided to perfection; for, though it is true that God can give all this to a person in an instant, it is not His way to do so, but it is to be obtained ordinarily only by hard labour and many conflicts.



On receiving this letter, the daughter replied to him as follows:—What I long for is not wise words, but a holy life; and this I have the courage truly and honestly to strive after until I attain it, whatever pain it may entail upon me, and no matter what I may have to give up or suffer, or die to, or whatever else may be needful to bring me to perfection; for all this I must and will undergo. And fear not on account of the weakness of my nature; for whatever you have the courage to command me, which is painful to nature, I have the courage to accomplish, with the help of God's might. Begin first with the lowest things, and guide me in them, just as a little school-child is first taught what is adapted to its childish years, and then afterwards receives more and more instruction, until it becomes at last a master in the art. One only prayer I make to you, and this you must grant me, for God's sake, in order that I may not only be instructed by you, but may be also strengthened against all the trials which I may have to encounter. He asked what this request might be. She answered:—Sir, I have heard say that the pelican is of such a nature that it bites itself, and, from natural love, feeds with its own blood its young offspring in the nest. Ah, sir, what I ask is, that you will act thus towards your needy child, and feed her with the spiritual food of your good teaching; and that you will not seek for this from afar, but take it from yourself; for the nearer it has been to you in the way of experience, the more deeply it will come home to my longing soul.



The Servitor wrote thus to her in answer:—Thou showedst me a little while ago some high thoughts which thou hadst thyself culled from the sweet teaching of the holy Master Eckart, and which, as is just, thou valuedst highly; and I marvel much, that, after thou hast drunk of the noble drink of this high Master, thou declarest thyself so thirsty for the coarse drink of the lowly Servitor. Nevertheless, when I consider it well, I note with joy thy great wisdom in this matter; namely, that thou art so busy in thy questionings about what is the first beginning of a high and secure life, and what are the exercises which must be first practised in order to attain it.



CHAPTER XXXVI.

Of the first beginnings of a beginner.

THE beginnings of a holy life, said the Servitor to the daughter, are various. One person begins in one way, and another in an other; but as regards the beginning, to which your questions refer, I will tell you about it. I know a man in Christ, who, when he began to give himself to God, first cleared out his conscience by a general confession; and he spared no pains to make this confession well, by exposing every sin that he had committed to a prudent confessor, in order that he might go pure and clean from the confessor, who sits in God's place, and that all his sins might be forgiven him, as happened to Mary Magdalen, when, with penitent heart and tearful eyes, she washed Christ's feet, and God forgave her all her sins. Such was the first beginning of this man's turning to God.

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The daughter laid this example very much to heart, and she wished to lose no time in imitating it, and she conceived a great desire to make her confession to the Servitor, thinking that he would be the one best suited for her; and it was her intention also, in doing this, to become thereby his spiritual daughter, and so to have a greater claim upon his godly care.

Now it so happened that the confession could not be made by word of mouth. She therefore passed in review her whole life, which, in very truth, had been a pure and innocent one; and whatever sins it seemed to her that she had committed, she wrote down on a large waxen tablet, which she then fastened up and sent to him, begging him to pronounce absolution over her sins.

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When he read through the confession, he came to the following words at the bottom of the tablet:—Gracious sir, I, a sinful creature, fall down now at your feet and beseech you, with your true and faithful heart, to bring me back again into God's heart, and to let me be called your child in time and in eternity. The daughter's confiding devotion touched him very much, and, turning to God, he said:—Merciful God, what answer is Thy Servitor to make to this? Shall I drive her from me? I should not like to treat a dog thus. O Lord, if I did this, it might reflect ill upon Thee, my Lord and Master; for she seeks the Lord's wealth in His servant. O gentle Lord, I cast myself at Thy holy feet, and beseech Thee, kind Lord, to hear her. Let her have the benefit of her good faith and hearty confidence, for she cries after us. How didst Thou treat the heathen woman? Ah! kind Heart, see how far and wide the fame of Thy unfathomable bountifulness has spread amongst us. O kindly Goodness, turn Thy gentle eyes towards her, and say to her one single little word of consolation. Say then, "Confide filia, fides tua te salvam fecit,"—Be of good heart, daughter; thy faith has

saved thee. And bring Thou it to pass in my stead; for I have done what rests with me, and I have wished her a full absolution from all her sins.

He wrote back the following answer to her by the same messenger:—What thou hast asked of God through the Servitor has come to pass, and thou must know that it was all shown to him by God beforehand. Early this very morning, when his prayer was ended, he sat down for a brief moment of repose; and his bodily senses being stilled in ecstasy, many divine mysteries were manifested to him. Among other things, he was enlightened to understand how God has made diversity of form to be the individualising principle of the angelic nature, and has given to each angel a special property which distinguishes him from the rest; all which it is impossible for him to express in words. After he had spent a good space of time in heavenly recreation with the angelic spirits, and was in very joyous mood through the exceeding wonderment which his soul had felt, it seemed to him, in the same vision, that thou didst come in and stand before him where he sat among the heavenly company, and then, kneeling down with great earnestness in front of him, didst bow thy face upon his heart, and continue kneeling thus with thy face bowed upon his heart, so that the angels who stood by beheld it. The brother marvelled at thy boldness, and yet thy bearing was so holy that he graciously permitted it. What manner of graces the Heavenly Father bestowed on thee, whilst thou wert bowed down upon the suffering heart, thou knowest right well, and they were visible upon thee; for when after a good while thou didst raise up thyself thy countenance was so joyous and full of grace, that it was quite evident God had bestowed some special grace upon thee; and He will do still more for thee through the same heart, that He may be glorified in it, and thou consoled.

The like happened also to a maiden named Anna, a noble and godly person, who dwelt in a castle, and who, moreover, led a life of pure unmingled suffering. God wrought great marvels in her from her youth up until her death. Before she knew the Servitor, or had ever heard of him, she was one day rapt in ecstasy at her devotions, and she saw how the Saints gaze upon and praise God in the court of heaven. Upon this she prayed her dear Apostle St. John, to whom she had a special devotion, to hear her confession. He answered her very lovingly:—I will give thee a good confessor in my place. God has granted him full authority over thee, and he can comfort thee well in thy manifold sufferings. She asked who and where he was, and what was his name:—all which St. John made known to her. She thanked God, and, rising early in the morning, went to the monastery which God had shown her, and asked for him. He came to her to the outer gate, and inquired of her what her business was. Upon this she made her confession to him, and when he heard the heavenly message, he consented, and fulfilled it.



This holy daughter also told him, that she had once seen in spirit a beautiful rose-tree, richly adorned with red roses, and on the rose-tree there appeared the little Child Jesus, with a garland of red roses. Beneath the rose-tree she saw the Servitor sitting. The little Child broke off many of the roses, and threw them upon the Servitor, so that he became all covered and bestrewed with roses. Upon this she asked the Child what the roses meant, and He answered:—The great quantity of roses signifies the manifold sufferings which God will send him, and which he must lovingly accept at God's hands, and bear with patience.



CHAPTER XXXVII.

Of the first lessons and examples which are suitable for a beginner, and how he should regulate his exercises with discretion.

AT the first beginning of the Servitor's interior life, after he had purified his soul properly by confession, he marked out for himself, in thought, three circles, within which he shut himself up, as in a spiritual intrenchment. The first circle was his cell, his chapel, and the choir. When he was within this circle, he seemed to himself in complete security. The second circle was the whole monastery as far as the outer gate. The third and outermost circle was the gate; and here it was necessary for him to stand well upon his guard. When he went outside these three circles, it seemed to him that he was in the plight of some wild-animal which is outside its hole, and surrounded by the hunt, and therefore in need of all its cunning and watchfulness.

He had, moreover, in his beginnings, made choice of a chapel as a place of retirement, in which he might satisfy his devotion by means of pictures. Now it should be observed that, in his youth, he had caused to be painted for himself, upon parchment, a picture of the Eternal Wisdom, who rules supreme over heaven and earth, and far surpasses all created things in ravishing beauty and loveliness of form; for which reason, when he was in the bloom of youth, he had chosen Wisdom for his beloved. He carried this lovely picture with him when he journeyed to the place of studies, and he always set it before him in the window of his cell, and used to look at it lovingly with heart felt longings. He brought it back home with him on his return, and caused it to be transferred to his chapel-wall as a token of affection. What other kinds of symbolical representations were there, bearing upon the interior life, and adapted to himself and other beginners, may be learned from the pictures and sayings of the ancient fathers painted on the walls. A part of these sayings, translated into the vulgar tongue, follows below, exactly as they were in scribed upon the chapel:—

The ancient father Arsenius asked the angel what he must do to be saved. The angel answered:—Thou must flee, and be silent and sit still.

Afterwards, in a vision, the angel read these words to the Servitor out of the book of the ancient fathers:—A well-spring of all bliss is to keep thyself quiet and in solitude.

Abbot Theodore. To keep thyself pure and spotless will advance thee more in knowledge than study will.

Abbot Moses. Sit in thy cell:—it will teach thee all things.

Abbot John. Keep thy outward man still, and thy inward man pure.



The same. A fish out of water and a monk out of his monastery will equally come to grief.

Anthony. Bodily mortification, interior devotion, and seclusion from men beget chastity.

The same. Wear no garment in which vanity can be discerned. The first battle of a beginner is boldly to resist sins.

The Shepherd. Be wroth with no one, until he tries to pluck out thy right eye.

Isidore. A wrathful man is displeasing to God, however great may be the miracles which he works.

Ipericius. It is a less sin to eat meat when it should have been avoided than to backbite thy neighbour.

Pior. It is very wicked to bring forward the sins of others, and to keep back our own.

Zachary. A man must suffer great humiliations if he is to arrive at perfection.

Nestor. Thou must first become an ass, if thou wouldst possess heavenly wisdom.

An Ancient. Thou shouldst be immovable in weal and woe, like one dead.

Helias. A pale complexion, a wasted body, and a lowly bearing beseem well a spiritual man.

Hilarion. A wanton horse and an unchaste body should have their provender cut down.

An Ancient. Take away from me wine, for the death of the soul lies hidden in it.

The Shepherd. He who still complains, and cannot keep from anger and much talking, will never become a spiritual man.

Cassian. As the dying Christ bore Himself upon the cross, so should our manner of life be fashioned.

Anthony said to a brother:—O man, help thyself; otherwise neither God nor I will ever help thee.

A woman besought the ancient father Arsenius to remember her before God. He answered:—I pray God to blot out thy image from my heart.

Macarius. I inflict many hardships on my body, because I have many temptations from it.



John, the father, said:—I have never done my own will, and I never taught any thing in words which I had not first practised in deeds.



An Ancient. Many words without deeds are vain; like the tree which bears many leaves, but no fruit.

Nilus. He who must have much intercourse with the world must needs also receive many wounds.

An Ancient. If thou canst do nothing else, keep guard at least over thy cell for God.

Ipericius. He who keeps himself chaste will be honoured here, and crowned by God hereafter.

Apollonius. Resist beginnings, and stop the serpent by the head.

Agathon. I have carried a stone in my mouth for three years, that I might learn silence.

Arsenius. I have often repented of having spoken, but never of having kept silence.

An ancient father was asked by a disciple how long he should keep silence. The father answered:—Until thou art asked a question.

St. Syncletica. If thou art sick, rejoice there at, for God has been mindful of thee.

The same. If thou art sick, do not ascribe it to thy fasts, for those also fall sick who do not fast.

The same. If thou art tried by temptations of the flesh, rejoice, for thou mayest become a second Paul.



Nestor, a good brother, said:—The sun never shone upon me eating.

Another called John added:—Nor upon me angry.

Anthony. The greatest virtue is to be able to observe moderation in all things.

Paphnutius. It is no use to begin well, unless thou dost carry it through to a good end.

Abbot Moses. Avoid whatever would deprive thee of purity of soul, however good it may appear.

Cassian. The term of all perfection is attained, when the soul, with all its powers, is gathered up into one only object, God.

The Servitor sent these examples and sayings of the ancient fathers to his spiritual daughter, who drank them all in, and applied them to herself, as though he had meant her also to exercise her body with severe chastisements, after the austere fashion of the ancient fathers. And she began accordingly to mortify and torment herself with hair-shirts, and cords, and cruel bands set round with sharp iron nails, and many other such-like instruments of penance.

But when the Servitor became aware of this, he wrote to her as follows:—Dear daughter, if thy purpose is to order thy spiritual life according to my teaching, as was thy request to me, cease from all such austerities, for they suit not the weakness of thy sex and thy well-ordered frame. The dear Jesus did not say, Take My cross upon you; but He said to each, Take up thy cross. Thou shouldst not seek to imitate the austerity of the ancient fathers, nor the severe exercises of thy spiritual father. Thou shouldst only take for thyself a portion of them, such as thou canst practise easily with thy infirm body, to the end that sin may die in thee, and yet thy bodily life may not be shortened. This is a very excellent exercise, and the best of all for thee.

She wished to know from him why he himself had practised such great austerities, and yet would not advise her or others to practise them. Upon this he referred her to the holy writings, saying:—It is written that, in former times, some among the ancient fathers led a life of such superhuman and incredible austerity, that the very mention of it is a horror to certain delicate persons of the present day; for they know not what burning devotion can enable a man, by the divine aid, to do and suffer for God. One who is filled with such fervour finds all impossible things become possible of accomplishment in God; just as David says, that with God's help he would go through a wall (*Ps. xvii. 30*). It is also written in the book of the ancient fathers, that some of them did not treat themselves with such great severity as others did, and yet they were all striving to reach the self-same end. St. Peter and St. John had not the same training. Who can fully explain this marvel, unless it be that the Lord, who is wonderful in His Saints, wills, by reason of His high sovereignty, to be glorified in many different ways? Besides this, our natures are not all alike, and what is suit able to one, suits not another. Therefore it must not be thought that, if perchance a man has not practised such great austerities, he will be thereby hindered from arriving at perfection. At the same time, those who are soft and delicate should not despise austerities in others, or judge them harshly. Let each look to himself, and see what God wants of him, and attend to this, leaving all else alone. Speaking generally, it is much better to be moderate rather than immoderate in the practice of austerities. But as the mean is hard to find, it is wiser to keep a little under it, than to venture too high above it; for it often happens that, if a man mortifies his bodily frame to excess, he will have afterwards to indulge it to excess; though certainly many great Saints have forgotten themselves in this point through the fervour of their devotion. Such



austerity of life, and the examples which have been mentioned, may be of use to those who are too tender with themselves, and to their own injury give too much rein to their rebellious bodies; but this concerns not thee, nor the like of thee. God has many kinds of crosses with which He chastens His friends. I look for Him to lay another sort of cross upon thy shoulders, which will be far more painful to thee than these austerities. Accept this cross with patience when it comes to thee.

Not long afterwards God afflicted the Servitor's spiritual daughter with long and weary illnesses, so that she continued sickly in body until her death. She sent him word that it had come to pass with her as he had predicted. Upon which he wrote in answer thus:—Dear daughter, God has not only afflicted thee according to my words, but He has also wounded me in thee; for I have now no one left who will help me with the same diligence and godly faithfulness to complete my little book, as then didst when thou wert well. Therefore the Servitor besought God earnestly on thy behalf, that it might be His good will to give thee back thy health; and when God would not forthwith hearken to his prayer, he was angered against Him with a loving anger, and was minded that he would write no more books about the faithful God, and would likewise leave off his usual morning-greeting through ill-humour, unless God made thee well again. Now when he had sat down in the disquiet of his heart, according to custom, in his chapel, his senses were absorbed in ecstasy; and it seemed to him that a company of angels came before him in the chapel, and sang to comfort him a heavenly song, because they knew that at that time he was in peculiar sorrow; and they asked him why he looked so sad and did not sing with them. Then he told them how he had behaved in his excess to the dear God, because He would not hearken to his prayer for thy recovery. And they counselled him to desist from it, and not act thus; for that God had ordained this sickness for the best, and it would be thy cross in this world, and through it thou wouldst earn great grace here, and a manifold reward in heaven. Therefore be patient, my daughter, and receive it simply as a loving gift from the faithful God.



CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Of certain devout practices of a young beginner in his early years.

ONCE upon a time the sick spiritual daughter besought the Servitor, who had come to see her in her illness, to tell her something about spiritual things, not of too grave a kind, but yet such as a godly soul would hear with pleasure. Upon which he told her about his devout practices in early life, in the following words:—

As the Servitor was in his youth of a lively temperament, he made it a practice for a long time, whenever he was bled, to turn in spirit to God under the cross, and, lifting up his wounded arm, to say, with an inward sigh:—Ah, Friend of my heart! remember that it is the way with lovers to go to their beloved ones at the time of blood-letting, in order that the new blood may be good. But Thou knowest well, dear Lord, that I have no beloved one save Thee alone, and therefore I come to Thee to bless my wound and make my blood good.

At this same season of his youth, when his face was still in its fresh bloom and beauty of colour, it was his practice, as often as he shaved himself, to go to the Lord, and say:—Ah, sweet Lord, if my countenance and mouth were as rosy as the hue of all red roses, Thy Servitor would keep them for Thee, and give them to no one else; and though Thou lookest only to the heart, and regardest little what is outward, nevertheless, dearest Lord, my heart offers Thee herein a love-token in testimony that it turns to Thee, and to none but Thee.

When he put on a new tunic or cloak, he would first go to his usual place of prayer and beseech the Lord of heaven, who had provided him with this garment, to wish him luck and happiness in it, and to help him to wear it out in the fulfilment of His all-lovely will.

Before this, in his childhood, it had been his custom, when the beautiful summer came and the tender flowrets first began to spring up, never to pluck or touch a flower until he had greeted with the gift of his first flowers his spiritual love, the sweet, blooming, rosy maid, God's Mother. When it seemed to him that the time for doing this had come, he picked the flowers with many loving thoughts, and, carrying them to his cell, made a garland of them; and then he went into the choir, or into our Lady's chapel, and, kneeling down very humbly before our dear Lady, placed the garland upon her image, in the hope that, as she was the fairest of all flowers, and the bliss of summer to his heart, she would not disdain to accept these first flowers from her Servitor.

Once upon a time, when he had thus crowned the all-lovely one, it seemed to him in a vision that heaven was opened, and he saw the bright angels ascending and descending in shining garments. He heard likewise in the court of heaven the blissful attendants singing the loveliest song which was ever heard. But chiefly they sang a song about our dear Lady,

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which rang so sweetly that his soul melted within him from excess of rapture, and it was like what is sung of her in the sequence on All-Saints day, “*Illic regina virginum, transcendens culmen ordinum, etc.*,” which means, that the pure Queen soars high above all the heavenly host in honour and dignity. He too began to sing with the heavenly company, and it left behind in his soul a great savour of heaven and longing after God.

Once, at the beginning of May, he had, according to his custom, placed with great devotion a garland of roses upon his loveliest heavenly Lady; and that same morning early, as he had come from a distance and was tired, he intended to allow himself a longer sleep, and to omit his usual greeting to the Virgin at the proper hour. Now when the time had come for him to greet her, as he was wont to do, and he should have got up, it seemed to him as if he were in the midst of a heavenly choir, and that they were singing the Magnificat in praise of God’s Mother. When it was ended, the Virgin came forward, and bade the brother begin the verse, “*O vernalis rosula, etc.*,” which signifies, O thou lovely little rose of summer. He thought within himself what she could mean by this, and yet, wishing to obey her, he began in joyous mood, “*O vernalis rosula.*” Whereupon immediately three or four youths of the heavenly company, who were standing there in choir, began to sing with him, and then the rest of the choir took up the strain, as if in rivalry, and they sang so merrily, that the sound rang out as sweetly as if all stringed instruments were resounding there together. But his mortal frame could not bear this excess of melody, and he came to himself again.

On the day after our Lady’s feast of the Assumption, he was once more shown a vision of great joy in the court of heaven. But no one was allowed to enter in who was not worthy to be present there. Now when the Servitor was very anxious to press in, there came a youth who caught him by the hand, saying:—It is not for thee to enter in at present. Thou hast done wrong, and must expiate thy misdeed, before thou wilt be allowed to hear the song of heaven. Then he led him by a crooked path into an underground hole, which was dark and desolate, and very miserable to look at. The Servitor could not move in it either to the one side or to the other; but he lay there like a man in a dungeon, who cannot see either the sun or the moon. This was a sore suffering to him, and he began to bemoan and lament himself on account of his imprisonment. Soon afterwards the youth came back, and asked him how it fared with him. The Servitor answered:—Very ill. Then the youth said to him:—Know that the sovereign Queen of Heaven is angry with thee on account of the fault for which thou art lying here in prison. The Servitor was greatly terrified at this, and said:—Woe is me! utterly miserable that I am, what have I done to her? He answered:—She is angry with thee for being so unwilling to preach about her on her festivals, and because yesterday on her great festival thou didst refuse thy superior’s request, saying that thou wouldst not preach about her. The Servitor made answer:—Alas, my friend and master! it seems to me in truth that she is worthy of far greater honour than what I can give her, and that I am of too little

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account to undertake this office. Therefore I yield it up to those who are old and worthy; for methinks they can preach more worthily about her than I, poor man, can. To this the youth replied:—Know that it pleases her to receive this honour from thee, and it is an acceptable service from thee in her eyes. Therefore refuse no more. The Servitor began to weep, and said to the youth:—Ah, dearest youth! make my peace with the pure Mother, for I promise thee by my troth that it shall not happen again. The youth smiled, and consoled him lovingly, and led him home out of the prison, saying:—I have observed, from the kindly way in which the Queen of Heaven looked at and spoke of thee, that she will lay aside her anger against thee, and will always love thee with a mother's faithful love.

It was the Servitor's practice when he left his cell, or returned to it, to pass through the choir before the Sacrament; for he thought within himself that he who has a very dear friend any where upon his road, is very glad to make his journey a little longer in order to hold some loving converse with him.

A man once asked God to bestow upon him a heavenly carnival, as he did not wish for an earthly one from creatures. And while his senses were stilled in ecstasy, it seemed to him as if the dear Christ came in, under the form which He wore when He was thirty years of age, and signified to him that He would grant him his request, and make for him a heavenly carnival. Then He took a cup of wine in His hand, and presented it to three men, who were sitting there at table, one after the other. The first sank down powerless; the second also became a little faint; but the third was not affected by it. Upon this the Lord explained to him the difference between a beginner, a proficient, and a perfect man,—how unlike they are in the way in which they bear themselves in spiritual sweetness.

When the Servitor had finished conversing with his spiritual daughter about these and such-like divine endearments, she wrote it all down secretly, and then placed it in a box, which she locked up for concealment and security.

Now one day there came to her a good sister, to whom she had given the box in charge, saying:—Dear sister, what is this marvellous heavenly secret which thou hast in thy box? I dreamed this night that there was in thy box a young heavenly boy, and that he had a sweet stringed instrument in his hands, from which he drew such ravishing spiritual melodies, that it filled many a one with spiritual delight. I pray thee bring forth for us what thou hast locked up, that we too may read it. But she kept silence, and would not speak to her about it, for it had been forbidden her.



CHAPTER XXXIX.

How he drew light-minded persons to God, and comforted those who were in suffering.

THE Servitor had once been a long time without sending any message to his spiritual daughter. Upon this she wrote a letter to him, telling him that she was in great need of a message from him to cheer her suffering heart, and adding:—The poor find a little consolation when they see those who are poorer than themselves, and sufferers draw a little courage from healing that some among their neighbours have been in greater straits than they are, and have been helped out of them by God.

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The Servitor wrote thus to her in answer:—In order that thou mayest be more patient in thy sufferings, I will tell thee for God's glory something about suffering. I know a man on whom by God's appointment there fell cruel sufferings in regard to his good name in this world. This man's unceasing desire was to love God from the very bottom of his heart, and to win all persons to the same love of God, and to withdraw them from all vain affections; and he brought this about in the case of many, both men and women. Since, however, by doing this he estranged from the devil those who had been his, and brought them back to God, the evil spirit took it ill, and appeared to certain holy persons, and threatened that he would avenge himself on the Servitor.

It happened once that the Servitor came to a monastery belonging to a certain Order in which the religious men are accustomed to have a special dwelling-place for themselves, and the religious women of the Order likewise a special dwelling-place for themselves. Now in this monastery there were two religious, a man and a woman, who were bound to each other by closest ties of great affection and hurtful intimacy; and the devil had so disguised it to their blinded hearts, that they looked upon the misdeed as if it were no fault or sin, but a thing permitted to them by God. When the Servitor was privately asked whether they could go on in this way without being in opposition to God's will, he answered:—No, by no means; and he told them that their view of the matter was false, and contrary to Christian doctrine; and he succeeded in making them leave off their intimacy, and live thenceforward in purity. Whilst he was occupied about this matter, a holy person named Anna was rapt in spirit when she was at prayer, and she saw a great band of devils gathered together in the air above the Servitor, and they all cried aloud with one voice:—Death, death, to the wicked monk! and they reviled and cursed him for having driven them forth by his good counsels from that place which was so pleasant to them; and they all swore, with horrible gestures,

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that they would never let him alone until they had revenged themselves upon him; and that if they were not allowed to touch him in his person or his goods, they would at least inflict cruel injury upon his good name and honour in men's eyes, by laying shameful things to his charge; and, however carefully he might avoid giving any cause for it, they would by falsehood and cunning bring it about. The holy woman Anna was greatly terrified at this, and she besought our dear Lady to come and help him in his impending straits. Upon which the kind Mother said to her lovingly:—They can do nothing to him without my Child's ordinance. What He ordains concerning him will be the best and the most profitable for him. Bid him therefore be of good cheer.

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When she told this to the brother, he began to feel great alarm at this hostile assembling of the evil spirits; and, as he often used to do in his distresses, he ascended the hill on which a chapel stands dedicated to the holy angels, and he went nine times round this chapel, according to his custom, saying prayers in honour of the nine choirs of the heavenly host, and he besought them earnestly to be his helpers against all his enemies. Early that same morning he was vouchsafed in a spiritual vision to a beautiful plain, and he saw there all round him an exceeding great company of angels, who stood ready to help him, and they comforted him, saying:—God is with thee, and will never leave thee in any of thy straits. Cease not, then, to draw worldly hearts to the love of God. This confirmed him in his purpose, and he busied himself all the more diligently in bringing back both the wild and the tame to God.

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He had succeeded by his good words in coming round a ferocious man, who had been eighteen years without confession. This man was inspired by God with confidence in the Servitor, and confessed to him with such great contrition, that they both began to weep. He died soon afterwards, and made a happy end.

He once converted twelve sinful women from their evil life. It is impossible to tell how much he suffered from them. In the end, however, only two of them persevered.

There were at that time up and down the country many persons of the female sex, both secular and religious, who from the frailty of their disposition had fallen openly into sinful practices. These poor women through shame dared not confess to any one their heart's anguish; so that from agony and distress of mind they were often assailed by the temptation to destroy themselves. Now when these persons heard that the Servitor had a tender heart for all who were in suffering, they took courage and came to him,—each one at the time when her distress lay heavy upon her,—and disclosed to him their anguish, and the straits in which they were held captive. When he saw these poor hearts in such misery and suffering, he used to weep with them and console them lovingly. He often risked his good name in this world in order to help them to recover their souls and their reputation; and he let malicious tongues pass what judgment on him they pleased.

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Among others there was a lady of high birth, whose contrition for her fall was very great. One day our Lady appeared to her and said:—Go to my chaplain; he will set thee right again. She answered:—Alas, Lady, I know him not. The Mother of Compassion replied:—Look here beneath my mantle, where I keep him under my guard, and note well his face, that thou mayest know him again. He is a help in need and a comforter of all who suffer. He will comfort thee. The lady came to the Servitor from a foreign land, and she recognised his face as she had seen it before in spirit, and she prayed him to bring her back to grace, and told him what had befallen her. He received her very kindly, and set her right again to the best of his ability, according as the Mother of Compassion had enjoined him.



CHAPTER XL.

Of a grievous suffering which befell him while thus occupied.

SUCH was the way in which the Servitor aided many persons who were in suffering. But the good work cost him dear, owing to the martyrdom of sufferings which fell upon him in consequence. And God showed him these afflictions when they were still future, in the following vision. Once when he was travelling he arrived one evening at an inn; and just before daybreak it seemed to him in a vision that he was taken to a place where Mass was going to be sung, and that he had to sing it, for the lot had fallen upon him. The singers began the Mass of martyrs, “*Multae tribulationes justorum;*” that is, Many are the sufferings of God’s friends. He was not pleased at hearing this, and would have been very glad to change it, saying:—How strange! Why are you deafening us with the martyrs? Why do you sing to day the Mass of martyrs? We are not keeping any martyr’s feast to-day. They looked at him, and pointing at him with their fingers, said:—God has His martyrs now at this time, as He has ever had. Get ready, then, and sing for thyself.

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He turned over the pages of the Missal which lay before him, and would much rather have sung the Mass of confessors, or any other one except that of the suffering martyrs; but though he turned the book over and over again, it was all full of Masses of martyrs. When he saw that it could not be otherwise, he sang with them, and his singing rang forth exceeding mournfully. After a little while he began again, and said to them:—This is very singular. One would much rather sing *Gaudeamus* (Let us rejoice) about joyful things, than sing as we are doing about sorrowful things. They answered:—Good friend, thou dost not understand it yet. This song about the martyrs goes first, and then when the proper time has come the joyous song *Gaudeamus* follows after it.

When he came to himself again his heart trembled within him because of the vision, and he said:—Alas, O God! must I once more suffer martyrdom? In consequence of this his demeanour became so sorrowful as he journeyed onwards, that his companion asked him, saying:—Ah! father, what is the matter with you, that you look so exceeding sorrowful? He answered:—Alas! dear companion, I have to sing here the Mass of martyrs. Meaning, that God had made known to him that he had a martyrdom to suffer. But his companion understood him not; so he remained silent, and kept it all within himself.

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On his arrival at the town, which took place in the dark days before Christmas, he was, as usual, so sorely visited with bitter sufferings that it seemed to him, as the saying is, that his heart within his body must break, if such a thing has ever happened to those in sorrow. For these sufferings hedged him round on all sides, and it was his sad lot to have every thing taken from him which had been a support to him in the way of service, consolation, or

honour, and which was of a nature calculated to comfort a man here below. This bitter suffering was of the following kind:—Among those persons whom he had tried to lead to God there came to him a deceitful crafty woman, who under an outwardly good life concealed a wolfish heart, which she hid so well that the brother for a very long time did not perceive it. She had before this fallen into great sin with a man, and had added to her crime by attributing the off spring to a different person from the guilty man, who protested his own innocence in the matter.

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The Servitor did not reject the woman on account of her misdeeds; but he heard her confession, and helped her in all needful and proper ways, more than it was the custom of the other religious of the country, who are called Terminer (mendicants), to do. After this had gone on for a long time, it came to the knowledge of the Servitor, and of other reliable persons, that she was still secretly continuing the same evil practices as before. He said nothing about it, and would have gladly avoided making it known; at the same time he gave up his relations with her and ceased to help her. When the woman became aware of this, she sent him word not to act thus; and threatened him that, if he left off giving her the same assistance as heretofore, he should suffer for it; for that she would father upon him a child, which she had had by a secular man, and he would thus be put to shame by means of the child and be covered with infamy every where.

The Servitor was filled with consternation at these words, and stood motionless; then, sighing inwardly, he spoke thus within himself:—Anguish and distress surround me on all sides, and I know not which way to turn; for if I act in this way, woe is me, and if I do not act thus, still woe is me; and I am so girt round on all sides by distress and woe that I am like to sink under it. And thus, with terror in his heart, he waited for whatever God might allow the devil to bring upon him. At last, after taking counsel with God and himself, he came to the conclusion, that of these two miserable alternatives it was better for him in soul and body to abandon the wicked woman altogether, let the consequences to his good name be what they might; and so he did.

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This inflamed her fierce heart with such rage against him, that, running hither and thither to ecclesiastics and seculars, she strove with more than human wickedness to defame herself, in order to bring suffering upon the poor man, and she told every one that she had had a child, and that it was by the brother. All who believed her words were greatly scandalised at it, and the scandal was the greater the wider the reputation of his holiness had spread. All this pierced him through to his very inmost heart and soul, and, being thus encompassed on every side by anguish and distress, he lived absorbed in himself, and the days seemed to him long and the nights miser able, and his short sleep was mingled with panic frights. He used to look upwards sorrowfully to God, and with deep groans exclaim:—Alas, O God!

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my hour of woe is come. How shall I, or how can I, bear this agony of heart? Alas, O God, would that I had died before I ever saw or heard of this misery! Lord, behold, I have honoured Thy venerable Name all the days of my life, and I have taught many persons far and wide to love and honour it. And wilt Thou bring my name to such great dishonour? This is a sore thing that I complain of. Behold how the venerable Order of Preachers must now be brought to disgrace through me. I grieve for this, and shall always grieve for it. Woe is me, by reason of the straits into which my heart has come! All good persons, who before held me in great honour as a holy man—a thing which gave me courage to persevere—now, alas! regard me as a wicked deceiver of the world; and this pierces and wounds my heart through and through.

When the poor sufferer had spent much time in these lamentations, and his body and vital powers were wasting away, there came to him a woman, saying:—Good sir, why do you wear yourself away through this excessive grief? Be of good cheer. I will give you such counsel and assistance, that, if you will follow my advice, your good name will remain uninjured. Therefore take courage. He looked up, and said to her:—Dear lady, how will you bring this to pass? She answered:—I will take away the child by stealth under my cloak, and either bury it alive at night, or stick a needle into its brain so that it will die. Thus the vile slander will fall to the ground, and you will keep your good name. He answered in a voice of fury:—Woe is me, wicked murderess! alas for thy murderous heart! Wouldst thou thus kill the guiltless babe? What matter that its mother is a wicked woman? Wouldst thou bury it alive? No, no; God forbid that such a crime should ever be committed through me. See; the very worst that can befall me in this matter is the loss of my worldly honour; but if the worldly honour of a whole country depended on me, I would rather sacrifice it to-day to the everlasting glorious God than let this innocent blood thus perish. She replied:—And yet it is not your child. Why then trouble yourself about it? Upon which she drew forth a sharp-pointed knife, and said:—Let me take it away out of your sight, and I will wring its neck, or stick this knife into its little heart. It will be dead at once, and you will be at peace again. He answered:—Silence, thou unclean and wicked devil. Be it whose child it may on earth, it is still formed after God's image, and has been full dearly purchased with the most precious and innocent Blood of Christ. Therefore I will not that its young blood be shed in this way. The woman made answer to him impatiently:—If you will not let it be killed, at least let me carry it secretly into the church some morning, that it may fare with it as with other deserted found lings; else you will be put to great expense and annoyance, until the child's bringing up is finished. He replied:—I trust in the rich God of heaven, who has always provided for me hitherto, that He will provide henceforth for both of us. And then he added:—Go and bring me the babe very secretly, that I may see it.

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When he took the babe into his bosom and looked at it, the babe smiled at him. Upon which, fetching a deep sigh, he said:—Should I then kill a pretty babe that smiles at me? No, in truth! I will gladly suffer whatever may befall me through it. Then turning to the babe; he said:—Alas, thou hapless, tender babe! thou art indeed a poor orphan; for thy own false father has denied thee, and thy murderous mother has sought to fling thee away, like an ugly good-for-nothing whelp. Well; since God's providence has given thee to me, in such a way that I cannot help being thy father, I will gladly act as one towards thee, and I will receive thee from God and from no one else; and even as He is dear to me, so shalt thou too be dear to me, my own sweet babe. Ah, child of my heart! thou sittest in my sorrowful lap, and lookest up at me so lovingly, and yet canst not speak. Alas! and I too look at thee with wounded heart and tearful eyes, and mouth that kisses thee, and I bedew thy infant face with the stream of my hot tears.

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When the pretty boy felt the great tears of the weeping man fall so fast upon his little eyes, he too began to weep heartily with him; and they both wept together. But when the Servitor saw the babe thus weeping, he pressed it tenderly to his heart, and said:—Be still, my darling! Alas, child of my heart! should I kill thee because thou art not my child, but must cost me dear? Alas, my beautiful, dear, tender child! I would not hurt thee; for thou must be my child and God's child; and so long as God provides me with but one single mouthful, I will share it with thee, to the glory of the good God; and I will bear patiently what ever may befall me through thee, my own sweet child.

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When the cruel-hearted woman who had before wished to kill the babe heard him speak thus tenderly amid his tears, she was so deeply moved by it to great pity, and broke out into such loud cries and weeping, that he was obliged to quiet her, lest some one should come, and the whole thing be known. At length, when she had wept her full, he gave her back the babe, and blessed it, saying:—May the loving God bless thee, and the holy angels guard thee from all evil! And he bade her provide it with what was needful at his cost. Afterwards the wicked woman, the child's mother, set to work again; and as she had already greatly slandered the brother, so she continued to do whenever she had an opportunity of injuring him; on which account he became an object of pity to many pure and virtuous souls, and they often wished that the just God would take her away out of the world.

It happened once that one of the Servitor's kinsmen came to him, and said:—Alas, sir, for the great crime which this wicked woman has committed against you! God knows, I will avenge you on her. I will secretly station myself on the long bridge which goes over the water; and when the sacrilegious wretch passes that way, I will throw her over and drown her; and her great crime shall be avenged upon her. He answered:—No, my friend; God forbid that any living being should be put to death on my account. God, who knows all hidden things,

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knows that she has done me wrong about the child. Therefore I leave the matter in His hand, either to slay her or to let her live, according to His will. And I tell thee that, even if I were willing to disregard my soul, by conniving at her death, I would still honour in her the dignity of all pure women, and allow her the benefit of it. The man answered very angrily:—As for me, I would as soon kill a woman as a man, if she had behaved to me so villanously. He replied:—Nay; for that would be an act of most unreasonable and blameworthy ferocity. Think no more about it, and let all the sufferings fall upon me which God wills me to suffer.

As the Servitor's afflictions were continually on the increase, it seemed to him one day? through infirmity of soul, that his distress had reached such a point that he must needs go forth in quest of something to support and cheer him in his sufferings. Accordingly he went out to seek for consolation, and he hoped to meet with it especially at the hands of two of his friends, who while he still sat on the upper side of fortune's wheel had treated him as though they were his true friends and comrades. It was from them that he now sought consolation for his suffering heart. Alas! God showed him in them both that no dependence is to be placed in creatures; for he was more cruelly humiliated by them and those about them than he ever was by ordinary people. One of these friends received the afflicted brother very harshly, and turning away his face from him in anger, behaved to him in a very insulting manner, with cutting words. Among other offensive expressions which he used he told the Servitor to cease in future from all familiarity with him; for that he was ashamed of his company. Alas! this pierced the Servitor's inmost heart; and he answered mournfully:—O dear friend, if by God's ordinance thou hadst fallen into the miry pool, as I have done, verily I would have sprung in after thee, and lovingly helped thee out of it. O misery! it is not enough for thee to see me lying before thee deep in the mire, but thou must needs trample on me besides. Of this I make my plaint to the sorrowful Heart of Jesus Christ. His friend bade him be silent, and said to him insultingly:—There is an end of you now. Not only your preaching, but your books too which you have written, ought to be treated with contempt. The Servitor answered him very sweetly, and looking up to heaven, said:—I put my trust in the good God of heaven that my books will be still more valued and loved than they have ever been, when the appointed time shall come. Such was the mournful consolation which he received from his best friends.

Hitherto in this town his necessities had been fully supplied by kind-hearted persons. But when these lying and slanderous tales were carried to them, those who believed the false talemongers withdrew from him their help and friendship, until at length, the truth having been manifested to them by God, they returned to him and acknowledged that he was guiltless.

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One day, when he had sat down to take a little rest, his bodily senses were stilled in ecstasy, and it seemed to him that he was carried into a land above the ken of sense. Then he heard something say in the very depths of his soul:—Hearken, hearken, to a word of consolation which I will read to thee. He did as bidden, and listened attentively. Upon which the voice began to read in Latin the following words from the chapter at none of the Vigil of Christmas, “Non vocaberis ultra derelicta, etc.” (Is. lxii. 4); that is, Thou shalt no more be called the forsaken of God, and thy land shall not be called the wasted land. Thy name shall be, God’s will is in thee, and thy land shall be cultivated; for the heavenly Father is well pleased with thee. When the voice had finished reading these words, it began again to read the same words over and over again full four times.

The Servitor in astonishment said:—Dear friend, what meanest thou by repeating these words so often? The voice answered:—I do this to strengthen thy confidence in God, who will provide for the land of His friends—that is, for their mortal bodies—all things needful to them; and when what they require is withdrawn from them on one side, He will make it up to them on another. In this fatherly way the almighty and everlasting God will deal with thee. And in truth this all came to pass so manifestly, that many a heart laughed for joy at it, and the almighty and everlasting God was praised by those who had before shed many tears from great compassion.



It fared with this suffering man as with some dead animal which has been knocked about and torn in pieces by wild beasts, and yet has some marrow left in it. Last of all, the hungry flies and other insects settle upon it, and strip bare the gnawed bones, and carry away with them into the air the marrow which they have sucked out. Even so the Servitor was miserably pulled to pieces, and his shame was carried far and wide into distant lands by persons of seeming piety; and they did this with good words, and under the cover of regrets, and with outward show of friendship, which was nothing but faithlessness within. In consequence of this, evil thoughts like these would sometimes dart across the Servitor’s mind:—Alas, dear God! he who only suffers at the hands of Jews, and heathen, and open sinners, may contrive to bear it; but these persons who are tormenting me so grievously have the appearance of being Thy good friends, and therefore it is so much more painful.

But when he came to himself, and took a reasonable view of it, he excused them from all fault, and acknowledged that it was God who had done it through them, and that it was fitting he should suffer thus, and that Almighty God often orders things for His friends good by means of His enemies.



Once especially, when he was suffering from these thoughts, it was said to him inter-iorly:—Remember that Christ the Lord would not only have His beloved disciple John and His faithful St. Peter in His pure company, but He willed also to endure the wicked Judas

at His side. And dost thou desire to imitate Christ, and yet will not endure thy Judas? A thought in answer flashed at once across his mind:—Alas, Lord! if a suffering friend of God had only one Judas, it would be bearable; but in these times every corner is full of Judases, and when one departs four or five spring up. To this there came the following reply within him:—A man who is what he ought to be should not look on any Judas as a Judas; but he should regard him as God's fellow-worker, by whom he is to be trained and purified for his good. When Judas betrayed Christ with a kiss, Christ called him his friend, saying:—My friend, wherefore art thou come?

The sufferings of this poor man had now lasted a long time; but there was one very little ground of comfort, to which he clung, and which was all his support—namely, that the burden which weighed him down had not been brought before the judges and prelates of the Order. This little comfort was speedily withdrawn from him by God; for the Master-general of the whole Order and the Master of the German province both came together to the town in which the wicked woman had slandered the pious Servitor of God. When the poor man, who was living in another place, heard this news, his heart died within him utterly, and he said to himself:—If perchance the Masters give credence to the wicked woman against thee, thou art dead; for they will condemn thee to such a penitential prison, that it were better for thee to die. He remained under the weight of this anguish twelve days and nights continuously, and during this time he was in constant expectation of this agonising penance, as soon as they should arrive there.

One day, overcome by the state of misery in which he was, he broke out, through human frailty, into unseemly gestures and behaviour; and in this sad condition of his outer and inner man he went apart from every one into a place of secrecy, where none could hear or see him, and he gave way at intervals to deep and repeated groans. The tears stood in his eyes, and then streamed down his cheeks. His distress was so intense that he could not remain still, but he would sit down on a sudden, and then spring up again and run up and down the room like a man wrestling with grief and anguish. Then there shot through his heart a thought which took the form of a remonstrance, thus:—Alas! O everlasting God, what is Thy purpose with me? Meanwhile, when he was in this sad disordered state, a voice from God spoke within him, saying:—Where is now thy detachment and that evenness of soul in weal and woe which thou hast so often and so joyously counselled to others, whilst thou didst lovingly point out to them how entirely a man should abandon himself to God, and hold fast by nothing?

To this he answered with many tears:—Askest thou me where my detachment is? Rather do thou tell me where is God's unfathomable pity for His friends? For in spite of it I am

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waiting here in utter desolation, like a man condemned to forfeit his life, property, and honour. I had fancied that God was kind. I had fancied that he was a good and gracious Lord to all who ventured to abandon themselves to Him. Woe is me! God has failed me! Alas! that vein of kindness whose compassionate streams never yet ran dry has run dry for me, poor man. Alas! the kind Heart whose kindness the whole world proclaims has deserted me, poor man, miserably. He has turned away from me His beautiful eyes and His gracious countenance. O thou Divine countenance! O thou kind Heart! I had never deemed of Thee that Thou wouldst have cast me off so utterly. O fathomless abyss, come to my aid, for I am altogether undone. Thou knowest that all my consolation and reliance is in Thee alone, and in no one else on earth. Oh, hearken to me this day for God's sake, all ye suffering hearts! See that no one take scandal at my disordered state; for so long as detachment was in my mouth it was sweet to me to speak of it; but now my whole heart is wounded through and through, and the inmost core of all my veins and brain is trans pierced with anguish, and there is not a limb of my body which is not tortured and wounded in every part of it. How can I then be detached?

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When he had spent about half a day in this disordered state, and his brain was quite shattered, he sat still at last, and, turning from himself to God, gave himself up to God's will in these words:—May it not be otherwise! “Fiat voluntas Tua” (Thy will be done).

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As he sat thus, with his senses rapt in ecstasy, it seemed to him in a vision that there came and stood before him one of his holy spiritual daughters, who when she was yet alive had often told him that he would have many sufferings, but that the everlasting God would help him out of them. She now appeared to him, and tried lovingly to comfort him; but he received her consolations angrily, and charged her with untruthfulness. She smiled at this, and drawing near, offered him her holy hand, saying:—Accept my Christian troth, in God's stead, that He will not forsake you, but will help you to come out victorious from these and all other sufferings. He answered:—See, daughter! The weight of my afflictions is so great, that I can no longer credit thee, unless thou givest me some token that thy words are true. She replied:—God Himself will manifest your innocence to all good and pure hearts. As for wicked hearts, things look to them according to the colour of their own wickedness. A wise friend of God heeds them not. Moreover, the Order of Preachers which you bewail shall be the more pleasing to God and all reasonable men, on your account. And as a sign that these words are true, note this. The ever lasting God will soon avenge you, and will let fall His wrathful hand upon the wicked heart which has thus troubled you. Moreover, all those who have specially abetted her by their malicious slanderings will soon feel His vengeance. Be sure of this. The brother was much comforted by these words, and waited steadfastly in expectation of how God would bring this matter to fill end.

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Very soon afterwards, it all came to pass exactly as she had said. For the monster who had thus tormented him died, and she died too by a sudden death. And many others also among those who had been the chief causes of his sufferings were snatched hence by death; some of them dying insensible, and others without confession and communion.

One of these persons, who had been a prelate, and had caused very great suffering to the Servitor, appeared to him in a vision after death, and told him that it was on this account God had cut short his life and term of office, adding, that he would have to waste and wither in purgatory for a long time as a penance for it.

Many persons who knew what had happened, and were favourably disposed towards the Servitor, on seeing this unusual vengeance, and the deaths which God sent so suddenly upon his adversaries, praised Almighty God, saying:—Of a truth God is with this good man; and we see well that wrong has been done him, and it is but just that he should henceforth be of more account in the eyes of reasonable men, and be looked upon as higher in holiness than if God had not visited him with these sufferings.

Moreover, the prelate of the German province exculpated him, saying that he and the Master-general of the Order had held a strict visitation about him, as was fitting, and had found nothing against him, save that a wicked woman, who was unworthy to be believed, had spoken maliciously of the honest man; a thing which might very well happen, if people would give ear to wicked tongues.

Thus the kind God succoured the Servitor, and very graciously caused this terrible storm of suffering to subside and pass away, according as the holy daughter in the vision had told him for his consolation. And he often thought within himself:—Ah, Lord, how true the words are which are said of Thee: He to whom God wishes well can be harmed by no one!

The friend, also, who behaved to him in such an unfriendly way was shortly afterwards taken hence by God. After his death, when all the hindrances which had delayed him from beholding God face to face had been removed, he appeared to the Servitor in golden garments radiant with light, and embracing him lovingly, pressed his face tenderly against his cheeks and besought his pardon for all the wrong he had done him, and prayed him that a true heavenly friendship might continue between them ever lastingly. The Servitor accepted this proposal with joy, and embraced him in turn very lovingly; upon which he vanished out of sight, and entered again into the bliss of God.

Afterwards, when the appointed time had come, God gladdened the sufferer in return for all his sufferings with inward peace of heart, still repose, and bright illuminations of grace; so that he praised God with all his heart for the past suffering, saying that he would not take the whole world not to have suffered it all. More over, it was given to him to see

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clearly that by this crushing blow he had been in a more noble fashion drawn out of himself and transported into God than by all the manifold sufferings which he had endured from his youth upwards until then.



CHAPTER XLI.

Of interior sufferings.

WHEN the Servitor's spiritual daughter had read the account of the grievous sufferings just related, and had shed many tears over it through pity, she prayed him to explain to her in the next place what is the nature of interior sufferings? He answered:—I will tell you two things about interior sufferings. There was a man of high position in a certain Religious Order on whom God had laid an interior suffering; and the poor brother's heart and spirits were so overwhelmed by it, that he ceased not night and day from tears and cries and lamentations. At length he came with great devotion to the Servitor of the Eternal Wisdom, and told him his distress, and besought him to pray to God for him that he might be delivered.

Early one morning, when the Servitor was sitting in his chapel and praying for the brother, he saw the evil spirit come and stand before him, under the form of a hideous Moor, with eyes of fire and a terrific hellish look, and with a bow in his hand. The Servitor said to him:—I adjure thee by the living God to tell me who thou art, and what thou wantest here. He answered in a very fiendish fashion:—I am "Spiritus Blasphemiae" (the Spirit of Blasphemy), and thou shalt soon know what I want.

The Servitor turned towards the door of the choir, and, as he did this, the suffering brother came in by the same door on his way to the choir for Mass. Thereupon the evil spirit drew his bow and shot a fiery arrow into the brother's heart, so that he almost fell backwards, and could not come into the choir. The Servitor was greatly pained at this, and severely reproved the devil for it. On which the proud fiend became exceeding wroth with him, and drawing the bow once more, with a fiery arrow upon it, tried to shoot him also through the heart. But the Servitor turned quickly to our dear Lady for help, saying:—"Nos cum prole pia benedicat Virgo Maria" (O Virgin Mary, bless us with thy gentle Babe); and immediately the devil's strength left him, and he vanished out of sight.

When morning came, the Servitor related what he had seen to the suffering brother, and consoled him, and at the same time told him the remedies which would be of avail, as they are set forth in the sermon of his which begins:—"Lectulus noster floridus, etc. *"

Among the many persons afflicted with interior sufferings who sought his help, there once came to him a secular man from a foreign country, saying:—Sir, I have within me the greatest of all sufferings which a man ever had, and no one can help me. A little while ago I despaired of God, and I was so despondent, that through excess of anguish I resolved to destroy myself, and kill both body and soul. In this agony of mind, just as I was on the point of springing into a raging torrent, and had already taken a run with the deliberate purpose

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of drowning myself, I heard a voice above me say, "Stop! stop! Put not thyself to this shameful death: seek a friar preacher." And the voice named you to me by your name, which I had never heard before, and it said, "He will help you and set you right." I was full of joy at this, and gave up the thought of killing myself; and I have sought you out by asking after you, as I was bidden. When the Servitor saw the miserable state in which the man was, he turned lovingly to the poor sufferer, and comforting him, made his heart light, and taught him what to do in order to avoid, by God's help, falling again into such a temptation.



CHAPTER XLII.

What sufferings are the most useful to men, and bring most glory to God?

THE holy daughter asked him, saying:—I would gladly know what kind of sufferings are, above all others, most useful to men, and bring most glory to God. He answered as follows:—Thou must know that there are many kinds of sufferings by which a man is disciplined and set forward on the road to bliss, if only he can use them rightly. Sometimes God sends heavy sufferings on a man without any fault of his, either to try how firm he stands, or to show him what he is in himself, as we often read in the Old Testament; or, again, merely to manifest His own glory, as is related in the Gospel about the man born blind whom Christ the Lord declared to be without fault, and restored to sight.

On the other hand, there are some sufferers who well deserve their sufferings, as the thief did who was crucified with Christ the Lord, and to whom Christ gave everlasting bliss be cause of his true conversion to Him amid his sufferings. There are others, again, who are guilt less in regard to the particular thing for which they are at the moment suffering, but yet there is something else faulty in them, on account of which God makes them suffer; just as it often happens that Almighty God crushes haughty arrogance, and brings persons of this description to themselves by letting their pride and superciliousness meet with a heavy fall in things in which, perhaps, they are wholly and entirely free from guilt. Again, God sometimes sends sufferings upon men out of special love for them, to save them in this way from a still greater suffering, as is the case with those to whom God gives their purgatory in this life by sicknesses, poverty, or such like, that so they may be delivered from sufferings in the life to come; or with those whom He permits to be tried and exercised by fiendish men, that they may thus be saved from the sight of the foul fiend at death. There are others also who suffer from burning love, like the martyrs, whose joy it was by the manifold deaths, whether of body or soul, which they endured, to show forth to the dear God their love.

Besides all this, we find in this world many sufferings which are vain and without consolation; such, for example, as are undergone by those who make it their aim to please the world in worldly things. These persons purchase hell at a very dear price, while, on the contrary, those who suffer for God find help in their tribulations. Again, there are some persons who are often inwardly admonished by God to give themselves to Him without reserve, because He wishes to admit them to His intimacy. Now if they resist the call through negligence, God draws them to Him by sufferings; and to whichever side they turn in their endeavours to escape Him, the faithful God sends upon them temporal misfortunes and discomfort, and thus holds them by the hair, that they cannot get away from Him.

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There are many others also to be met with who have no sufferings except those which they make for themselves, by estimating too highly what is not worthy of being taken into account at all. Once when a man who was heavily laden with afflictions chanced to pass by a certain house, he heard a woman within uttering very great lamentations. The thought came to him:—Go in and comfort the woman in her sufferings. Accordingly he went in and said:—Dear lady, what has happened to you, that you are bewailing yourself thus? She answered:—I have let a needle drop, and cannot find it any where. He turned round, and thought to himself as he went out:—O foolish woman, if thou hadst my burden on thee thou wouldst not weep for a needle! In this way some soft-natured persons make for themselves sufferings in a multitude of things where there is nothing to suffer.



But the noblest and best kind of suffering is after the pattern of Christ's sufferings I mean those which the heavenly Father gave to His only-begotten Son, and which He still gives to His dear and chosen friends. This must not be taken as if any one were altogether without fault, except indeed the dear Jesus Christ, who never sinned; but it is to be understood of the example of patience which Christ gave us when He bore Himself in His sufferings like a gentle little lamb among wolves. Hence it is that He sometimes gives great sufferings to some of His dear and chosen friends, that we, who are so impatient under suffering, may learn patience from these blessed men, and in every case by sweetness of heart to overcome evil with good. All this thou shouldst consider, my daughter, and be ready to suffer without reluctance; for from whatever quarter sufferings come they can be turned to profit, if only the sufferer accepts them all as sent by God, and refers them back again to God, and so gets the mastery over them with His help.



The daughter answered:—The noblest kind of suffering, of which you spoke last, I mean when a person suffers innocently, is the lot of few. Therefore I would gladly hear how those who for their sins have deserved to suffer can r by God's help, come forth victorious from their sufferings; for such persons have a twofold source of pain:—they have angered the Almighty God, and they are tormented from without.

He replied:—I will tell you. I knew a man who, whenever he fell into a sin through human frailty, used to do like a good washerwoman, who takes the clothes, when she has steeped and softened them, to the pure spring, and there by washing makes every thing clean and fresh which before was dirty. Even so this man would never rest until some of the innocent, clown-trickling Blood of Christ, which the Lord shed with unspeakable love, that it might be a help and comfort to all sinners, had been spiritually poured forth in sufficient measure upon him: and in this hot Blood he washed himself and all his stains away, and he bathed himself in the healthful brook of Blood as a little child is bathed in a warm water-bath; and this he did with heart felt devotion in a well-grounded Christian faith that this Blood must



and would wash away all his sins, and cleanse him from all guilt by its almighty power. In this way, however things might be, whether he was guilty or free from guilt, he always referred them ultimately to the good God.

CHAPTER XLIII.

How he drew certain hearts from earthly love to the love of God.

WHILE the Servitor was occupied in drawing souls from earthly love to God, he remarked that in certain monasteries there were persons who, though they wore the religious habit, had worldly hearts beneath it. Among others there was one who had steadfastly fixed her heart upon a perishable affection, of a kind which goes by the name of “sponsiren,” and is a very poison to all happiness in religion. The Servitor told her that if she wished to lead a godly and quiet life, she must renounce this practice, and in place of her earthly lover take the Eternal Wisdom for her beloved. This was a hard thing for her to do; for she was in the bloom of youth, and completely entangled in this kind of company. Nevertheless, he brought her thus far, that she formed the good resolution to do it. When, however, she broke this good resolution again, through the influence of her friends, he said to her:—Daughter, leave off this practice; for I tell thee that if thou wilt not do it cheerfully, thou wilt have to do it sorrowfully. As she would not be converted by his friendly counsels, he prayed to God very earnestly to withdraw her from this affection, cost her what it might. One day he went up into the pulpit under the crucifix, as his wont was, and he took a severe discipline on his bare back, so that the blood streamed from it, and he besought God for her that she might be tamed. And so it came to pass; for immediately upon her return home there grew an ill-shaped hump upon her back, which made her look hideous, and thus necessity obliged her to give up what she had refused to renounce for God.

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In the same unenclosed monastery, there was a young, beautiful, and noble maiden, who having been caught in the same devil’s net, had been for many years wearing away her heart and her time in frivolous light-mindedness with all kinds of persons; and she had become so infatuated in these practices, that she always fled like a wild animal from the Servitor of the Eternal Wisdom, because she feared that he would order her to give up the kind of life which she was leading. Now the sister of this maiden besought the Servitor to try his luck with her, and see whether he could not bring her back from her ruinous courses to the ever lasting God. This seemed to him an impossible request, and he made answer that, in his opinion, it would be more possible for the sky to fall than for her to give up this practice; and that only death could take it from her. The sister, however, was very urgent with him in her entreaties, saying that it was her firm belief that whatever he asked of the everlasting God with earnestness, God never refused to him. At length she overcame him by her importunities, and he promised her to undertake it.

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As the maiden always fled from him, so that he could never come to words with her, he took note one day, about the time of St. Margaret’s feast, that she had gone out with the

other young sisters into a field to pick flax. He stole after them, and went round the field, and in this way managed to come gently up to her.

When she perceived that he was drawing near to her, she turned her back upon him very insolently, and, with her face all on fire with anger, cried out passionately to him:—Sir monk, what mean you by coming out here to me? keep to your own road, I advise you; for you have nothing to do with me. I tell you that I would rather have my head cut off than confess to you, and I would sooner be buried alive than obey you and give up my practices (*sponsiren*).

Her playmate, who stood next her, tried to quiet her; and reproved her, saying that the Servitor had only done it out of kindness. But she, tossing up her head in fury, answered:—See, I will not deceive him; I will show him by my words and ways what I have in my heart. The Servitor was so horror-struck by these insolent words and unseemly gestures, that he blushed with shame and kept silence; for he could not speak. The other sisters, who heard her outcries against him, were grieved at it, and chid her sharply. He soon withdrew on one side and left her; and then looking upwards, he began to sigh deeply, and would have given up the attempt; only that there still remained in him a kind of interior impulse from God, reminding him that he who wishes to accomplish any thing either for God or for the world must not give up so soon. This took place after midday.

On the evening of that same day, after sup per, the sisters went in a body into the court yard to pill the flax which they had gathered, and the afore-mentioned sister went with them. Now they were obliged to pass by the guest-quarters, in which the Servitor was staying. He, therefore, besought one of the maiden's playmates to contrive to bring her to him, and then to leave the room again herself. This was man aged, though with difficulty.

As soon as she came into the room where the brother was, and had seated herself near him under the window, he fetched a deep sigh from his full heart, and said:—Ah! beautiful and gentle maiden, God's chosen one! how long will you abandon your beautiful lovely body and your tender heart to the vile and wicked devil! And yet you are so richly adorned by the everlasting God with every grace, that it is indeed an evil tale that such a well-formed, noble, and angelic maiden should be the be loved of any other save the All-adorable One alone. Who has a greater right to pluck the fair and tender rose than He whose own it is? No, dear lovely maiden, open your bright falcon-eyes, and think of that beautiful chosen love, which begins here and lasts for ever and ever. Think, too, what sorrow and unfaithfulness, what pain and suffering in body and goods, in soul and honour, they must needs endure, willingly or unwillingly, who pursue earthly love; only they are so blinded by the honeyed poison that they forget the great hurt which thence results to them in time and in eternity. Come, then, thou angelic form, thou loving noble heart, and turn thy nature's high nobility

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to Him who is noble from eternity, and cease from this. I promise thee, by my troth, that God will take thee for His darling, and will be altogether true to thee, and love thee right well, here and hereafter, everlastingly.

The moment was propitious. These fiery words shot, as it were, through her heart, and softened her so exceedingly, that, at once lifting up her eyes and sighing very deeply, she said to him these determined and courageous words:—Ah, sir, my father! I surrender myself this day to God and you; and from this hour I will have done with my wild unbridled life, and, by your counsel and help, I will give myself to the loving God, to be His own, and will serve Him only until my death. He answered:—This is an hour of gladness. Praised be the kind Lord, who is ready to receive back again with joy all those who return to Him.



"While the two were thus conversing together in private about God, her playmates whom she had left stood outside the door, and they were vexed at the length of the discourse, for they feared lest she should abandon their light-minded society. So they called out to her to finish with him. Upon this she rose up, and went away with them, saying:—My playmates, God bless you! I bid you now farewell you and all our comrades, with whom, alas, I have wasted my time so frivolously; for henceforth I will have no one but the faithful God, and all else I will let go.

From that time the maiden began to avoid all hurtful company, and to keep herself retired; and though in after times the attempt was often made to bring her back to her old life, nothing ever came of it; and her conduct continued such, that, in the enjoyment of an honourable reputation and the practice of every virtue, she remained firmly and steadfastly attached to God until her death.

Once, later on, the Servitor set forth from home to visit his new daughter, that he might confirm her in a good and holy life, and console her lovingly, if she were in any sorrow; and he put himself to much suffering by undertaking the journey at a time when he was ill. As he walked along in this state through the deep mire, and climbed over lofty mountains, he often lifted up his eyes to the living God, and said:—Merciful God, be mindful of the painful steps which Thou didst take for man's salvation, and keep safe my child. His companion, on whom he leant from time to time, said to him in pity:—It well beseems God's goodness that many souls should be kept safe through you.



When he had gone on until he could go no further, but was quite exhausted, his companion said to him once more:—Ah, father! God should have considered how very ill you are, and He should have sent you a horse to ride upon, until you come to where people are. He answered:—Well, if we both ask God for it, I have confidence that He will let me have the benefit of thy virtue, and that it will come to pass.

Then the Servitor looked round about him, and he saw there on the right hand, coming forth out of a wood, a handsome horse, properly bridled and saddled, and it was coming along alone. His companion joyfully exclaimed:—See, dear father, how God will not forsake you! He answered:—Son, look round about on all sides of this broad plain, and observe whether there is any one to whom it can belong. He looked far and near, and could see no one, but only the horse trotting up to them. Then he said:—Of a truth, father, God has sent it to you; sit upon it and ride. He answered:—Well, comrade, if the horse stops still when it comes to us, I trust in God that He has sent it hither for our necessity. The horse came up quietly, and stood still before him. He said:—So be it, in God's name. Then his companion helped him on the horse and made him ride upon it, and walked by his side for some distance, until he was well rested. When they came near a village the Servitor got off, and laying the reins upon the horse's neck, let it go its way to the place from which it came. But whence it came, or whose it was, he never could discover afterwards.

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When the Servitor had arrived at his journey's end, it happened one evening that he was sitting with his spiritual children speaking to them in disparagement of perishable love, while at the same time he praised and celebrated to them the excellence of eternal love. When they left him, his heart was greatly inflamed with Divine love through the ardour of his discourse; for it seemed to him that his Beloved, whom he both loved himself and advised others to love, was infinitely better than all earthly objects of love. While he meditated on this, his senses were stilled in ecstasy, and it appeared to him in a vision that he was carried to a beautiful green heath, and that by his side there went a heavenly youth of comely form and noble bearing, who led him by the hand. Then the youth began to sing in the brother's soul a song which rang forth so joyously that all his senses took to flight before the mighty power of that sweet melody, and it seemed to him that his heart became so exceeding full of burning love and longing after God that it began to leap and rage within his body, as if it were on the point of breaking, from the intense strain that was upon it; and he was forced to lay his right hand upon his heart as a relief, and his eyes became so full that the tears ran down his cheeks.

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When the song was ended, a picture was placed before him, with the intent to teach him this song in such a way that he might not forget it. He looked, and saw there our Lady pressing her Child, the Eternal Wisdom, to her maternal heart. Over the Child's head the beginning of the song was written in beautiful and well-formed letters, and yet the writing was so concealed that it was not every one could read it. Only those who had gained the knowledge of it by experience and spiritual exercises read it well; and the writing was, "Heart's darling."

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The Servitor read the writing rapidly; and then the Babe looked up and gazed at him with love; upon which he felt in his inmost soul how true it is that the Divine Babe alone is our heart's darling—the sole object of all our joy and sorrow. Then he pressed the Babe to the very centre of his heart, and began to sing with the youth this song from end to end. In these burning sentiments of heartfelt love he came to himself again, and he found his right hand lying upon his heart, just as he had placed it there as a relief, when his heart was agitated so violently.



CHAPTER XLIV.

How God multiplied drink for His friends.

ONCE upon a time the Servitor, having travelled to a distance, became very tired, and on arriving in the evening at a hermitage, where it was proposed to spend the night, no wine was to be found either in the village or the hermitage; until at length, a certain good woman came and said that she had a small bottle of wine left, about half a quart, adding, “But what is this among so many?” For they were in number about twenty persons, good children, together with those who had come thither desiring to hear the word of God from his mouth. The Servitor told her to bring the bottle and place it on the table, and they prayed him to pronounce a blessing from God upon it. He did this in the mighty power of the loving Name of Jesus, and then began to drink of it, for he was very thirsty from the journey; after which he offered it to the others, and they all drank together. The bottle was placed upon the table openly, in the sight of every one, and no more wine or water was poured into it, for there was no other wine there. They continued drinking again and again out of the same bottle; and they were so eager to hear from him the word of God, that no one took note of the Divine miracle. At last, when they came to themselves, and saw God’s almighty power so manifestly displayed in the multiplication of the drink, they began to praise God, and wished to attribute the miracle which had taken place to the Servitor’s holiness. But he would not on any account suffer this, saying:—Children, this is not my doing. God has permitted this pure company to reap the benefit of their good faith, and has given them drink both bodily and spiritually.



CHAPTER XLV.

Of certain sufferers, who were attached to the Servitor by special ties of friendship and affection.

IN a certain town there were two persons of eminent holiness, both intimate friends of the Servitor. The one stood in high repute before the people, and abounded in divine sweetnesses. The other was held in no esteem, and God exercised him continually with sufferings.

After they were both dead, the Servitor wished much to know what was the difference between their rewards in the next world, inasmuch as the roads by which they had been led in this life were so unlike. Early one morning, the one who had been held in such esteem here below appeared to the Servitor, and told him that he was still in purgatory; and when asked how this could be, he replied, that the only sin for which he had to suffer was a certain spiritual pride which had assailed him, through the high esteem in which he had been held, and which he had not driven away quickly enough. He added, that his sufferings would soon be at an end. The other, whose life had been full of humiliations and sufferings, passed at once without any hindrance to God.

The Servitor's mother was all the days of her life a very great sufferer. This arose from the painful dissimilarity which there was between her and her husband. She was full of the Almighty God, and her whole desire was to live a spiritual life. But her husband was full of the world, and opposed her with great harshness and severity; and through this she had much to suffer.

It was her custom to cast all her sorrows into the bitter sufferings of Jesus Christ, and in this way to get the mastery over them. Before her death she confessed to the Servitor that for thirty years she had never assisted at Mass without weeping bitterly from heartfelt compassion for the torments of our dear Lord and His faithful Mother. She told him also that, from the excessive love which she felt for God, she had once fallen ill, and kept her bed for twelve weeks, longing and pining for God so ardently that the physicians clearly perceived it and were edified by it.

Once, at the beginning of Lent, she went to the Cathedral, where the taking down of the Lord Jesus from the cross is represented in carved wood over an altar. While she was before this image she experienced sensibly the great anguish which the tender Mother felt beneath the cross; and so intense was the agony which it caused this good woman, through compassion, that her heart became sick within her body, and she sank down fainting to the



ground, and could neither see nor speak. She was helped home, and lay there sick until Good Friday at none, and died while the Passion was being read.

Her son, the Servitor, was at this time at Cologne, engaged with his studies. She appeared to him there in a vision, and said to him with great joy:—Ah, my child! love God and trust Him well, for He will never forsake thee in any trouble. See, I have departed from this world, and yet I am not dead. I shall live ever lastingly in the presence of the everlasting God. She kissed him in motherly fashion upon his mouth, and blessed him lovingly, and then disappeared. He began to weep, and cried out after her, saying:—O my, true-hearted holy mother, be true to me in God's presence! and thus weeping and sighing, he came to himself again.

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In his young days, when he was at the place of studies, God provided him once with a dear and holy companion. On one occasion, when they were alone, and had conversed together much and tenderly about God, the companion besought the Servitor by the sincerity of their friendship to show him the lovely Name of Jesus which was engraven over his heart. The Servitor was reluctant to do this; nevertheless, when he saw his companion's great devotion, he granted his request, and drawing aside his habit where it covered his heart, let him look at this jewel of his heart as much as he would. The companion was not content with this; but when he saw the sweet Name standing out visibly in the middle over the Servitor's heart, he put out his hand and face, and after passing his hand across it, laid his mouth upon it, and began to weep so heartily from devotion that the tears ran down over the heart. After this the Servitor covered up the Name, and he never would allow any one else to see it, save only one of God's chosen friends, to whom this was permitted by the everlasting God; and this person also contemplated it with the same devout feelings as the other.

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When these two dear companions had spent many years together in spiritual companionship, and the time was come for them to separate, they blessed each other lovingly, and made a compact between them, that whichever of them might die first, the survivor should, as a token of their mutual friendship, say for his departed friend two Masses weekly during a year; the one to be a Requiem Mass on the Mondays, and the other a Mass of our Lord's Passion on the Fridays. Many years passed away after this, until at length the Servitor's dear companion died before him; but the Servitor had forgotten the promise about the Masses, though, without reference to it, he faithfully remembered his friend's soul to God. One morning, as he sat in ecstasy in his chapel, his companion appeared to him in a vision, and said to him very piteously:—Alas, friend, how great is thy unfaithfulness! How hast thou forgotten me! The Servitor answered:—And yet I remember thee every day in my Mass. His companion replied:—This is not enough. Fulfil what we promised about the Masses, that some of the sinless Blood may thus come down upon me and quench the severity of my

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purgatory. In this way I shall be soon set free. The Servitor accomplished this with affectionate fidelity, grieving much for his forgetfulness; and his companion was soon released.

CHAPTER XLVI.

How Christ appeared to him under the form of a Seraph, and taught him how to suffer.

ONCE upon a time, when the Servitor had turned to God with great fervour, beseeching Him to instruct him how to suffer, there appeared to him in a vision a likeness of Christ upon the cross in the form of a Seraph:—and the Seraph had six wings:—with two he covered his head, with two his feet, and with two he flew. On the two lowest wings was written, “Receive sufferings willingly;” on the two middle wings, “Bear sufferings patiently;” and on the two highest wings, “Learn to suffer after Christ’s pattern.”

He told this vision of love to one of his intimate friends, who was a very holy person. The answer which he received was:—Be assured that God has once more prepared for you new sufferings, which you will have to suffer. He asked what kind of sufferings these might be. He was answered:—You will be raised to the dignity of a prelate, in order that those who are disaffected to you may be the better able to strike you, and may humble you so much the more deeply. Therefore stablish yourself in patience, as has been shown you under the figure of the Seraph. He fetched a sigh, and looked out for the coming of a new storm; and so in truth it came to pass as the holy person had foretold him.

It happened at this time that there were several years of scarcity, and no one gave alms of bread or wine to the convent in which he then was; so that the convent fell greatly into debt. The brothers resolved in common to elect the Servitor prior during the great scarcity, notwithstanding his sorrow and repugnance; for he well understood that herein new sufferings were prepared for him.

On the first day he caused the bell to be rung for chapter, and he exhorted the community to call upon the dear St. Dominic, inasmuch as he had promised his brothers that if they called upon him when they were in need, he would, with God’s permission, come and help them. Now there were two of the brothers sitting side by side in the chapter, one of whom whispered to the other very scornfully:—See what a foolish man this prior is, that he bids us turn to God in our need. Does he fancy that God will open heaven, and send us down meat and drink? The other answered:—He is not the only fool. We are all fools for having made him prior, though we knew well beforehand that he is quite ignorant about earthly things, and does nothing but gape upwards continually to heaven. Many a contemptuous judgment of this kind was passed upon him. When morning came, he ordered a mass of St. Dominic to be sung, that the saint might provide for them what they needed. Now, while he was standing in the choir deep sunk in thought, the porter came and called him out to a rich canon, who was his particular friend. The canon said to him:—Dear sir, you have no

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experience in temporal things; but I have been inwardly admonished by God last night to help you in His stead, and accordingly I have brought you twenty pounds weight of Constance pennies for a beginning. Put your trust in God. He will not forsake you. The Servitor was filled with joy, and, taking the money, ordered wine and corn to be bought with it. Moreover, God and St. Dominic so helped him during the whole time that he was prior, that the convent never wanted for provisions of any kind; and besides this, he paid off all the debt.

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The above-mentioned canon, when he lay upon his death-bed, made large bequests for his soul's health to various objects towards which he had a devotion. Afterwards he sent for the Servitor, who was then prior, and intrusted him with a considerable number of florins, bidding him distribute them in other places among poor friends of God who had worn out their strength in austere exercises. The Servitor was reluctant to undertake this, for he feared that he would have to suffer for it afterwards, as in fact happened. At last he was over-persuaded to take the money, and he went out into the neighbouring country and distributed the sum, as he had promised, here and there where he believed that it would be most beneficial to the donor's soul; and he took proper receipts for it, and gave account of it all to his superiors. A heavy tribulation, however, fell upon him in consequence of this.

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The canon had an ill-conditioned natural son, who, after squandering away what his father had given him, abandoned himself to profligate and ruinous courses. This man was very anxious to obtain possession of the money in question, and, as he could not succeed in this, he sent word to the Servitor, under a solemn oath, that wherever he fell in with him he would kill him. No one could appease this man's enmity, however often the attempt was made. Nothing would do but he must kill him. The poor Servitor was for a long time in anguish and distress, and he did not venture to travel about from place to place, for fear of being murdered by the reprobate man. He used to lift up his eyes to God, and with many sighs exclaim:—Alas, O God! what miser able kind of death hast Thou ordained for me! His distress was all the greater because a short time before a brother of good repute had been cruelly murdered in another town for the same sort of thing. The poor Servitor found no one who had the will or the courage to undertake to shield him from the ferocity of this savage man. So he betook himself to the sovereign Lord of all, who set him free from his persecutor, and cut short his young and vigorous life by death.

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To these afflictions was added another bitter suffering. There was a certain ecclesiastical community which had received great gifts from the canon. But this did not satisfy them, and they all fell upon the brother with great indignation because he would not let all the abovementioned money come to them. He was sadly insulted on this account, and they accused him before seculars and ecclesiastics, and the slanderous tale, making him out guilty by a perversion of the facts, was carried far and wide throughout the country, and he had

to bear the loss of his good name among men for things in which he was guiltless in the eyes of God.

At this time the deceased canon appeared to him in a vision, clothed in a beautiful green vestment worked all over with red roses. He told the Servitor that it was well with him in the other world; and he entreated him to bear patiently the great wrong which was being done him, for that God would make it all up to him abundantly. The Servitor asked him what his beautiful vestment signified. He answered:—The red roses on the green ground represent your patient suffering, with which you have richly clothed me; and for this God will clothe you with Himself everlastingly.



CHAPTER XLVII.

How steadfastly he must fight who would win the spiritual prize.

AT the first beginning of the Servitor's conversion, he desired with all his heart to be singularly and pre-eminently well-pleasing to the loving God, but he expected to accomplish this without labour and suffering.

Now it happened once, when he went out into the country to preach, that he embarked on board a passenger ship on the Lake of Constance, and he observed there, sitting among the other passengers, a comely youth, gaily attired. He drew near the youth, and asked him what manner of man he was. The youth answered:—I am an esquire errant, and I bring the gentlefolk together, and arrange tournaments, in which they tilt and fight, and pay homage to fair ladies; and he who proves himself to be the best of all carries off the honour and the reward. The Servitor said:—And what is the reward? The esquire replied:—The most beautiful of the ladies present places a gold ring upon his finger. The Servitor asked further:—But tell me, dear friend, what must one do to carry off the honour and the ring? He answered:—He who proves to be the best at bearing sword-strokes and assaults, and who shows no faintheartedness in this, but behaves himself courageously and manfully, and sits firm, and bears up against the blows—he it is who receives the prize. The Servitor asked once more:—Tell me; if a man were only bold in the first onset, would that be enough? He replied:—No; he must remain firm to the very end of the tournament; and though the blows which he receives bring sparks of fire into his eyes, and make the blood burst from his mouth and nose, he must endure them all, if he is to obtain the glory of victory. The Servitor replied:—But, dear comrade, may he not weep or look mournful when he gets such terrible blows? He answered:—No; and though his heart sinks within him, as happens to many, he may not do anything of the kind; but he must bear himself joyously and bravely, otherwise he will become a laughing-stock, and lose the glory and the ring.



This discourse made the Servitor enter into himself, and, fetching a sigh from the depths of his heart, he said:—Ah! glorious Lord God! must the knights of this world endure so much suffering for such a small reward, which is in itself a very nothing! How fitting then it is that much greater labours should be undergone for the ever lasting prize! O sweet Lord, would that I were worthy to be Thy spiritual knight! O lovely Eternal Wisdom, who art rich in graces beyond aught in any land, would that my soul might receive a ring from Thee! To win it, I would suffer whatever might be Thy will! And he began to weep, from the great fervour which he felt.



When he arrived at the place to which he was going, God sent him great and cruel sufferings in such plenty that the poor Servitor nearly lost all his trust in God; and many eyes

became wet with tears through pity for him. He had forgotten all his knightly daring and his promise, and he became melancholy and peevish with God, wondering within himself what God could have against him that He had sent him such great sufferings. In the morning, at daybreak, there came a calm over his soul; and his bodily senses being stilled in ecstasy, a voice spoke within him:—Where is now thy knightly prowess? What a knight of straw, and a scarecrow of a man he must be, who is so daring in prosperity, and so despairing in adversity! This is not the way to win the everlasting ring, for which thou longest. He replied:—O Lord! the jousts of the interior life, which must be borne for Thee, are far too long and wearisome. To this there came an answer:—Therefore the glory, and the honour, and the ring of My knights, who receive honour from Me, are stable and everlasting. Upon this the Servitor, entering into himself, said very humbly:—Lord! I am in the wrong. Only permit me to weep while I suffer, for my heart is very full. The answer came:—Alas for thee! Dost thou want to weep like a woman, and disgrace thyself before the court of heaven? Wipe thy eyes, and bear thyself joyously, so that neither God nor men may perceive that thou hast wept on account of sufferings. The Servitor began to laugh, and yet at the same time the tears were running down his cheeks, and he promised God that he would no more wish to weep, that so he might obtain from Him the spiritual ring.



CHAPTER XLVIII.

How the Servitor's face was once seen to shine with light while he was preaching.

ONCE when the Servitor was preaching at Cologne with great fervour, there sat among his hearers a beginner in the spiritual life, who had been recently converted to God. Now while this beginner was attending diligently to the preacher, he saw with the eyes of his soul that the preacher's face began to be transfigured with a ravishing brightness, and three times it became like the radiant sun when its splendour is at the highest; and the face, moreover, was so pure, that the beginner saw himself reflected in it. This vision brought him very great consolation in his sufferings, and confirmed him in a holy life.

CHAPTER XLIX.

Of the lovely Name of Jesus.

THE Servitor of the Eternal Wisdom once made a journey from the upper country to Aix-la-Chapelle, to visit our dear Lady. And on his return, our dear Lady appeared to a holy person, and said:—Behold, my Child’s Servitor has come hither, and he has carried about His sweet Name of Jesus far and wide, with the same ardent desire with which His Apostles of old carried it; and just as their desire was to make all men know this Name through the preaching of the faith, even so all his strivings have been to set all cold hearts on fire with new love for this Name of Jesus. Therefore he shall receive, after his death, an everlasting reward with them.



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Afterwards, this holy person saw our dear Lady holding a beautiful candle in her hand, and it burned so beautifully that its light shone throughout the whole world; and all round and round the candle the Name of Jesus was writ ten. Then our dear Lady said to this person:—Behold, this burning candle signifies the Name of Jesus, because He in very truth illuminates the hearts of all who receive His Name with devotion, and pay it honour, and bear it lovingly about with them. To this end, my Child has chosen out His Servitor, that devotion to His Name may be lit up through him in the hearts of many, and that these may be helped onwards by him to everlasting bliss.

When this holy maiden, of whom mention has been made above, perceived that her spiritual father was so devout to, and had such firm faith in, the loving Name of Jesus, which he bore upon his breast over his heart, she conceived a great and peculiar love for it, and out of devotion she marked the Name of Jesus in red silk on a little piece of cloth, in the following form:—IHS—and wore it secretly upon her self. She also made an almost countless number of similar Names, and persuaded the Servitor to lay them on his bare heart, and then send them, with a blessing from God, to his spiritual children in different parts. Moreover, it was revealed to her by God that those who bore the Name upon them, and said daily with devotion an “Our Father” in honour of it, would be treated lovingly by God in this world, and would find grace before Him at their last passage.



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Such were the austere exercises and such the godly examples of Jesus Christ and His dear friends, according to which the beginnings of this holy maiden’s spiritual life were fashioned.



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CHAPTER L.

A good distinction between a true and false use of reason noticeable in certain persons.

"As the eagle enticing her young to fly" (Deut. xxxii. 11).

WHEN this holy daughter, by the good instructions of her spiritual father, had been thoroughly fashioned after the outward man to every branch of holiness which can be taught by examples, just as a piece of soft wax before the fire takes the form of the seal which is impressed upon it, and when she had been for a long time regularly trained in the imitation of the mirror-like life of Christ, which is the surest way, she received the following letter from her spiritual father, the Servitor:—Daughter, the time is now come for thee to aim at something higher, and to fly upwards out of the nest of forms and images, and the consolations which proceed from them. Do like a young, newly-fledged eagle, and soar upwards on thy well-grown pinions—I mean thy soul's highest powers—to the heights of that noble contemplation which belongs to a blissful and perfect life. Knowest thou not what Christ said to His disciples, who clung so closely to His sensible presence?—It is expedient for you that I go away from you, if you are to receive the Holy Ghost (John xvi. 7). Thy former exercises have been a good preparation to bring thee onwards through the wilderness of an animal and unconscious life, into the promised land of a pure and quiet heart, where bliss begins in this world, and will continue everlastingly in the next. But that thou mayest better understand this high intellectual way, I will cause to shine before thee the light of a good distinction, which, if thou clearly comprehendest it, will save thee from all error, however high thou mayest soar with thy mind.

Observe this then. Two courses are to be met with among apparently good persons. Some pursue a course in harmony with reason, and others a course at variance with it. The first are those who make it their aim to shape all their thoughts, actions, and omissions according to the rule of sound discretion, in harmony with the sentiments of holy Christendom, to God's glory, and the peace and quiet of all other men; while at the same time they keep diligent watch over their words and ways, so as to give scandal to no one, unless indeed a person takes scandal at them through his own fault, as often happens. Now the very name and nature of reason admonish us to pursue a guarded walk and manner of life like this. And the reason of these persons is after the fashion of the Divine reason, and worthy of praise, for its light shines inwards in itself in a true though hidden way, just as the heavens shine in the bright stars. On the contrary, in those apparently good persons who follow a course at variance with reason, and with an unmortified nature make self their aim, and only gaze intently upon objects with their reason after the manner of contemplation, and are able to discourse about them overbearingly before the unlearned, while by word and

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deed they testify contempt for every unfavourable judgment passed upon them; in such persons the intellectual light streams outwards, and not inwards; and just as decayed wood, from the glimmer it sends forth at night, seems to be something, and yet is nothing, even so the inward light and outward walk of these persons show themselves to be in all respects unlike that which they ought to resemble.

What these persons are may be easily gathered from the free and unweighed maxims which they put forth. We will only take one of these maxims, and by it we can estimate all the rest. The following words occur in a poem by one of them, "The just needs shun no obstacle." This saying, and others like it, have an air of importance in the eyes of certain dim-sighted persons, but will meet with no praise from those who see well and understand what they really mean. This is evident in the case of the saying just quoted, "The just needs shun no obstacle." For what is "the just," and what is an "obstacle"? "The just," according to the usual meaning of the term, is a just man regarded as actually existing in creation. For the quality "just" has no existence by itself, but needs a subject in which it can exist, and this subject in the present case is the just man. Again, what is an "obstacle"? It is sin which separates a man from God. Is a just man, then, to shun no obstacle—that is to say, is he to avoid or shun no sin? Such an assertion would be simply false, and at variance with all reason. It is true, indeed, that the just man, and all other things, when viewed, antecedently to their coming into being and their creation, as existing ideally from everlasting in God's essential reason, are all one and the same, without any formal difference, and therefore the saying, if understood in this sense, may be allowed to pass. But then it must be remembered that the just man, regarded as existing only in this simple super-essential basis, is not the corporeal man; for there is nothing corporeal in the God head, neither is there any obstacle there. But it is outside this basis that each man finds himself to be this or that individual man; for outside of it he is mortal, and within it he is immortal: and it is outside of it that he now exists in his frail created nature, in which he has great need to shun every hurtful obstacle. If, then, I were to try to regard myself in my own mind as non-existent, and in this way to know nothing of myself; and if, without distinguishing between myself and God, I were to do all corporeal actions as though the uncreated Being did them—this would be a crime above all crimes.

From this we see, that such maxims as these have really nothing rational in them. In saying this, however, it is not meant to condemn rational doctrine or rational well-weighed maxims and poems, by which men are refined, and guided towards intellectual truth, even though they are not understood by every body. For it is manifestly true, that no one can



speaking with sufficient clearness to be understood by those who are grossly blind, and as ignorant as brute beasts.

The daughter answered:—Praised be God for this good distinction! But I should also be very glad to hear the distinction between a well-ordered reason and one which is all flowers and outward show, as well as between true and false detachment.



CHAPTER LI.

How to distinguish between a well-ordered reason and one which is all flowers and glitter.

THE Servitor replied as follows:—At the end of the first combats, which have for their object to bring flesh and blood into subjection, a man arrives at a deep sea in which many perish; and this is a use of reason which is all glitter and external show. Now what is meant by this? The following is what I mean by a use of reason which is all glitter and outward show:—When a man has been emptied interiorly of the grossness caused by sin, and his mind is freed from the forms and images which used to cling to it, and he is able to soar upwards joyously above time and space, which till then held him in bondage, so that he could not use his nature's noble powers—at such a time, when he has already begun to open his soul's eyes and to taste a new and better pleasure, even that which springs from the perception of truth, the enjoyment of divine bliss, the gazing into the now of eternity which lies before him, and such like, and when, moreover, his created reason begins to recognise in itself and in all things a portion of the everlasting and uncreated reason, it comes to him as something wondrous strange, when, for the first time, he sees himself as he was before and as he is now, and he discovers that he was before like a poor, godless, needy creature, both blind and far from God; whereas now it seems to him that he is full of God, and that there is nothing which is not God; nay, more, that God and all things are absolutely one. And he catches at this view too hastily, and in an unseasonable way, and his mind runs wild, like new wine which is still fermenting and has not settled, and he seizes upon that which is present to his thoughts, or which is suggested to him, without the needful distinction, by some One, who is Himself that very One to whom alone he should give ear, and to no one else; and then he resolves according to his self-satisfied judgment to dismiss from his thoughts every thing created, and he regards no longer hell or heaven, devil or angel, in their own created nature; nay, he disdains also Christ's suffering Humanity as soon as he has beheld God in it. Yet for all this, he has not gone to the bottom in his knowledge of things; namely, in regard to their distinctions, and what is permanent and what is transient in them. It fares, in fact, with such men as with the honey-bees. When the bees are fully grown, and for the first time burst forth out of the hive, they fly at random on this side and on that, they know not whither; and some go astray in their flight and are lost, while others return again in due course to the hive. The same thing happens with these persons when, with their undisciplined reason, they try to behold God as all in all, and endeavour, according to their imperfect intelligence, to let go this and that, they know not how. It is true, indeed, that every thing must be let go by him who would attain perfection; but they do not understand how this letting-go of things is to be managed, and they try to let go this and that without discretion, and to rid themselves of all things without attending to the necessary distinctions. This fault arises

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either from unlearned simplicity or unmortified craftiness. Hence many a one imagines that he has attained every thing if only he can go forth out of himself in this way, and detach himself from himself. But it is not so. For he has only slunk over the outer ditch of the still unstormed fortress, under cover of the screen behind which he skilfully and secretly conceals himself, and he cannot yet, by the orderly annihilation of his spiritual being, pass away into a veritable poverty of spirit, in which every foreign object is in a certain sense let go, and to which the possession of the everlasting and simple Godhead corresponds, now that all human activity has come to an end, as will be shown hereafter with the requisite distinctions.

Behold, this is the point where some persons, without knowing it, stick fast for many years, and can neither come in nor go out. But I will show thee, by the help of a distinction, the right road, so that thou mayest not be able to go astray.



CHAPTER LII.

A good distinction between true and false detachment.

KNOW, then, that there are three kinds of passing away. The first is a complete passing away. This takes place when a thing passes away so entirely that it ceases to exist; as a shadow passes away and is no more. In this sense of the word, the spirit of a man, to which we give the name of a rational soul, does not pass away at its going forth, but it continues for ever, in virtue of the high nobility of its rational nature and godlike powers. For God, after whose image it is fashioned, is a superessential reason, and therefore it is impossible for the soul to cease to exist, as the mortal body does.

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Another kind of passing away may be termed a half passing away, and has its own hour and time. This is the case with those who are rapt in contemplation into the pure Godhead, as Paul was; or again, in another way, when a man becomes abstracted in thought, as often happens, and thus passes away out of himself. This kind, however, is transitory; for when Paul came to himself again, he found himself the same Paul, a man as before.

The third kind may be called a metaphorical passing away. This takes place when a man, by the renunciation of his free-will, abandons himself to God at each moment that he finds himself, just as if he knew nothing about himself, and God alone was lord and master. This kind of passing away cannot be complete and perpetual, so long as the body and soul are united; for at the very moment when a man has detached himself from himself, and fancies that he has so entirely passed away into God that he will never resume himself, so far as his lower or sensual nature is concerned, all at once, in an instant, he and his perverse self are back again, and he is the same that he was before, and has to forsake himself again and again. To think, then, that in this imperfect state of detachment a man may lawfully do just whatever he pleases, would be a simple delusion. Though certainly it is true, that the more any one estranges himself from himself, and passes away out of himself into God, the more completely he is established in the very truth.

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Thou must know further that there are two kinds of detachment from self. The one is called antecedent, and the other subsequent detachment. Thou wilt understand this better from an example. A thief feels in himself through the wickedness of his nature an impulse and craving to steal. But his conscience opposes this, saying:—Thou shouldst not steal? for it is a sin. Now if the thief went out of himself and obeyed his conscience, this would be antecedent detachment, and the nobler of the two, for he would remain in his innocence. If, however, he will not detach himself from himself in this matter, but resolves to satisfy his wicked propensities, later on, when he has been caught and he sees that he must hang for it, the subsequent detachment comes, moving him to yield himself patiently to death,

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since it cannot be otherwise. This kind of detachment is good and saves the man's soul, but the other is beyond comparison nobler and better. Hence we ought not to be so daring as to abandon ourselves to sin, according to the sentiments of some foolish persons, who say that he who would arrive at perfect detachment must wade through all sins. This is false; for a man would be a fool to throw himself wantonly into a filthy pool, in order that he might afterwards become more beautiful.

Therefore the most pious of God's friends earnestly desire to be brought to naught, and to abide steadfastly in antecedent detachment, without ever resuming themselves in any thing so far as human frailty will permit; and whenever they fail in this, it is a source of lamentation to them. It is true, indeed, that they have this advantage over other men, that they can rid themselves more speedily of the obstacle (*i.e.* of the sin which stands between them and God); for out of their lamentation itself springs up at once a subsequent detachment, which replaces them quickly where they were before, and this happens when a man, finding himself still a man, bears with himself as such for God's glory.

Moreover this subsequent detachment becomes in a certain sense profitable to them, through the self-knowledge which results from it; and here their lamentation ceases to be a lamentation, and they are born again into their former state of simplicity, and become once more what they were before. If, however, a man who is thus incomplete were to try by subtlety to help himself, alleging, What harm can it do a man if he resumes himself in what is only accidental, and thereby commits some sin exteriorly, provided that the essence of the man remains as it was, without being resumed in any point? To this I answer, that he neither understands himself nor what he says. And all learned doctors will agree to this, if only they understand what the term accident means. For the name of accident is given to that which may be added to or taken from the substantial essence without destroying the substance, as colour on a board. But here the case is different; for the soul and body, which in their ignorance they term accidents, are two essential parts which make up a man's essence, and do not belong to him as accidents. Therefore every man, however perfectly he may be able to detach himself from, himself, and to bring himself back again, has still that in him by which he can act virtuously or sinfully. For the annihilation of the spirit, its passing away into the simple Godhead, and all its nobility and perfection, are not to be regarded as a transformation of man's created essence into God, in virtue of which all that he is is God, only that he does not perceive it through his grossness, or, in other words, that he has become God, and his own essence is annihilated; but they are to be understood of a going out of self, and a contempt for self, such as has been described. And thus it is that the spirit of a man is taken out of itself and passes away duly and rightfully, and then for the first time it is well with him. For God has now become all things to him, and all things have become, as it were, God to him; for all things present themselves to him now in the manner in which

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they are in God, and yet they all remain each one what it is in its own natural essence. This is what those who are blindly ignorant and unexercised in reasoning cannot or will not admit into their bewildered minds according to the above true distinction.

Thou mayest now, with the help of this good distinction, proceed to consider the following rational maxims and instructions, which have for their object to free men from their grossness of spirit, and to lead them onwards to their highest bliss.

CHAPTER LIII.

Maxims, conformable to right reason, for the guidance of an exterior man into his interior.

LET thy walk be an interior one, and be not given to break out either in words or in thy walk.

Act according to the truth in simplicity, and whatever happens, be not helpful to thyself; for he who helps himself too much will not be helped by the Truth.

When thou art with men pay no heed to what thou seest or nearest, and cleave to that alone which has shown itself to thee (*i.e.* remember God alone who has shown Himself to thee under these outward things).

Be careful that in thy actions thy reason goes first; for when the sensual appetite gets the start, every evil comes of it.

God wishes not to deprive us of pleasure; but He wishes to give us pleasure in its totality, that is to say, all pleasure.

The more mightily thou humblest thyself, the higher thou shalt be exalted.

He who wishes to dwell in his inmost interior, must rid himself of all multiplicity. We must habitually reject all that is not the one thing.

Where the sensual appetite is the moving principle of a man's actions, there is toil, suffering, and mental darkness.

What greater pleasure is there than to find myself the one thing that I ought to be, and the whole thing that I ought to be (*i.e.* one with God, who is one and all)?

A man should remain steadfast in his state of freedom from mental images, and of self-restraint. Herein lies the greatest delight.



In what does a truly detached man exercise himself? In annihilating himself.

When our love is given to a sensible image or person, it is accident, loving accident, and this we have no right to do; nevertheless I bear with myself in this until I get quit of it. It is, however, an interiorly simple act, when a man does not love the image, which is present to him, but when all things are to him one, and that one is God.



When a man detaches himself from himself without allowing the sensual appetite to break out, he destroys self. If he acted otherwise, he would be helping himself by means of his sensual appetite.

Keep thy feelings within thee both in weal and woe; for a man who does this loves more in one year than one who lets his feelings break out loves in three.

Wilt thou be of use to all creatures, turn thyself away from all creatures.

If a man cannot comprehend the matter, let him be passive, and the matter will comprehend him.

Take heed not to break out exteriorly in a way unlike the (divine and interior) pattern.

A man should be on his guard against the inclination which leads him to catch at every thing which may save him from having to yield to the invitations of the simple Truth. If thou wilt not submit to be simple, thou wilt have to submit to be manifold.



Live as if there were no creature on earth but thee.

Say to creatures:—What thou art to me I will not be to thee (*Res tibi, te Deo*).

Nature loves nature and makes itself its aim. Some men's nature has not been sufficiently crushed, and when this happens, they continue exterior.

The power of refraining from things gives a man more power than the possession of the things would.

One deflection from the right course brings along with it another.

See that nature in thee is unburdened, and that thy outward man is conformable to thy inward man.

Look well to the inward man; for on this depends thy exterior and interior life.

It belongs to perfect detachment to keep nature at all times bridled.

A man should never lose sight of himself, lest nature should run away.

Thou lamentest that thou art still too active, undetached, and impatient. Nevertheless despair not. The more keenly thou feelest this the better.

Perishable love is a root of all vices, and a cloak of all truth.

The setting of the sensual nature is the rising of the truth. When the powers of the soul have ceased to work, and the elements have been purified, the powers remain fixed upon their eternal object, if they have been directed towards it according to their ability.

All the powers have one object and one work, and this is to be conformed to the eternal Truth.

There is nothing pleasurable save what is uniform with the most inmost depths of the Divine nature.

Some men are to be met with who have had an interior drawing from God, and have not followed it. The interior and exterior of these men are far apart, and it is in this that many fail.

Our nature in its present state is richly endowed. The more it goes out of itself, the further it is from God; and the more it turns inwards, the nearer to Him it is.

He who has attained to the purification of the senses in God performs so much the better all the operations of the senses.

If a man subjects his nature, when it has been purified, to the Truth, his nature is guided in such sort that it performs much more perfectly all exterior actions. Otherwise it wastes itself upon temporal matters, and can do nothing really well.

Purity, intelligence, and virtue give a feeling of wealth to those who possess them. When the sensible possession of these virtues is withdrawn from such persons by God, it sometimes happens that they die to all creatures. Those who profit by this withdrawal are brought Higher to God by it.

What is that which drives a man to pursue evil courses? It is the craving for some thing which may satisfy him. Yet we can only find this in abnegation, and not in evil courses.

The reason why some men so often fall into a faulty sadness is that they do not at all times keep an eye upon themselves to avoid in every thing doing what deserves punishment.

To be worsted is to gain the victory in the estimation of God's friends ([Matt. v. 39](#)).

Abide within thyself. The plea of seeking things outside thee presents itself as a necessity; but it is only a way of helping self.



It is bad to begin many things and to bring none to an end.



We should not move until we have observed whether it be God or nature that is working in us.

Take care that nature works in thee its works from out itself without the concurrence of other causes.

A truly detached man should attend to four things. First, he should be very virtuous in his walk, that things may flow from him with out him. Secondly, he should also be virtuous and quiet with regard to his senses, and not carry tales hither and thither, for this is calculated to fill his mind with images. Thus his interior senses will be able to act inactively. Thirdly, he should not be given to attach himself; and he should take care that there is nothing heterogeneous in him. Fourthly, he should not be contentious, but he should be have lovingly to those by whom God may be pleased to purify him.

Remain steadfastly in thyself until thou art drawn out of thyself without any act of thine.

Observe whether the intimacy between good people arises from inclination or from simplicity. The first is far too common.

Offer not thyself too much to any one. Those please least who offer most.



An interior humble walk beseems thee. When a thing acts in opposition to its nature, it is always unbecoming to it.

Happy the man whose words and ways are few. The more words and ways there are in any man, the more there is of what is accidental. Stay within thyself, and be not like such men, otherwise thou wilt suffer for it.

Some men act from their sensible feelings both in suffering and in joy; but a man should not look to himself in this.

In the spiritual annihilation of self the final consummation is attained. When Christ had said, "Into Thy hands I commend My spirit," He added immediately, "It is consummated."

God and the devil are in man. He who guides himself and he who forsakes himself discover the difference (*i.e.* the self-willed find in themselves hell, and the detached heaven).

He who desires to have rest at all times must be on his guard against himself in this as in every thing else (*i.e.* this desire is a species of self-seeking).

He who is interior amid exterior things is much more interior than he who is only interior when within himself.

It is good for a man to guide himself in nothing; and he is on the right road who contemplates under the forms of things their eternal essences.

There are many more reasoning men than simple men. Those are called reasoning men in whom reason rules. But the simple man, through his inaction, is freed from the multiplicity of images which are generated by sensible objects, and he does not contemplate things as sensible, for simplicity has become his nature, and he is like a vessel (full of God) and like a child.

He who wishes to possess all things must become as nothing to himself and all things.

How happy is the man who abides steadfast against multiplicity! What a sensible entrance he has into familiar intercourse with heaven!

A good intention often impedes true union.

Our eyes should not look outwards, except to rid ourselves of interior images.

We should bear as readily with that part of us which comes from Adam (*i.e.* the consequences of the fall) as with that by which we attain eternal bliss.

A detached man is always interiorly alike.

When a man still complains and is impatient, all this springs from imperfection. It must therefore be got rid of.

All those who allow themselves a wrong liberty make themselves their own aim and object.

A detached man must be unformed from the forms and images of creatures; he must be formed upon Christ, and transformed into the Godhead.

He who regards himself in Christ lets all things follow their rightful course.

When a man has died to self and begun to live in Christ, it is well with him.

When a man strives by turning inwards to conform himself to the Truth, it is clearly brought home to him that he has gone forth out of himself, and he observes that there is still some thing of the creature in him, on which the attraction acted. In this he bears with himself, and perceives that he has not yet ceased from all action. Now, thus to bear with self



is to become simple. The going out of self produces a kind of weariness; but when he has turned away from creatures this weariness passes off.

What is a truly detached man's object in all things? It is to die to himself; and when he dies to himself all things die to him.

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What is the least obstacle? It is a thought. What is the greatest obstacle? It is when the soul abides in the obstinacy of its self-will.

A detached man should not let any moment pass away unmarked.

A detached man should not be always looking to see what he needs, but he should be always looking to see what he can do without.

If a detached man wishes to conform himself to the Truth, he must in the first place be diligent in turning inwards from things of sense, for God is a spirit. Secondly, he must take note whether he has attached himself to any obstacle (*i.e.* any thing which stands between him and God). Thirdly, he must observe whether he is his own guide in any thing, owing to the sensual appetite having got the start. Fourthly, he must, in the light which fills his soul, consider the presence of the all-penetrating Divine essence in him, and that he is one of Its vessels.

The more a man turns away from himself and all created things, the more perfect are the union and bliss to which he attains.

Wouldst thou be a detached man? take care that, however God may act towards thee, whether directly by Himself or indirectly by His creatures, thou abidest always the same, by a complete renunciation of what is thine.

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Keep thy senses closed to every image which may present itself.

Be empty of every thing which the outward-gazing mind selects, which takes captive the will, and which brings earthly joy or delight into the heart:

Rest on nothing which is not God.

If thou art where a sin or imperfection is committed, add not aught of thine to it, and have nothing to do with it.

He who always dwells with himself becomes possessed of very ample means.

The recreation which a detached man grants to his nature should be confined to strict necessity, and it should be taken in harmless occupations, from which he can readily and without attachment turn away to God.

The more or less detachment a man has, the more or less will he be disturbed by transitory things.

It happened once to a half-detached man that, on a certain occasion when he had been too self-conscious in suffering, it was said to him:—Thou shouldst be so attentive to Me and so forgetful of thyself, that when thou knowest it is well with Me thou shouldst care nothing how it fares with thee.

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In the case of a detached man who draws his senses inwards from external objects and establishes himself in the inner castle of his soul, the less he finds within to cling to, the more painful are his interior sufferings, and the more quickly he dies, the more swiftly he bursts through to God.

To give the senses a wide field withdraws a man from his interior.

See that thou undertakest nothing which will carry thee out of thyself.

If things come in search of thee, let them, not find thee.

Be quick in turning inwards into thyself.

Natural life shows itself in movement and in the operations of the senses. He who detaches himself from himself in this, and dies to himself in stillness, begins a supernatural life.

Some persons find no hindrance in going out of themselves, but they want steadfastness in this state.

Establish thyself in absolute detachment; for an unbounded longing, even for what is divine, when it is excessive, may become a secret obstacle.

A detached man should keep the powers of his soul under such restraint that, on looking within, this is apparent to him.

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A detached man remains always inactive as regards himself, just as if he were unconscious of himself; for in that object, which is God, all things are well and harmoniously ordered in him.

Give heed also to thy outward man that it be at one with thy inward man, by the subjection of all fleshly appetites.

To return again into God by detachment is often more pleasing to Him than a self-satisfied stability.

Gather together and draw in thy soul from the external senses, through which it has dissipated itself upon the multiplicity of outward things.

Go in again, and return over and over again into unity, and enjoy God.

Be steadfast, and never rest content until thou hast obtained the now of eternity as thy present possession in this life, so far as this is possible to human infirmity.



CHAPTER LIV.

Of the high questions which the well-exercised daughter put to her spiritual father.

AFTER the introduction of the outward into the inward man had taken place in a way conformable to right reason, high thoughts arose in the daughter's mind, and she inquired whether she might yet venture to ask questions about them. The Servitor replied:—Yes; if thou hast been duly led through the proper intermediate stages, it is quite lawful now for thy spiritual intelligence to ask about high things. Ask what thou wilt. She made answer:—Tell me what is God? and where is God? and how is God?—I mean how He is single and yet three fold?

The Servitor replied:—God knows, these are high questions. As to the first—what is God?—thou must know that all the learned doctors who ever were cannot fully explain it; for God is above all sense and reason. And yet a diligent man, by hard seeking, gains some knowledge of God, though in a very far-off way; and it is in this knowledge that man's supreme bliss consists. Thus it was that in days of old certain virtuous heathen doctors sought after God, especially the intellectual Aristotle. He pried minutely into the course of nature, in order to discover who he is who is the lord of nature. He searched after Him diligently, and found Him. He proved, from the well-ordered course of nature, that there must necessarily be one only prince and lord of all creatures, and that is what we mean by the name God.

Of this God and Lord we know thus much:—that He is a substantial being; that He is everlasting, without before or after; that He is simple and unchangeable; an unembodied and essential Spirit; whose being is to live and work; whose essential reason knows all things in itself and by itself; whose being's fathom less delight is in itself; and who is to Him self, and to all who shall enjoy Him in the way of contemplation, a supernatural, unspeakable, and entrancing bliss.

The daughter looked upwards and said:—This is good to hear, for it stirs the heart and lifts the soul sursum, on high above itself. Therefore, dear father, tell me more about it.

He answered:—Behold, then. The divine essence, of which it is said that it is a rational substance, of such nature that no mortal eye can see it in itself, may nevertheless be discerned in its effects, just as we trace a good craftsman in his works. For, as Paul says, creatures are like a mirror which reflect God. And this mode of gaining knowledge we term reflection (*speculiren*).

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But let us pause here awhile, and reflect upon the high and venerable Master as mirrored in his works. Look above thee and around thee to the four quarters of the universe, and see how wide and high the beautiful heaven is in its swift course, and how nobly its Master has adorned it with the seven planets, each of which, not to reckon in the moon, is much bigger than the whole earth, and how He has decked it with the countless multitude of the bright stars. Oh! when in summer time the beautiful sun bursts forth unclouded and serene, what fruitfulness and blessings it bestows unceasingly upon the earth! See how the leaves and grass shoot up, and the lovely flowers smile; how forest, heath, and meadow ring again with the sweet song of nightingales and other little birds; how all those little creatures, which stern winter had shut up, issue forth rejoicing, and pair together; and how men too, both young and old, entranced with joy, disport themselves right merrily. All, gentle God, if Thou art so lovely in Thy creatures, how exceeding beautiful and ravishing Thou must be in Thyself! But look again, I pray thee, and behold the four elements—earth, water, air, and fire, with all the wondrous things which they contain in manifold variety—men, beasts, birds, fishes, and sea-monsters; and mark how they all cry aloud together, Praise and honour be to the unfathomable immensity that is in Thee! Who is it, Lord, that sustains all this? Who feeds it all? It is Thou who providest for all, each in its own way; for great and small, for rich and poor. It is Thou, O God, who doest this. Thou, O God, art God indeed!

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Come, daughter, thou hast now found thy God, whom thy heart has so long sought after. Look upwards, then, with sparkling eyes and radiant face and bounding heart, and behold Him and embrace Him with the infinite out stretched arms of thy soul and thy affections, and give thanks and praise to Him, the noble Prince of all creatures. See how, by gazing on this mirror, there springs up speedily, in a soul susceptible of such impressions, an intense inward jubilee; for by jubilee is meant a joy which no tongue can tell, but which pours itself with might through heart and soul. Alas! I feel now within me that, be it painful or pleasant, my soul's closed mouth is opened to thee, and I must needs tell thee, for God's glory, somewhat of my hidden secrets, which I never yet have told to any one. See, I knew a friar preacher who, at the beginning of his conversion, used commonly to receive from God twice every day, morning and evening, during ten years, an outpouring of grace like this, and it lasted for about the space of two nocturns.⁹ At these moments he was so utterly absorbed in God, the Eternal Wisdom, that he could not speak of it. Sometimes he would lovingly converse with God within him, while at other times he would sigh piteously, or weep longingly, or again smile silently. It often seemed to him as if he were floating in the air, and swimming between time and eternity in the deep sea of God's unfathomable marvellousness. And his heart became so full through this, that he would at times lay his hand upon it, as it beat wildly, saying:—Alas, my heart, how will it fare with thee to-day? One day

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9 About half an hour.

it seemed to him that the Eternal Father's heart was, in a spiritual and ineffable manner, pressed tenderly, and with naught between them, upon his heart, as it lay open over against the Father's heart in longing desire, and it appeared to him that the Father's heart, in a way of love transcending all forms and images, spoke in his heart the uncreated Word, the Eternal Wisdom. Then he began to exclaim joyously in spiritual jubilee:—Be hold now, my loveliest love! thus do I lay bare to Thee my heart, and in simplicity and nakedness with regard to all created things I embrace Thy formless Godhead. Alas, my love! Thou who art far above all other loves! Earthly lovers, however greatly they may love, must needs bear to be distinct and separate from each other; but Thou, O unfathomable fulness of all love, meltest away into Thy beloved's heart, and, in virtue of Thy being absolutely all in all, pourest Thyself so utterly into the soul's essence that no part of Thee, the loved One, remains outside, and is not lovingly made one with Thy beloved.

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The daughter answered:—Ah, God! what a great grace it is for any one to be thus caught up into God in jubilee. But I would fain know whether this is the most perfect kind of union or not. The Servitor replied:—No; it is only a preliminary preparation for arriving at an essential mode of being taken up into God. She answered:—What mean you by essential and non-essential? He replied:—I call him an essential man who, by the good and persevering exercise of all the virtues, has so completely mastered them, that the practice of them in their highest perfection has become pleasant to him, and that they dwell in him abidingly, as the sunshine in the sun. On the other hand, I call him a non-essential man in whom the light of virtue shines in a borrowed, unsteadfast, and imperfect way, as the moonlight in the moon. The sweet abundance of sensible grace which I have just described is such a dainty treat to the spirit of a non-essential man, that he would fain always have it; and as its presence begets in him delight, even so its withdrawal causes in him undue sadness, as I will now show you by an example. It happened once, when the Servitor had gone into the chapter-house, and his heart was full of heavenly jubilee, that the porter came and summoned him to the door to a woman who wanted to confess to him. The Servitor tore himself unwillingly from his interior joys, and, receiving the porter harshly, replied, that the woman must send for some one else, as he would not confess her then. Now she had a burdened and sinful heart, and her message was, that she had a particular drawing to seek consolation from him, and that she would confess to no one else. But when she heard that he would not come to her, she began to weep from grief of heart, and going aside into a corner, sat down there in wretchedness, and wept long and bitterly. Meanwhile God with drew very quickly from the Servitor the delights of sensible grace, and his heart became as hard as a flint; and when he sought to know the meaning of this, God answered him:—As thou hast driven from thee uncomforted the poor woman with her burdened heart, even so I have withdrawn from thee My divine consolations. The Servitor sighed deeply and beat his breast, and ran with speed to the door, and, as he did not find the woman there, was in great distress. The porter

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ran about in every direction looking for her, and when at last he found her, where she was sitting weeping, he brought her back with him to the door, and the Servitor, receiving her with great kindness, graciously consoled her repentant heart. Then he went back from her to the chapter-house, and immediately in an instant the kind Lord was there again with His divine consolations, just as before.

The daughter answered:—He may well bear sufferings to whom God gives such rapturous jubilee. The Servitor replied:—Oh! it had all to be paid for afterwards with great suffering, as has been already related. At length, however, when all this had passed away, and God's appointed time had come, this same grace of jubilee returned, and was with him in an abiding manner both at home and abroad, in company and when alone. Ofttimes in the bath or at table the same grace was with him; but its working was now interior, and no longer broke forth into exterior manifestations.



CHAPTER LV.

An explanation where and how God is.

THE good daughter said:—Sir, I have now indeed found out what God is; but I would fain know also where God is. He answered:—Thou shalt hear this. The learned doctors say that God has no *where*, but that He is all in all. Open then the inward ears of thy soul and give good heed. These same doctors tell us in the art of logic, that we come to know what a thing is through its name. Now, one doctor says that being is the first name of God. Turn, then, thine eyes to being in its pure and naked simplicity, and take no note of this or that partial being. Consider only being in itself, unmixed with all non-being. For as all non-being is the negation of all-being, even so being in itself is the negation of all non-being. A thing which has yet to be, or which once was, is not now at this moment in actual being. Moreover, we can have no knowledge of mixed being or non-being, unless we take into account that which is all-being. For if we would understand what any thing is, the first point which our mind meets with in it is being, and this is a being which is the efficient cause of all things. It is not the partial and particular being of this or that creature; for partial being is always mixed with some other element, and has a capacity for receiving something new into it. Therefore, the nameless Divine Being must be in itself a being that is all-being, and that sustains all particular beings by its presence.



It is a proof of the singular blindness of man's reason, that it cannot examine into that which it contemplates first before every thing, and without which it cannot perceive any thing. It is with the reason as with the eye. When the eye is intent upon observing a variety of coloured objects, it does not notice the light which enables it to see all these objects, and even if it looks at the light, it still does not see it. Thus, too, is it with our soul's eye; when it looks at this or that particular being, it takes no heed of the being, which is every where one, absolute and simple, and which enables it to apprehend all other beings. Hence a wise doctor says, that the eye of our intelligence, owing to its infirmity, is affected towards that being which is in itself the most manifest of all beings, as the eye of a bat or a night-owl towards the bright light of the sun; for particular beings distract and dazzle the mind, so that it cannot see the Divine darkness, which is in itself the brightest of all brightness.



Open now thy inward eyes and gaze as best thou canst on being in its naked simple purity, and thou wilt see at once that it comes from no one, and has no before nor after, and no capacity of change, either from within or from without, because it is a simple being. Thou wilt note too that it is the most actual, the most present, and the most perfect of all beings, with out flaw or alteration, because it is absolutely one in naked simplicity. And this truth

is so evident to an enlightened reason, that it is impossible for it to think otherwise; for one point proves and implies the other. Thus, because it is a simple being, it must needs be the first of beings, and without origin and everlasting; and because it is the first and everlasting and simple, it must be the most present. It is at the very highest summit of perfection and simplicity, to which nothing can be added and from which nothing can be taken away. If thou canst understand what I have just told thee about the pure Godhead, thou wilt have been guided a long way into the incomprehensible light of God's hidden truth. This pure and simple being is the first and highest cause of all beings which have a cause (created beings), and by its peculiar presence it encloses, as the beginning and end of all things, whatever comes into being in time. It is altogether in all things, and altogether outside all things. Hence a certain doctor says:—God is a circular ring, whose centre is every where and circumference nowhere.

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The maiden answered:—Praised be God, I have been shown, as far as can be, what God is and where God is. I would fain now learn how, if God is so exceeding simple, He can be at the same time threefold.

The Servitor replied:—Each several being, the more simple it is in itself, the more manifold it is in its productive efficacy. That which has nothing gives nothing, and that which has much can give much. Now, I have already spoken of that inflowing and overflowing fountain-head of good which God is in Himself, and of God's unfathomable supernatural goodness which constrains Him not to keep all this to Himself, but to communicate it joyfully both within and with out Himself. But the highest and most perfect outpouring of the supreme Good must of necessity take place within itself, and this can be none other than a present, interior, substantial, personal, and natural outpouring, necessary, yet without compulsion, alike infinite and perfect. All other outpourings which take place in time and in creatures are but a reflection of the eternal outpouring of the unfathomable Divine goodness. And learned doctors say that, in the outflow of creatures from their primal fountainhead, there is a circular return-movement of the end to the beginning; for as the outflowing of the Person from God is an image and representation of the origin of creatures, so also it foreshadows the flowing back again of creatures into God.

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Now, observe the difference between the creature's outpouring and God's outpouring. Inasmuch as a creature is only a partial being, its giving and its outpouring is also partial and in measure. Thus a human father gives his son, when he begets him, only a part of his own being; he does not give him wholly and entirely all that he is, for he himself is but a partial good. But since the Divine outpouring is manifestly of a far more interior and nobler kind than the creature's outpouring, in proportion to the greatness of the good which God is in Himself and His immeasurable superiority over all other goods, it follows as a necessary

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consequence from this that the outpouring must be like the being; and this cannot be unless God pours out His being according to the personal relations.

If now with cleansed eye thou canst look into and gaze upon the most pure goodness of the supreme Good, which goodness is of its own nature a present active principle of the natural and spontaneous love with which the supreme Good loves itself, thou wilt behold the exuberant supernatural outpouring of the Word from the Father, by which act of begetting and speaking all things are spoken forth and produced; and thou wilt see too in the supreme Good and in the highest outpouring the divine Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, necessarily bursting forth. And if it be that from the supreme essential goodness the highest and most perfect outpouring gushes forth, it follows that there must be in the aforementioned Trinity the most supreme and intimate community of being, as well as the most perfect similarity and identity of that being, which the Persons possess in the jubilee of their outpouring, without any division or partition of the substance and the almightiness of the three Persons of the Godhead.

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The maiden exclaimed:—O wonderful! I swim in the Godhead as an eagle in the air. He answered:—It is impossible to express in words how the Trinity of the Divine Persons can subsist in the unity of one essence. Nevertheless, to say what can be said about it, St. Augustin lays down that the Father is the fountain-head of all the Godhead of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, personally and essentially. St. Denys says, that in the Father there is an outflowing of the Godhead, and that this outflowing or stream pours itself out naturally in the outrunning Word, who is the Son by nature. He also pours Himself out according to the loving bountifulness of the will into the Son, and the Son in turn pours Himself out according to the lovingness of the will into the Father, and this is called a reciprocal love, and is the Holy Ghost. The hidden meaning of this is disclosed and proved to us by that bright light the dear St. Thomas, the teacher, who speaks thus:—In the outpouring of the Word from the Father's heart and reason, it must needs be that God, with His luminous intellect, contemplates Himself, bending back, as it were, upon His Divine essence; for if the reason of the Father had not the Divine essence for its object, the Word conceived would be a creature and not God, which would be false. But in the way described, the Word is a Divine being from a Divine being. Again, this backward look upon the Divine essence in the reason of the Father must take place in a manner productive of a natural likeness, otherwise the Word would not be the Son. Here, then, we have unity of essence with diversity of Persons; and, as a good attestation of this distinction, the high-soaring eagle, St. John, has said:—"The Word was in the beginning with God."

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With regard to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, thou shouldst know that the substance of the Divine intellect is an act of cognition (*intellectio*), and this, moreover, must have an inclination for its object under the form in which it has been received into the intellect. This inclination is the will, and the longing of the will is to seek after pleasure as best it can. Thou shouldst also observe that the object loved is not in the person loving under the likeness of its natural form, as is the case with the object of the intellect in the light of the cognition. Now, inasmuch as the Word flows out from the looking forth of the Father according to the form of the nature, without confusion of Persons, this outpouring of the Father is called a begetting. But since this mode of procession does not occur in the out flowing of the will and of the love, which is the third Person, who is poured forth like a stream, of love by the Father, and also by His express image the Son, from out His very inmost depths, therefore this outflowing cannot be termed a Son or begotten. And since this love is in the will after an intellectual or spiritual fashion, like an inclination or love-bond present inwardly in the lover towards the object of his love, the third Person in the procession, who proceeds according to the loving manner of the will, fittingly receives the name of Spirit. But when a man has reached this point he is transformed by the Divine light in that mysterious way which they only can understand who have experienced it.

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The daughter said:—Ah, sir, this is indeed a sublime fulness of Christian doctrine. Nevertheless, there are to be met with certain intellectual men who deny what has been just said about God, and whose view is, that he who would attain to perfect union will find the contemplation of God a hurtful impediment. He should, on the contrary, according to them, divest himself of God and of the spirit, and cast behind him all visions, and turn himself only to the inwardly-shining truth, which he is himself.

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He answered:—This doctrine is false if the words are taken in their ordinary sense. Therefore keep clear of it, and hearken to what the Christian faith teaches on this point. The common view which men take of God is that He is the Lord and Creator of the whole world, who suffers no wickedness to pass unpunished, and no good deed unrewarded. He, then, who commits sin regards God as a terrible God; as the good Job said, “I have always feared God as shipmen fear the great waves” (*Job xxxi. 23*). He also who serves God for reward has a great and munificent God, able to recompense him abundantly. But a well-exercised and experienced man, who by manifold dyings has rid himself of the sinful things which God hates, and who serves God at all times with burning love, this man loves God in his heart, and not after the afore-mentioned fashion. And he has in a certain sense divested himself of God, and he loves Him as his heart’s own loved one; for servile fear has passed from him, as St. Paul says. Thus to the spiritual man God remains truly God and Lord, and yet at the same time he has emptied himself of God, according to the grosser acceptation of the term, for he has attained to a more perfect conception of Him.

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Now as to the way in which a man should be divested of the spirit, hearken to the true account of it. When a man at the outset of his interior life begins to observe that he is a creature composed of body and soul, and that his body is mortal, but that his soul is an ever lasting spirit, he gives his body and all his animal nature their dismissal, and cleaves to the spirit, and brings his body into subjection to it; and every thing he does is interiorly in thought directed to this one end, how he may discover the superessential Spirit, and how lay hold of It, and how unite his spirit with It. A man of this kind is called a spiritual and holy man. Now, supposing that all goes right with him, after he has exercised himself in this for a long time, and yet the superessential Spirit, though ever playing as it were before him, has always eluded his grasp, his created spirit begins at last to realise its own helplessness, to abandon itself by an utter renunciation of self to the everlasting Divine might, and to turn away from itself, with contempt for what comes from the senses, to the immensity of the Supreme Being. In this taking-up of the spirit into God it attains to a forgetfulness and loss of self, of which St. Paul speaks, "I live, but not I" ([Gal. ii. 20](#)); and of which Christ has said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit" ([Matt. ii. 3](#)). Thus it is that a man's spirit, while it remains what it was as to its essence, is nevertheless divested of itself in regard to the possession of itself through the senses.

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I will also explain to you the difference between pure truth and doubtful visions. To gaze without any medium upon the unveiled Godhead is undoubtedly absolute and unmingled truth; and the more intellectual and unimaginary a vision is, and the more nearly it approaches to the unveiled contemplation, the more noble is its character. Some of the prophets had imaginary visions, as Jeremias and others. And such imaginary visions are still often granted to God's intimate friends, sometimes when asleep and sometimes when awake, their outward senses being at the time stilled to rest and abstracted. A learned doctor says, that angelic appearances happen to some persons oftener in sleep than when awake, and for this reason:—because a man in sleep is in a state of greater quietude with regard to the multiplicity of his external operations than when awake. But when it is that a vision which takes place in sleep may and ought to be deemed a true vision—as the dream in the Old Testament which King Pharaoh had about the seven fat and seven lean kine, and many similar dreams mentioned in Holy Writ—and also how the truth of such visions is to be discerned,—for dreams are usually deceptive, though undoubtedly they some times announce the truth,—all this thou mayest learn from what St. Augustin writes about his holy mother. God, she told him, had given her this gift: that when He showed her any thing in sleep or half-sleep, she received at the same time the inward power of discerning whether it was merely a common dream, which she should disregard, or an imaginary vision, to which she should attend. Those persons who have this gift from God can all the better explain to themselves how this is. But no one can communicate it to another by words. Those only understand it who have had experience of it.

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CHAPTER LVI.

Of the very highest flight of a soul experienced in the ways of God.

THE wise daughter said:—There is nothing which I would more gladly learn from Scripture than the answer to this deep and pregnant question, where and how a well-exercised person's understanding may arrive at its highest end and aim in the deepest abyss of the God head, in such a manner that what is actually experienced will harmonise with the teaching of Holy Writ?

The Servitor drew from Scripture an answer conformable to right reason, and its purport according to its hidden meaning was as follows. Every one who has attained to the true nobility of spirit ponders in simplicity and inactivity the pregnant word which the Eternal Son spoke in the Gospel, "Where I am, there also shall My servant be" (John xii. 26). Now he who has not shrunk from following the Son to that bitter *where*, on which according to His manhood He took post in death upon, the cross, has, in virtue of this promise, the right and the possibility of enjoying, after a blissful and intellectual manner, in time and in eternity, the delightful *where* of the Son's pure Godhead, so far as this is possible more or less. But where is the *where* of the Son's pure Godhead? It is in the form-pregnant light of the divine Unity,—a light which may be termed in its unnameableness a nothingness; in its inward concentration, an essential stillness; in its indwelling outflow, a triune nature; in its peculiar property, a self-comprehending light; in its uncreated creativeness, an existence which makes things to be. And in the modeless darkness of this light all multiplicity ceases, and the spirit loses itself as self, and comes to an end as regards its own activity. This is the highest aim and the endless *where*, in which the spirituality of all spirits finds its end. Ever to lose oneself in this is everlasting bliss.

Thou must know, moreover, in order to understand this better, that in the form-pregnant light of the Divine Unity there is an indwelling out-springing impulse by which the Persons are poured forth out of the almighty and eternal Godhead. For the Trinity of the Persons is in the Unity of the nature, and the Unity of the nature is in the Trinity of the Persons. The Unity has its actuality in the Trinity, and the Trinity has its potentiality in the Unity; according to what St. Augustin says in his book about the Trinity—namely, that the Trinity of the Persons contains in itself the Unity as Their nature and essence, and hence it is that each Person is God, and according to the simplicity of the nature so also is the Godhead. Now the Unity shines forth in the Trinity after a divided fashion; but the Trinity, viewed as tending inwards and as indwelling, shines forth in the Unity after a simple fashion, just as the three Persons contain in themselves the Unity after the same simple fashion. The Father is the fountain-head of the Son, and the Son is an outflowing of the Father, gushing forth from Him eternally as regards the Personality, and dwelling in Him as regards the being or

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essence. The Father and the Son pour forth Their Spirit; and the Unity, which is the being of the primal fountain-head, is the being of all the three Persons. But as to how the Trinity is one, and the Trinity in the Unity of the nature is one, while nevertheless the Trinity comes forth from the Unity, this cannot be expressed in words, owing to the simplicity of that deep abyss. Hither it is, into this intellectual where, that the spirit, spiritualising itself, soars up, now flying on the summitless heights, now swimming in the bottomless depths of the sublime marvels of the Godhead. Nevertheless, the spirit retains there its own nature as a spirit, while it enjoys the co-eternal, co-omnipotent, indwelling and outflowing Persons, and high above the clouds and bustle of things below contemplates with fixed gaze the Divine marvellousness. For what greater marvel can there be than the pure Unity, into which the Trinity of the Persons merges itself in simplicity, and in which all the multiplicity of sensible objects ceases. And this is to be understood in the sense that the outflowing of the Persons poured forth is always tending back again into the Unity of the self-same essence, and that all creatures in regard to their indwelling outflow (*i.e.* their ideal procession) are from eternity in this one essence, and have in it an existence identical with God's life, God's knowledge, and God's essence, according to the words in the beginning of St. John's Gospel, "That which was made, was in Him life from everlasting."¹⁰ This pure Unity is a dark stillness and an inactive inactivity, which no one can understand, save he alone whom the Unity in itself illumines. Out of this still inactivity there shines forth freedom without any admixture of wickedness, for freedom is the fruit of the new birth of self-annihilation; and there shines forth likewise deep hidden truth without speck of falsehood, and this truth is born of the unveiling of the veiled Divine purity; for now at length, after the revelation of these things, the spirit is unclothed of that dusky light which has hitherto followed it, and in which it has till now viewed objects in a human and earthly way. And it finds that it has now become, strictly speaking, another, and something quite different, from what it till then understood itself to be according to its previous light; as St. Paul has said, "I live, but not I" ([Gal. ii. 20](#)); and in this manner it is unclothed and simplified in the modeless simplicity of the Divine essence, which makes its light to shine into all things in simplicity and stillness. In this simple and modeless contemplation the spirit takes no note of the permanent distinction of the Persons, viewed as separate. For, as Christian doctrine teaches, it is not the Person of the Father, taken by itself, which produces bliss, nor the Person of the Son, taken by itself, nor the Person of the Holy Ghost, taken by itself; but it is the three Persons, in dwelling in the Unity of the essence, that is eternal bliss. And this is the being itself of the Persons by nature, and it is that which gives being to creatures by grace, and it contains in itself the form and idea of all things in

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¹⁰ *Quod factum est, in ipso vita erat* ([Joan. i. 3, 4](#)). According to this deeply-suggestive reading, the clause *quod factum est* is referred to the words that follow instead of to those which precede. Many of the Fathers read the passage thus.

simplicity and essentially. Now, just as this form-pregnant light subsists as being, even so all things subsist in it according to their essential being, and not according to their accidental character; and since, moreover, it pours itself as light into all things, therefore its property is to subsist as light. And hence it is that all things shine forth in this absolute being in interior stillness, without detriment to its simplicity.

This intellectual *where*, in which, as has been just set forth, the tried servant of God should dwell with the eternal Son, may be regarded as the essentially existing unnameable Nothingness. And here it is that the spirit arrives at the naught of the Unity; and this Unity is termed naught because the spirit can not discover any mode of being under which to frame a conception of what it is. Nevertheless the spirit clearly feels that it is contained by another, quite different from what it is itself; for which reason that which contains it deserves more properly the name of something than naught, though it seems to the spirit naught because it cannot find any mode of conceiving what it is. Now when the spirit, by the loss of its self-consciousness, has in very truth established its abode in this glorious and dazzling obscurity, it is set free from every obstacle to union and from all its individual properties, as St. Bernard says; and this takes place less or more according as the spirit remains in the body or goes out of it when it passes away out of itself into God. And this loss of the spirit's self is after that Divine manner in which all things, so to speak, have come to be for it, as the Scripture says (1 Cor. xv. 28).

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In this merging of itself in God the spirit passes away, and yet not wholly; for it receives indeed some attributes of the Godhead, but it does not become God by nature. What befalls it is all of grace, for it is still a something which has been created out of nothing, and continues to be this everlastingly. Thus much then we may say: When the spirit has passed away out of itself and has been taken up into God, it is rid of that wondering doubt which it felt while losing itself, and it ceases to exist in regard to the sense, so far as its own knowledge of itself is concerned. For, to use ordinary language, the spirit is drawn upwards by the might of the all-luminous Divine essence above its natural capacity into the purity of the Divine naught, in which it is unclothed of all created modes, though without ceasing to retain its own proper mode of existence as a creature. This modeless mode is the being of the Persons, which they contain within Them as their nature in absolute simplicity and perfection. And it is by gazing upon this that the spirit is divested of itself, as has been said; and this takes place in the naught of the Unity, when the spirit ceases to be conscious of its own proper name and existence, in the perfect knowledge of this naught to which it has attained; for in it the spirit loses itself in a forgetfulness of self and all things; and this happens to it the

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moment it turns away from itself and all created things to the purity of the uncreated naught. On this wild mountain range of the Divine where, there is an abyss, perceptible to all pure spirits, disporting itself, so to speak, before them, and opening itself out to their gaze,—here it is they enter into the hidden depths of that which is unnameable and into that wild estrangement; and this is the fathomless abyss of all creatures, which naught but itself can fathom, and which lies hid from all that is not God, save only from those to whom God pleases to reveal it. And these persons must seek it in detachment, and in a certain sense they must behold it with God Himself; according to the words of Scripture, “We shall know then, even as we are known” (1 Cor. xiii. 12; 1 John iii. 2).

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The spirit has not this knowledge from its own self, for the Unity in the Trinity draws it up into Itself—that is to say, into the spirit’s true supernatural dwelling-place, in which it dwells above itself in that which has drawn it up thither. Here the spirit dies, and yet is all alive in the marvels of the Godhead. The dying of the spirit consists in this: that when it has passed away into God it no longer takes note of any distinction between individual existences; nevertheless, as regards the outpouring of the Persons and of creatures, it holds firmly the distinction between the three Persons, and also the separate existence of every creature, as is explained in the Servitor’s short treatise concerning Truth. Observe, moreover, that when the spirit has passed out of itself in the way described above, there shines forth out of the Unity a simple light, and this modeless light streams out from the three Persons into the purity of the spirit. When this light falls upon the spirit, it sinks down out of itself and all that belongs to self, the activity of all its powers comes to an end, and it is divested of its operations and its self-existence. This arises from the entering of the spirit into God, when it has passed away out of itself as regards the sense, and is lost in the stillness of the glorious dazzling obscurity and of the naked simple Unity. It is in this modeless *where* that the highest bliss is to be found.

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The maiden exclaimed:—Oh, wonderful! But how is one to enter into it? He answered:—I leave the answer of this question to that bright light St. Denys, who speaks thus to his disciple:—If thou wouldst enter into the hidden mysteriousness, mount boldly upwards; and disregarding thy outer and inner senses, and the workings of thy reason in itself, and all things visible and invisible, and all that is and is not, mount upwards to the simple Unity. Into this thou must press forward without knowing it, even into that silence which is above all being and above all science, with the purity and simplicity of a mind utterly abstracted from every creature, right into the very splendours of the Divine darkness. Here thou must let go every hold, and part with every thing created; for in the superessential Trinity of the God-transcending Godhead, on that mysterious, incomprehensible, all-dazzling pinnacle of pinnacles, marvellous things are heard from out the low whispering silence, and marvellous things are felt, new and yet unchangeable, amid the splendours of that dark obscurity, which

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is the fulness of light and glory manifested, where in all that is shines forth, and which fills to overflowing the sightless mind of the beholder with its incomprehensible, invisible, and effulgent luminousness.



CHAPTER LVII.

The conclusion of the contents of this book in a few simple words.

THE daughter said:—Ah, sir, you speak with so much Christian learning, both from your own experience and from Holy Writ, concerning the mystery of the pure Godhead, and the flowing forth and the flowing in again of the spirit, could you not draw out for me this mysterious teaching, as you understand it, under the form of a similitude, that I may be the better able to comprehend it? And I should also be very glad if you would gather together in a short discourse, and illustrate by figures, all the sublime doctrines which you have handled at length, that they may be more firmly fixed in my weak mind.

He answered:—How can one express in figures what has no figure, and set forth in words what has no mode of being, seeing that it is above the ken of sense and human reason? For every thing to which it may be likened is a thousand times more unlike than like it. Nevertheless, in order to expel from your imagination figures by figures, I will try, so far as is possible, to image forth for you in similitudes these form-transcending thoughts, as in truth they may be termed, and thus conclude a long discourse in a few words.

Hearken then. It is said by a learned doctor that God, in regard to His Godhead, is like a very wide ring, whose centre is every where, and circumference nowhere. Now picture to your imagination what follows. If a stone is flung with violence into the centre of a sheet of still water, a ring is formed in the water, and this ring by its own might makes a second ring, and the second makes a third; and in proportion to the force of the first fling will be the breadth and width of the circles; and the force of the fling might be even great enough to pass beyond the limit of the water. Imagine now that the first ring represents the infinite might of the Divine nature in the Father. This produces a second ring like it, according to the Person, and this ring is the Son. And the two produce the third, which is the Spirit of both, co-eternal and co-omnipotent with them. Thus the three circles signify Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. In this deep abyss, the Divine nature in the Father is everlastingly speaking forth and begetting the Word as to the personality, and dwelling in Him as to the essence—that self-same Word, I mean, who has taken upon Him human nature. If any one wishes to picture this to his imagination, let him figure to himself a man, from the depths of whose heart a form like the man's own springs forth, yet in such a way as to be always gazing fixedly upon and returning back again into him out of whom he sprang. This spiritual superessential begetting of the Divine Word is the full and entire cause of the bringing forth of all creatures and spirits into their natural state of existence. The supreme superessential Spirit has ennobled man, by illuminating him with a ray from His eternal Godhead; and this is God's image in the rational soul, which also is everlasting. Hence from out the great

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ring, which represents the eternal Godhead, there flow forth, to carry on the metaphor, little rings, which may be taken to signify the high nobility of rational creatures.

Now there are some persons who, to their own hurt, turn away from this nobility of their reason, and, plastering over the radiant image of God within them, turn themselves to the bodily pleasures of this world; and when they fancy that they possess the joy which they are pursuing, stern death comes and puts an end to them. But a man who acts conformably to reason turns away from the bright spark of his soul to that which is eternal, and out of which the spark came forth; and he gives all creatures their dismissal, and cleaves to the eternal Truth alone.



Attend, likewise, to the right and orderly way in which the flowing back again of the spirit into God should take place, as set forth in the following instruction:—The first thing which a man should do is to turn away entirely and with all his might from the pleasures of the world, and from sinful practices, to God, with persevering prayer, seclusion, and virtuous discreet exercises, in order thus to bring his body into subjection to the spirit. The second thing is to offer himself willingly and patiently to bear the countless multitude of contradictions which may come upon him from God or creatures. The third thing is to take the sufferings of Christ crucified as the model on which to form himself, and to copy Him in His sweet teaching, gentle walk, and pure life, which He proposed to us as our example, and in this manner to press onwards through Him. The fourth thing to be done is to divest himself of exterior occupations, and to establish himself in a stillness and repose of soul by an energetic detachment from all things, as if he were dead to himself, and could not guide himself, and had no other thought but for the honour and glory of Christ and His Heavenly Father. To this he should add an humble bearing towards all men, whether friends or foes. After a man has passed through these exercises, the next point at which he arrives is, that his outward senses, which until then were much too actively employed on exterior objects, cease from action; and his spirit's highest powers, dying to their natural operation, acquire a supernatural sensitiveness.



Here it is that the spirit, having parted with every thing of nature which had clung to it, presses further in through the ring, which signifies the eternal Godhead, and arrives at spiritual perfection. The sublimest wealth of the spirit in its own proper form consists in this:—that being now freed from the weight of sin, it soars upwards in the might of God into its divinely illuminated reason, where it enjoys a perpetual influx of heavenly consolations. It can now behold the secret relations of things, and interpret them according to reason with true discrimination, and it is duly set free from bondage by the Son in the Son.

It still, however, continues to view things in their outflow from God, and to contemplate them as existing each one in its own proper nature. This may be called the transport of the spirit, for it is now lifted up above time and place, and has passed away by intense loving contemplation into God. Now, he who can clear a way for himself still further, and to whom God is pleased to give great and special help by drawing him away mightily from creatures, as He did to St. Paul, and may possibly still do to others, according to what St. Bernard says—this man finds his created spirit seized upon by the superessential Spirit, and drawn into that which it never could have attained to in its own strength. This entry of the spirit into God strips it of all images, forms, and multiplicity, and it loses consciousness of itself and all things, and Becomes merged with, the three Persons in the abyss of their indwelling simplicity, and enjoys there its highest and truest bliss. Here all striving and seeking cease, for the beginning and the end have become one, and the spirit, being divested of itself, has become one with them, as is explained else where with the help of figures.¹¹ But as to how a man can pass away in this life, either permanently or transiently, and how, while he is still in time, he can be caught up above time, more or less, and be drawn out of himself and transported into the formless Unity—all this I have already set forth with the necessary distinctions. And now, daughter, remember that all these figures and images, with their interpretations, are as remote from and unlike the formless Truth as a black Moor is unlike the beautiful sun; and this comes from the formless and in comprehensible simplicity of the Truth.

The maiden looked upwards, and said:—Praised be the eternal Truth for the beautiful instruction which I have received from your wise words concerning the first entry of a beginner into the interior life, the hindrances which he will meet with as he advances, the things which he will have to avoid, his sufferings and his exercises, as well as the hidden mystery of the pure and absolute Truth, according to the good distinctions which you have laid down. Glory be to God eternally for this.

Now, when this holy maiden had been thus nobly guided by her spiritual father, with the help of good distinctions and in accordance with the whole Christian truth, along all the ways which end in supreme bliss, and when she had well mastered it, as far as is possible in this life, he wrote to her in his last letter thus:—Come now, daughter; give creatures their dismissal, and leave off thy questionings. Give ear, and listen for thyself to what God will say within thee. Thou mayest well rejoice that thou hast obtained that which to many a one is wanting. Painfully as thou hast earned it, all this is now past and over. Henceforth there is nothing more for thee to do except to possess Divine peace in still repose, and joyfully to

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await the moment when thou shalt pass away from this life into the fulness of everlasting bliss.

It came to pass soon afterwards that the holy maiden died; and her end was a blessed one, even as her life had been.¹² After her death she appeared in a vision to her spiritual father clad in snow-white garments, shining with a dazzling brightness, and full of heavenly joy. She drew nigh to him, and showed him in what noble fashion she had passed away into the pure God head. He saw and heard this with delight, and the vision filled his soul with heavenly consolation. When he came to himself again, he sighed deeply, and thought within himself:—Ah, God! how blessed is the man who strive after Thee alone! He may well be content to suffer whose sufferings Thou rewardest thus. God help us to rejoice in this maiden and in all His dear friends, and to enjoy His Divine countenance eternally. Amen.



THE END.

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¹² Elizabeth Stäglin died in the convent of Thoss, near Winterthur, A.D. 1360, five years before her spiritual father.

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