

FEAST DAY: JANUARY 24TH

ST. FRANCIS OF SALES,

BISHOP AND CONFESSOR.

[From his writings and authentic lives, chiefly that written by his nephew, Charles Augustus de Sales; also that by F. Goulu, general of the Feuillans; that by Henry de Manpas du Tour, Bishop of Puy, afterwards of Evreux; and that by Madame de Bussi-Rabutin, nun of the Visitation. See his life, collected by M. Marsoillier, and done into English by the late Mr. Crathorne. See also the bull of his canonisation, and an excellent collection of his maxims and private actions, compiled by his intimate friend and great admirer, M. Peter Camus, Bishop of Bellay, in his book, entitled, "L'Esprit de St. François de Sales," and in his scarce and incomparable book, under the title, "Quel est le meilleur Gouvernement, le rigoureux ou le doux," printed at Paris, without the name of the author, 1636. Though I find not this book in any catalogue of Bishop Camus's works, the conformity of the style, and in several places the repetition of the same expressions which occur in the last-mentioned work, seem to prove this to be also the production of his pen. See also the excellent new edition of the "Letter of St. Francis of Sales," in six volumes, 12mo., 1758.]

A.D. 1622.

THE parents of this saint were Francis, Count of Sales, and Frances of Sionas. The countess, being with child, offered her fruit to God with the most fervent prayers, begging he would preserve it from the corruption of the world, and rather deprive her of the comfort of seeing herself a mother than suffer her to give birth to a child who should ever become his enemy by sin. The saint was born at Sales, three leagues from Annecy, the seat of that noble family, and his mother was delivered of him when she was but seven months advanced in her pregnancy.¹ Hence he was reared with difficulty, and was so weak, that his life, during his infancy, was often despaired of by physicians. However, he escaped the danger, and grew robust: he was very beautiful, and the sweetness of his countenance won the affections of all who saw him: but the meekness of his temper, the pregnancy of his wit, his modesty, tractableness, and

(1) It is a problem in nature, discussed without success by several great physicians, why children born in their seventh month more frequently live than those that are brought forth in their eighth month.

obedience, were far more valuable qualifications. The countess could scarce suffer the child out of her sight, lest any tincture of vice might infect his soul. Her first care was to inspire him with the most profound respect for the church and all holy things, and she had the comfort to observe in him a recollection and devotion at his prayers far above his age. She read to him the lives of the saints, adding recollections suited to his capacity; and she took care to have him with her when she visited the poor, making him the distributor of her alms, and to do such little offices for them as he was able. He would set by his own meat for their relief, and when he had nothing left to bestow on them, would beg for them of all his relations. His horror of a lie, even in his infancy, made him prefer any disgrace or chastisement to the telling of the least wilful untruth.

His mother's inclination for a domestic preceptor, to prevent his being corrupted by wicked youth in colleges, was overruled by her husband's persuasion of the usefulness of emulation for advancing children in their studies, hoping his son's virtue and modesty would, under God, be a sufficient guard of his innocency. He was accordingly sent to Rocheville at six years of age, and some time after to Annecy. An excellent memory, a solid judgment, and a good application, could not fail of great progress. The young count spent as much of his time as possible in private studies and lectures of piety, especially that of the lives of saints, and by his diligence always doubled or trebled his school tasks. He showed an early inclination for the ecclesiastical state, and obtained his father's consent, though not without some reluctance, for his receiving tonsure in the year 1578, and the eleventh of his age. He was sent afterwards, under the care of a virtuous priest, his preceptor, to pursue his studies in Paris, his mother having first instilled into him steady principles of virtue, a love of prayer, and a

dread of sin and its occasions. She often repeated to him those words of Queen Blanche to her son, St. Louis, King of France—"I had rather see you dead than hear you had committed one mortal sin." On his arrival at Paris, he entered the Jesuits' schools, and went through his rhetoric and philosophy with great applause. In pure obedience to his father's orders, he learned in the academy to ride, dance, and fence, whence he acquired that easy behaviour which he retained ever after. But these exercises, as matters of amusement, did not hinder his close application to the study of the Greek and Hebrew languages, and of positive divinity, for six years, under the famous Genebrard and Maldonatus. But his principal concern all this time was a regular course of piety, by which he laboured to sanctify himself and all his actions. Pious meditation and the study of the holy scripture were his beloved entertainments; and he never failed to carry about him that excellent book, called, "The Spiritual Combat." He sought the conversation of the virtuous, particularly of F. Angelus Joyeuse, who, from a duke and marshal of France, was become a Capuchin friar. The frequent discourses of this good man on the necessity of mortification, induced the count to add to his usual austerities the wearing of a hair shirt three days in the week. His chief resort during his stay at Paris was to some churches, that especially of St. Stephen des Grez, as being one of the most retired. Here he made a vow of perpetual chastity, putting himself under the special patronage of the Blessed Virgin. God, to purify his heart, permitted a thick darkness insensibly to overspread his mind, and a spiritual dryness and melancholy to overwhelm him. He seemed, from a perfect tranquillity and peace of mind, to be almost brought to the brink of despair. Seized with the greatest terrors, he passed nights and days in tears and lamentations, and suffered more

than can be conceived by those who have not felt the severity of such interior conflicts. The bitterness of his grief threw him into a deep jaundice; he could neither eat, drink, nor sleep. His preceptor laboured, but all in vain, to discover the cause of this disorder, and find out a remedy. At last Francis, being at prayer in the same Church of St. Stephen, cast his eyes on a picture of our Lady; this awaking his confidence in her intercession, he prostrated himself on the ground, and, as unworthy to address the Father of all consolation, begged that she would be his advocate, and procure him the grace to love God with his whole heart. That very moment he found himself eased of his grief as of a heavy weight taken off his heart, and his former peace and tranquillity restored, which he ever after enjoyed. He was now eighteen years old, when his father recalled him from Paris, and sent him to Padua, to study the law, where his master was the celebrated Guy Pancirola; this was in the year 1554. He chose the learned and pious Jesuit, Antony Possevin, for his spiritual director, who at the same time explained to him St. Thomas's Sum, and they read together Bellarmin's Controversies. His nephew, Augustus, gives us his written rule of life, which he made at Padua; it chiefly shows his perpetual attention to the presence of God, his care to offer up every action to him and implore his aid at the beginning of each. Falling sick, he was despaired of by the physicians, and he himself expected with joy his last moment. His preceptor, Deage, who had ever attended him, asked him with tears what he had to order about his funeral and other matters. "Nothing," answered he cheerfully, "unless it be that my body be given to the anatomy theatre to be dissected, for it will be a comfort to me if I can be of any advantage when dead, having been of none whilst alive. Thus I may also prevent some of the disorders and quarrels

which happen between the young physicians and the friends of the dead, whose bodies they often dig up." However, he recovered, and, by his father's orders, being twenty years of age, commenced doctor in laws, with great applause and pomp, in presence of forty-eight doctors. After which he travelled through Italy to see the antiquities, and visit the holy places there. He went to Rome by Ferrara, and returned by Loretto and Venice. To any insult offered him on the road he returned only meekness, for which he met with remarkable blessings from heaven. The sight of the pompous remains of ancient Rome gave him a feeling contempt of worldly grandeur; but the tombs of the martyrs drew every where tears of devotion from his eyes. Upon his return, his father received him with great joy at his Castle of Tuille, where he had prepared for him a good library of books.

All persons were charmed with the young count, but none so much as the great Antony Favre, afterwards first president of the parliament of Chamberry, and Claudius Cranier, the learned and truly apostolic Bishop of Geneva, who already consulted him as an oracle. His father had a very good match in view for him, and obtained in his behalf, from the Duke of Savoy, patents creating him counsellor of the parliament of Chamberry. Francis modestly, but very firmly, refused both, yet durst not propose to his parents his design of receiving holy orders; for the tonsure was not an absolute renouncing of the world. At last he discovered it to his pious preceptor, Deage, and begged of him to mention it to his father, but this he declined, and used his utmost endeavours to dissuade the young count from such a resolution, as he was the eldest son, and destined by the order of nature for another state. Francis answered all his reasonings, but could not prevail on him to charge himself with the commission. He had then recourse to a cousin, Louis of Sales, a priest and canon

of Geneva, who obtained the consent of his parents, but not without the greatest difficulty. His cousin also obtained for him from the pope, without his knowledge, the provostship of the church of Geneva, then vacant, but the young clergyman held out a long time before he would accept of it. At last he yielded, and took possession of that dignity, and was in a short time after promoted to holy orders by his diocesan, who, as soon as he was deacon, employed him in preaching. His first sermons gained him an extraordinary reputation, and were accompanied with incredible success. He delivered the word of God with a mixture of majesty and modesty, had a strong, sweet voice, and an animated manner of gesture, far from any affectation or vanity; but what chiefly affected the hearts of his hearers was the humility and unction with which he spoke from the abundance of his own heart. Before he preached he always renewed the fervour of his heart before God by secret sighs and prayer. He studied as much at the foot of the crucifix as in books, being persuaded that the essential quality of a preacher is to be a man of prayer. He received the holy order of priesthood with extraordinary preparation and devotion, and seemed filled by it with an apostolical spirit. He every day began his functions by celebrating the holy mysteries early in the morning, in which, by his eyes and countenance of fire, the inward flames of his soul appeared. He then heard the confessions of all sorts of people, and preached. He was observed to decline with the utmost care whatever might gain him the applause of men, seeking only to please God, and to advance his glory. He chiefly resorted to cottages and country villages, instructing an infinity of poor people. His piety, his charity to the poor, his disinterestedness, his care of the sick and those in prison, endeared him to all; but nothing was so moving as his meekness, which no provocation was ever capable of

disturbing. He conversed among all as their father, with a fellow-feeling of all their wants, being all to all. He was indeed naturally of a hasty and passionate temper, as he himself confesses; and we find in his writings a certain fire and impetuosity which renders it unquestionable. On this account, from his youth he made meekness his favourite virtue, and by studying in the school of a God who was meek and humble of heart, he learned that important lesson to such perfection, as to convert his predominant passion into his characteristic virtue. The Calvinists ascribed principally to his meekness the wonderful conversions he made amongst them. They were certainly the most obstinate of people at that time near Geneva, yet St. Francis converted no less than seventy-two thousand of them.

Before the end of this first year of his ministry, in 1591, he erected at Annecy a confraternity of the Holy Cross, the associates of which were obliged to instruct the ignorant, to comfort and exhort the sick and prisoners, and to beware of all law-suits, which seldom fail to shipwreck Christian charity. A Calvinistical minister took occasion from this institution to write against the honour paid by catholics to the cross. Francis answered him by his book entitled, "The Standard of the Cross." At this time fresh matter presented itself for the exercise of the saint's zeal. The Bishop of Geneva was formerly lord of that city, paying an acknowledgment to the Duke of Savoy. While these two were disputing about the sovereignty, the Genevans expelled them both, and formed themselves into a republic in alliance with the Switzers; and their city became the centre of Calvinism. Soon after, the protestant canon of Bern seized the country of Vaux, and the republic of Geneva, the duchy of Chablais, with the bailiwicks of Gex, Terni and Gaillard; and there by violence established their heresy, which from that time had kept quiet possession for sixty years. The Duke

Charles Emmanuel had recovered these territories, and resolving to restore the catholic religion, wrote, in 1594, to the Bishop of Geneva, to recommend that work to him. The wise ones, according to this world, regarded the undertaking as impracticable; and the most resolute, whether ecclesiastics or religious, were terrified at its difficulties and dangers. Francis was the only one that offered himself for the work, and was joined by none but his cousin-german Lewis de Sales. The tears and remonstrances of his parents and friends to dissuade him from the undertaking made no impression on his courageous soul. He set out with his cousin on the 9th of September, in 1594. Being arrived on the frontiers of Chablais, they sent back their horses the more perfectly to imitate the apostles. On his arrival at Thonon, the capital of Chablais, situate on the lake of Geneva, he found in it only seven catholics. After having commended the souls to God, and earnestly implored his mercy through the intercession of the guardian angels and tutelar saints of the country, he was obliged to take up his quarters in the castle of Allingens, where the governor and garrison were catholics, two leagues from Thonon, whither he went every day, visiting also the neighbouring country. The Calvinists for a long time shunned him, and some even attempted his life. Two assassins, hired by others, having missed him at Thonon, lay in wait to murder him on his return; but a guard of soldiers had been sent to escort him safe, the conspiracy having taken wind. The saint obtained their pardon, and overcome by his lenity and formed by his holy instructions, they both became very virtuous converts. All our saint's relations, and many friends, whom he particularly respected for their great virtue and prudence, solicited him by the most pressing letters to abandon such a dangerous and fruitless enterprise. His father, to the most tender entreaties, added his

positive commands to him to return home, telling him that all prudent persons called his resolution to continue his mission a foolish obstinacy and madness; that he had already done more than was needful, and that his mother was dying of grief for his long absence, the fear of losing him entirely, and the hardships, atrocious slanders, and continual alarms and dangers in which he lived. To compel him to abandon this undertaking, the father forbade his friends to write any more to him, or to send him necessary supplies. Nevertheless St. Francis persevered, and at length, his patience, zeal, and eminent virtue wrought upon the most obdurate, and insensibly wore away their prejudices. His first converts were among the soldiers, whom he brought over, not only to the faith, but also to an entire change of manners and strict virtue, from habits of swearing, duelling, and drunkenness. He was near four years, however, without any great fruit among the inhabitants, till the year 1597, when God was pleased to touch several of them with his grace. The harvest daily increased both in town and country so plentifully, that a supply of new labourers from Annecy was necessary, and the bishop sent some Jesuits and Capuchins to carry on the good work with Francis, and under his direction. In 1598 the public exercise of the catholic religion was restored, and Calvinism banished by the duke's orders over all Chablais, and the two bailiwicks of Terni and Gaillard. Though the plague raged violently at Thonon, this did not hinder Francis either by day or night from assisting the sick in their last moments; and God preserved him from the contagion, which seized and swept off several of his fellow-labourers. It is incredible what fatigues and hardships he underwent in the course of this mission; with what devotion and tears he daily recommended the work of God; with what invincible courage he braved the greatest danger; with what meekness and patience he bore all manner of

affronts and calumnies. Baron D'Avuli, a man of quality, and of great worth and learning, highly esteemed among the Calvinists, and at Geneva, being converted by him, induced him to go thither, to have a conference with the famous minister Iæ Faye. The minister during the whole conference, was ever shifting the matter in debate, as he found himself embarrassed and pressed by his antagonist. His disadvantage being so evident that he himself could read it in the countenance of every one present, he broke off the conference by throwing out a whole torrent of injurious language on Francis, who bore it with so much meekness as not to return the least sharp answer. During the whole course of his ministry in these parts, the violent measures, base cowardice in declining all dispute, and the shameful conduct of the ministers in other respects, set the saint's behaviour and his holy cause in a still more shining light. In 1597 he was commissioned by Pope Clement VIII. to confer with Theodore Beza at Geneva, the most famous minister of the Calvinist party, in order to win him back to the catholic church. He accordingly paid him four visits in that city, gained a high place in that heresiarch's esteem, and made him often hesitate in deep silence and with distracted looks, whether he should return to the Roman catholic church or not, wherein he owned from the beginning that salvation was attainable. St. Francis had great hopes of bringing him over in a fifth visit, but his private conferences had alarmed the Genevans so much that they guarded Beza too close for him to find admittance to him again, and Beza died soon after. 'Tis said, that a little before death he lamented very much he could not see Francis.¹ It is certain, from his first conference with him, he had ever felt a violent conflict within himself, between truth and duty on one hand, and on the other, the pride of being head of a party, the shame of recanting, inveterate

(1) Aug. Sales in Vit. lib. iii. p. 123.

habits, and certain secret engagements in vice, to which he continued enslaved to the last. The invincible firmness and constancy of the saint appeared in the recovery of the revenues of the curacies and other benefices which had been given to the orders of St. Lazarus and St. Maurice; the restoration of which after many difficulties he effected by the joint authority of the pope and the Duke of Savoy. In 1569 he celebrated mass on Christmas-day in the Church of St. Hippolytus at Thonon, and had then made seven or eight hundred converts. From this time he charged himself with the parish of the town, and established two other catholic parishes in the country. In the beginning of the year 1599 he had settled zealous clergymen in all the parishes of the whole territory.

The honours the saint received from the pope, the Duke of Savoy, the Cardinal of Medicis, and all the church, and the high reputation which his virtues had acquired him, never made the least impression on his humble mind, dead to all motions of pride and vanity. His delight was with the poor: the most honourable functions he left to others, and chose for himself the meanest and most laborious. Every one desired to have him for their director, wherever he went: and his extraordinary sweetness, in conjunction with his eminent piety, reclaimed as many vicious catholics as it converted heretics. In 1599, he went to Annecy to visit his diocesan, Granier, who had procured him to be made his coadjutor. The fear of resisting God, in refusing this charge, when pressed upon him by the pope, in conjunction with his bishop and the Duke of Savoy, at last extorted his consent; but the apprehension of the obligations annexed to episcopacy was so strong, that it threw him into an illness which had like to have cost him his life. On his recovery he set out for Rome to receive his bulls, and to confer with his holiness on matters relating to the mission to Savoy. He was highly

honoured by all the great men at Rome, and received of the pope the bulls for being consecrated Bishop of Nicopolis, and Coadjutor of Geneva. On this occasion he made a visit of devotion to Loretto, and returned to Annecy before the end of the year 1599. Here he preached the Lent the year following, and assisted his father during his last sickness, heard his general confession, and administered to him the rites of the church.

An illness he was seized with at Annecy made him defer his consecration. On his recovery he was obliged to go to Paris, on affairs of his diocess, and was received there by all sorts of persons with all the regard due to his extraordinary merit. The king was then at Fontainebleau; but the saint was desired to preach the Lent to the court in the chapel of the Louvre. This he did in a manner that charmed every one, and wrought innumerable wonderful conversions. The duchesses of Mercœur and Longueville sent him thereupon a purse of gold: he admired the embroidery, but gave it back, with thanks to them for honouring his discourses with their presence and good example. He preached a sermon against the pretended reformation, to prove it destitute of a lawful mission; it being begun at Meaux by Peter Clark, a wool-carder; at Paris, by Masson Rivière, a young man called to the ministry by a company of laymen; and elsewhere after the like manner. This sermon converted many Calvinists; amongst others the countess of Perdrieuville, who was one of the most obstinate learned ladies of the sect: she consulted her ministers, and repaired often to Francis's conferences, till she had openly renounced Calvinism with all her numerous family. The whole illustrious house of Raconis followed her example, and so many others even of the most inveterate of the sect, that it made Cardinal Perron, a man famous for controversy, say, "I can confute the Calvinists; but, to persuade and convert them, you must carry them to the

coadjutor of Geneva." Henry IV. was charmed with his preaching, and consulted him several times in matters relating to the direction of his conscience. There was no project of piety going forward about which he was not advised with. He promoted the establishment of the Carmelite nuns in France, and the introduction of F. Berulle's congregation of the oratory. The king himself earnestly endeavoured to detain him in France, by promises of 20,000 livres pension, and the first vacant bishopric: but Francis said, God had called him against his will to the bishopric of Geneva, and he thought it his obligation to keep it till his death; that the small revenue he had sufficed for his maintenance, and more would only be an incumbrance. The king was astonished at his disinterestedness, when he understood that the bishopric of Geneva, since the revolt of that city, did not yield the incumbent above four or five thousand livres, that is, not two hundred and fifty-nine pounds a-year.

Some envious courtiers endeavoured to give the king a suspicion of his being a spy. The saint heard this accusation just as he was going into the pulpit; yet he preached as usual without the least concern; and that prince was too well convinced of the calumny, by his sanctity and candour. After a nine months' stay in Paris, he set out with the king's letters, and heard on the road that Granier, Bishop of Geneva, was dead. He hastened to Sales Castle, and as soon as clear of the first visits, made a twenty days' retreat to prepare himself for his consecration. He made a general confession, and laid down a plan of life, which he ever punctually observed. This was, never to wear any silk or camlets, or any clothes but woollen, as before; to have no paintings in his house but of devotions, no magnificence in furniture; never to use coach or litter, but to make his visits on foot; his family to consist of two priests, one for his chaplain, the other to take care of his tempo-

ralities and servants; nothing but common meats to be served to his table; to be always present at all feasts of devotion kept in any church in town: his regulation with respect to alms was incredible for his revenues: to go to the poor and sick in person; to rise every day at four, make an hour's meditations, say lauds and prime, then morning prayers with his family; to read the scripture till seven, then say mass, which he did every day, afterwards to apply to affairs till dinner, which being over, he allowed an hour for conversation, the rest of the afternoon he allotted to business and prayer. After supper he read a pious book to his family for an hour, then night prayers; after which he said matins. He fasted all Fridays and Saturdays, and our Lady's eves: he privately wore a hair shirt, and used the discipline, but avoided all ostentatious austerities. But his exact regularity and uniformity of life, with a continued practice of interior self-denials, was the best mortification. He redoubled his fasts, austerities, and prayers, as the time of his consecration drew nearer. This was performed on the 3rd of December, 1602. He immediately applied himself to preaching and the other functions of his charge. He was exceeding cautious in conferring holy orders. He ordained but few, neither was it without the strictest scrutiny passed upon all their qualifications for the priesthood. He was very zealous, both by word and example, in promoting the instruction of the ignorant by explanations of the catechism, on Sundays and holidays; and his example had a great influence over the parish-priests in this particular, as also over the laity, both young and old. He inculcated to all the making, every hour when the clock struck, the sign of the cross, with a fervent aspiration on the passion of Christ. He severely forbade the custom of Valentines, or giving boys, in writing, the names of girls to be admired and attended on by them; and, to abolish it, he changed

it into giving billets with the names of certain saints for them to honour and imitate in a particular manner. He performed the visitation of his diocese as soon as possible, published a new ritual, set on foot ecclesiastical conferences, and regulated all things, choosing St. Charles Borromeo for his model.

Above all things he hated law-suits, and strictly commanded all ecclesiastics to avoid them, and refer all disputes to arbitration. He said they were such occasions of sins against charity, that, if any one during the course of a law-suit, had escaped them, that alone would suffice for his canonization. Towards the close of the visitation of his diocese, he reformed several monasteries. That of Six appealed to the parliament of Chamberry; but our saint was supported there, and carried his point. Whilst Francis was at Six he heard that a valley, three leagues off, was in the utmost desolation, by the tops of two mountains that had fallen, and buried several villages, with the inhabitants and cattle. He crawled over unpassable ways to comfort and relieve these poor people, who had neither clothes to cover, nor cottages to shelter them, nor bread to stay their hunger; he mingled his tears with theirs, relieved them, and obtained from the duke a remission of their taxes. The city of Dijon having procured leave from the duke of Savoy, the saint preached the Lent there in 1604, with wonderful fruit; but refused the present offered him by the city on that occasion. Being solicited by Henry IV. to accept of a considerable abbey, the saint refused it; alleging, that he dreaded riches as much as others could desire them; and that, the less he had of them, the less he would have to answer for. That king offered to name him to the dignity of cardinal at the next promotion; but the saint made answer, that though he did not despise the offered dignity, he was persuaded that great titles would not sit well upon him, and might raise fresh obstacles to his sal-

vation. He was also thought of at Rome as a very fit person to be promoted to that dignity, but was himself the only one who every where opposed and crossed the design. Being desired on another occasion by the same king to accept of a pension, the saint begged his majesty to suffer it to remain in the hands of his comptroller till he should call for it; which handsome refusal much astonished that great prince, who could not forbear saying, "That the Bishop of Geneva, by the happy independence in which his virtue had placed him, was as far above him, as he by his royal dignity was above his subjects." The saint preached the next Lent at Chamberry, at the request of the parliament, which notwithstanding at that very time seized his temporalities for refusing to publish a monitory at its request; the saint alleging that it was too trifling an affair, and that the censures of the church were to be used more reservedly. To the notification of the seizure he only answered obligingly, that he thanked God for teaching him by it, that a bishop is to be altogether spiritual. He neither desisted from preaching nor complained to the duke, but heaped most favours on such as most insulted him, till the parliament being ashamed granted him of their own accord a replev. But the great prelate found more delight in preaching in small villages than amidst such applause, though he everywhere met with the like fruit; and he looked on the poor as the object of his particular care. He took a poor dumb and deaf man into his family, taught him by signs, and by them received his confession. His steward often found it difficult to provide for his family by reason of his great alms, and used to threaten to leave him. The saint would answer: "You say right; I am an incorrigible creature, and what is worse, I look as if I should long continue so." Or at other times, pointing to the crucifix: "How can we deny any thing to a God who reduced himself to this condition for the love of us!"

Pope Paul V. ordered our saint to be consulted about the school dispute between the Dominicans and Jesuits on the grace of God, or *de auxiliis*. His opinion appears from his book "On the Love of God:" but he answered his holiness in favour of neutrality, which he ever observed in school opinions; complaining often in how many they occasioned the breach of charity, and spent too much of their precious time, which, by being otherwise employed, might be rendered more conducive to God's honour. In 1609, he went to Bellay, and consecrated bishop John Peter Camus, one of the most illustrious prelates of the church of France, and linked to our saint by the strictest bands of holy friendship. He wrote the book entitled "The Spirit of St. Francis of Sales," consisting of many of his ordinary sayings and actions, in which his spirit shines with great advantage, discovering a perpetual recollection always absorbed in God, and a constant overflowing of sweetness and divine love. His writings to this day breathe the same; every word distils that love and meekness with which his heart was filled. It is this which makes his epistles, which we have to the number of five hundred and twenty-nine, in seven books, to be an inestimable treasure of moving instructions, suitable to all sorts of persons and circumstances.

His incomparable book, "The Introduction to a Devout Life," was originally letters to a lady in the world, which, at the pressing instances of many friends, he formed into a book, and finished, to show that devotion suited Christians in a secular life no less than in cloisters. Villars, the Archbishop of Vienna, wrote to him upon it—"Your book charms, inflames, and puts me in raptures, as often as I open any part of it." The author received the like applause and commendations from all parts, and it was immediately translated into all the languages of Europe. Henry IV. of France was extremely pleased with it; his queen, Mary of Medicis, sent it

richly bound and adorned with jewels to James I. of England, who was wonderfully taken with it, and asked his bishops why none of them could write with such feeling and unction.¹ There was, however, one religious order in which this book was much censured, as if it had allowed of gallantry and scurrilous jests, and approved of balls and comedies, which was very far from the saint's doctrine. A preacher of that order had the rashness and presumption to declaim bitterly against the book in a public sermon, to cut it in pieces, and burn it in the very pulpit. The saint bore this outrage without the least resentment, so perfectly was he dead to self-love. This appears more wonderful to those who know how jealous authors are of their works, as the offspring of their reason and judgment, of which men are of all things the fondest. His book of "The Love of God" cost him much more reading, study, and meditation. In it he paints his own soul. He describes the feeling sentiments of divine love, its state of fervour, of dryness, of trials, suffering, and darkness, in explaining which he calls in philosophy to his assistance. He writes on this sublime subject what he had learned by his own experience. Some parts of this book are only to be understood by those souls who have gone through these states, yet the author has been ever justly admired for the performance. The general of the Carthusians had wrote to him upon his Introduction, advising him to write no more, because nothing else could equal that book. But seeing this, he bade him never cease writing, because his latter works always surpassed the former; and James I. was so delighted with the book, that he expressed a great desire to see the author. This being told the saint, he cried out, "Ah! who will give me the wings of a dove, and I will fly to the king, into that great island, formerly the country of saints, but now overwhelmed

(1) Aug. Sales in Vit.

with the darkness of error. If the duke will permit me, I will arise, and go to that great Ninive; I will speak to the king, and will announce to him, with the hazard of my life, the word of the Lord." In effect, he solicited the Duke of Savoy's consent, but could never obtain it.¹ That jealous sovereign feared lest he should be drawn in to serve another state, or sell to some other his right to Geneva, on which account he often refused him leave to go to preach in France, when invited by many cities. His other works are sermons, which are not finished as they were preached, except perhaps that on the "Invention of the Cross." We have also his "Preparation for Mass;" his "Instructions for Confessors;" a collection of his "Maxims, Pious Breathings, and Sayings," wrote by the Bishop of Bellay; some "Fragments;" and his "Entertainments to his Nuns of the Visitation," in which he recommends to them the most perfect interior self-denial, a disengagement of affections from all things temporal, and obedience. The institution of that order may be read in the "Life of B. Frances Chantal." St. Francis designing his new order to be such, that all, even the sickly and weak, might be admitted into it, he chose for it the rule of St. Austin, as commanding few extraordinary bodily austerities, and would have it possess funds and settlements in common, to prevent being carried off from the interior life by anxious cares about necessaries. But then he requires from each person so strict a practice of poverty, as to allow no one the proprietary or even the long use of any thing, and orders them every year to change chambers, beds, crosses, beads, and books. He will have no manner of account to be made of birth, wit, or talents, but only of humility; he obliges them only to the little office of our Lady, which all might easily learn to understand; meditations, spiritual reading, recollection, and retreats, abundantly compensating the defect. All

(1) Aug. Sales in Vit.

his regulations tend to instil a spirit of piety, charity, meekness, and simplicity. He subjects his order to the bishop of each place, without any general. Pope Paul V. approved it, and erected the congregation of the Visitation into a religious order.

St. Francis, finding his health decline, and his affairs to multiply, after having consulted Cardinal Frederic Borromeo, Archbishop of Milan, chose for his coadjutor in the bishopric of Geneva his brother, John Francis of Sales, who was consecrated Bishop of Chalcedon, at Turin, in 1618. But the saint still applied himself to his functions as much as ever. He preached the Lent at Grenoble in 1617, and again in 1618, with his usual conquests of souls, converting many Calvinists, and among these the Duke of Lesdiguières. In 1619 he accompanied to Paris the Cardinal of Savoy, to demand the sister of King Louis XIII., Christina of France, in marriage for the Prince of Piedmont. He preached the Lent in St. Andre des Arc, and had always such a numerous audience, that cardinals, bishops, and princes, could scarcely find room. His sermons and conferences, and still more the example of his holy life, and the engaging sweetness of his conversation, most powerfully moved not only the devout, but also heretics, libertines, and atheists, whilst his eloquence and learning convinced their understandings. The Bishop of Bellay tells us that he entreated the saint at Paris not to preach twice every day, morning and evening, for the sake of his health. St. Francis answered him with a smile, "That it cost him much less to preach a sermon than to find an excuse for himself when invited to perform that function." He added, "God has appointed me a pastor and a preacher, and is not every one to follow his profession? But I am surprised that the people in this great city flock so eagerly to my sermons, for my tongue is slow and heavy, my conceptions low, and my discourses flat, as you yourself are witness."—"Do

you imagine," said the other, "that eloquence is what they seek in your discourses? It is enough for them to see you in the pulpit. Your heart speaks to them by your countenance, and by your eyes, were you only to say the Our Father with them. The most common words in your mouth, burning with the fire of charity, pierce and melt all hearts. There is I know not what so extraordinary in what you say, that every word is of weight—every word strikes deep into the heart. You have said every thing even when you seem to have said nothing. You are possessed of a kind of eloquence which is of heaven; the power of this is astonishing." St. Francis, smiling, turned off the discourse.¹ The match being concluded, the Princess Christina chose Francis for her chief almoner, desiring to live always under his direction; but all her entreaties could neither prevail on him to leave his diocese, though he had a coadjutor, nor to accept of a pension, and it was only on these two conditions he undertook the charge, always urging that nothing could dispense with him from residence. The princess made him a present of a rich diamond by way of an investiture, desiring him to keep it for her sake. "I will," said he, "unless the poor stand in need of it." She answered, she would then redeem it. He said, "This will happen so often, that I shall abuse your bounty." Finding it given to the poor afterwards at Turin, she gave him another richer, charging him to keep that at least. He said, "Madam, I cannot promise you; I am very unfit to keep things of value." Inquiring after it one day, she was told it was always in pawn for the poor, and that the diamond belonged not to the bishop, but to all the beggars of Geneva. He had indeed a heart which was not able to refuse any thing to those in want. He often gave to beggars the waistcoat off his own back, and sometimes the cruet of

his chapel. The pious cardinal, Henry de Gondi, Bishop of Paris, used all manner of arguments to obtain his consent to be his coadjutor in the see of Paris, but he was resolved never to quit the church which God had first committed to his charge.

Upon his return to Annecy, he would not touch a farthing of his revenue for the eighteen months he was absent, but gave it to his cathedral, saying it could not be his, for he had not earned it. He applied himself to preaching, instructing, and hearing confessions with greater zeal than ever. In a plague which raged there, he daily exposed his own life to assist his flock. The saint often met with injurious treatment and very reviling words, which he ever repaid with such meekness and beneficence as never failed to gain his very enemies. A lewd wretch, exasperated against him for his zeal against a wicked harlot, forged a letter of intrigue in the holy prelate's name, which made him pass for a profligate and an hypocrite with the Duke of Nemours and many others: the calumny reflected also on the nuns of the Visitation. Two years after, the author of it lying on his death-bed, called in witnesses, publicly justified the saint, and made an open confession of the slander and forgery. The saint had ever an entire confidence in the divine providence, was ever full of joy, and resigned to all the appointments of heaven, to which he committed all events. He had a sovereign contempt of all earthly things, whether riches, honours, dangers, or sufferings. He considered only God and his honour in all things; his soul perpetually breathed nothing but his love and praises; nor could he contain this fire within his breast, for it discovered itself in his countenance, which, especially whilst he said mass, or distributed the blessed eucharist, appeared shining, as it were, with rays of glory, and breathing holy fervour. Often he could not contain himself in his conversation, and would thus express himself

(1) *Quel est le Meilleur Gouvernement, &c.*, ch. 8, p. 298.

to his intimate friends:—"Did you but know how God treats my heart, you would thank his goodness, and beg for me the strength to execute the inspirations which he communicates to me. My heart is filled with an inexpressible desire to be for ever sacrificed to the pure and holy love of my Saviour. Oh! it is good to live, to labour, to rejoice only in God. By his grace I will for ever more be nothing to any creature, nor shall any creature be any thing to me but in him and for him." At another time he cried out to a devout friend, "Oh! if I knew but one string of my heart which was not all God's, I would instantly tear it out. Yes! if I knew that there was one thread in my heart which was not marked with the crucifix, I would not keep it one moment."

In the year 1622, he received an order from the Duke of Savoy to go to Avignon to wait on Louis XIII., who had just finished the civil wars in Languedoc. Finding himself indisposed, he took his last leave of his friends, saying he should see them no more, which drew from them floods of tears. At Avignon he was at his prayers during the king's triumphant entry, and never went to the window to see any part of that great pomp. He was obliged to attend the king and the Cardinal of Savoy to Lyons, where he refused all the grand apartments offered him by the intendant of the province and others, to lodge in the poor chamber of the gardener to the Monastery of the Visitation, as he was never better pleased than when he could most imitate the poverty of his Saviour. He received from the king and queen-mother, and from all the princes, the greatest marks of honour and esteem, and though indisposed, continued to preach and perform all his functions, especially of Christmas-day, and St. John's in the morning. After dinner he began to fall gradually into an apoplexy, was put to bed by his servant, and received extreme unction: but as he had said mass that day, and his

vomiting continued it was thought proper not to give him the viaticum. He repeated with great fervour, "My heart and my flesh rejoice in the living God; I will sing the mercies of the Lord to all eternity. When shall I appear before his face? Show me, my beloved, where thou feedest, where thou retest at noon-day. O my God, my desire is before thee, and my sighs are not hidden from thee. My God and my all! my desire is that of the hills eternal." Whilst the physicians applied blistering plaisters and hot irons behind his neck, and a caustic to the crown of his head, which burned him to the bone, he shed abundance of tears under excess of pain, repeating, "Wash me, O Lord, from my iniquities, and cleanse me from my sin. Still cleanse me more and more." "What do I here, my God, distant from thee—separated from thee?" And to those about him, "Weep not, my children; must not the will of God be done?" One suggesting to him the prayer of St. Martin, "If I am still necessary for thy people, I refuse not to labour," he seemed troubled at being compared to so great a saint, and said he was an unprofitable servant, whom neither God nor his people needed. His apoplexy increasing, though slowly, he seemed at last to lose his senses, and happily expired on the feast of Holy Innocents, the 28th of December, at eight o'clock at night, in the year 1622, the fifty-sixth of his age, and the twentieth of his episcopacy. His corpse was embalmed, and carried with the greatest pomp to Annecy, where he had directed by will it should be interred. It was laid in a magnificent tomb near the high altar in the church of the first monastery of the Visitation. After his beatification by Alexander VII., in 1661, it was placed upon the altar in a rich silver shrine. He was canonised in 1665 by the same pope, and his feast fixed to the 29th of January, on which day his body was conveyed to Annecy. His heart was kept in a leaden case, in the Church

of the Visitation at Lyons: it was afterwards exposed in a silver one, and lastly in one of gold, given by King Louis XIII. Many miracles—as the raising to life of two persons who were drowned, the curing of the blind, paralytic, and others—were authentically attested to have been wrought by his relics and intercession, not to mention those he had performed in his lifetime, especially during his missions. Pope Alexander VII., then Cardinal Chigi, and plenipotentiary in Germany, Louis XIII., Louis XIV., and others, attributed their cures in sickness to this saint's patronage.

Among his ordinary remarkable sayings, we read that he often repeated to Bishop Camus, "That truth must be always charitable; for bitter zeal does harm instead of good. Reprehensions are a food of hard digestion, and ought to be dressed on a fire of burning charity so well, that all harshness be taken off; otherwise, like unripe fruit, they will only produce gripings. Charity seeks not itself nor its own interests, but purely the honour and interest of God: pride, vanity, and passion cause bitterness and harshness: a remedy injudiciously applied may be a poison. A judicious silence is always better than a truth spoken without charity." St. Francis, seeing a scandalous priest thrown into prison, fell at his feet, and with tears conjured him to have compassion on him, his pastor, on his religion, which he scandalized, and on his own soul; which sweetness converted the other, so that he became an example of virtue. By his patience and meekness under all injuries, he overcame the most obstinate, and ever after treated them with singular affection, calling them dearer friends, because regained. A great prelate observes from his example that the meek are kings of other hearts, which they powerfully attract, and can turn as they please, and in an express and excellent treatise, proposes him as an accomplished model of all the qualifications requisite in a superior to govern well.

Meekness was the favourite virtue of St. Francis de Sales. He once was heard to say, that he had employed three years in studying it in the school of Jesus Christ, and that his heart was still far from being satisfied with the progress he had made. If he, who was meekness itself, imagined, nevertheless, that he had possessed so little of it; what shall we say of those, who, upon every trifling occasion, betray the bitterness of their hearts in angry words and actions of impatience and outrage? Our saint was often tried in the practice of this virtue, especially when the hurry of business and the crowds that thronged on him for relief in their various necessities, scarce allowed him a moment to breathe. He has left us his thoughts upon this situation, which his extreme affability rendered very frequent to him. "God," says he, "makes use of this occasion to try whether our hearts are sufficiently strengthened to bear every attack. I have myself been sometimes in this situation: but I have made a covenant with my heart and with my tongue, in order to confine them within the bounds of duty. I considered those persons who crowd in one upon the other, as children who run into the embraces of their father: as the hen refuseth not protection to her little ones when they gather around her, but, on the contrary, extendeth her wings so as to cover them all; my heart, I thought, was in like manner expanded, in proportion as the numbers of these poor people increased. The most powerful remedy against sudden starts of impatience is a sweet and amiable silence; however little one speaks, self-love will have a share in it, and some word will escape that may sour the heart, and disturb its peace for a considerable time. When nothing is said, and cheerfulness preserved, the storm subsides, anger and indiscretion are put to flight, and nothing remains but a joy, pure and lasting.—The person who possesses Christian meekness, is affectionate and tender towards every one; he is

disposed to forgive and excuse the frailties of others; the goodness of his heart appears in a sweet affability that influences his words and actions, and presents every object to his view in the most charitable and pleasing light; he never admits in his discourse any harsh expression, much less any term that is haughty or rude. An amiable serenity is always painted on his countenance, which remarkably distinguishes him from those violent characters, who, with looks full of fury, know only how to refuse; or who, when they grant, do it with so bad a grace, that they lose all the merit of the favour they bestow."

Some persons thinking him too indulgent towards sinners, expressed their thoughts one day with freedom, to him on this head: he immediately replied: "If there was any thing more excellent than meekness, God would have certainly taught it us; and yet there is nothing to which he so earnestly exhorts us, as to be "meek and humble of heart." Why would you hinder me to obey the command of my Lord, and follow him in the exercise of that virtue which he so eminently practised and so highly esteems? Are we then better informed in these matters than God himself?" But his tenderness was particularly displayed in the reception of apostates and other abandoned sinners; when these prodigals returned to him, he said, with all the sensibility of a father: "Come, my dear children, come, let me embrace you; ah, let me hide you in the bottom of my heart! God and I will assist you: all I require of you is not to despair: I shall take on myself the labour of the rest." Looks full of compassion and love expressed the sincerity of his feelings: his affectionate and charitable care of them extended even to their bodily wants, and his purse was open to them as well as his heart: he justified this proceeding to some, who, disedified at his extreme indulgence, told him, it served only to encourage the sinner, and harden

him still more in his crimes, by observing, "Are they not a part of my flock? Has not our blessed Lord given them his blood, and shall I refuse them my tears? These wolves will be changed into lambs: a day will come when, cleansed from their sins, they will be more precious in the sight of God than we are: if Saul had been cast off, we would never have had a St. Paul."

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