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THE LITTLE FLOWERS OF ST. FRANCIS
THE MIRROR OF PERFECTION BY
LEO OF ASSISI · THE LIFE OF ST. FRANCIS
BY ST. BONAVENTURA · INTRODUCTION
BY THOMAS OKEY

H. Meaton.

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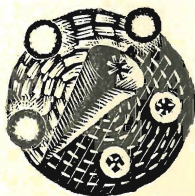
10-13 BEDFORD STREET LONDON W.C.2

E. P. DUTTON & CO. INC.

286-302 FOURTH AVENUE

NEW YORK

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THE LITTLE FLOWERS OF
ST. FRANCIS
THE MIRROR OF PERFECTION
THE LIFE OF ST. FRANCIS



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NEW YORK: E. P. DUTTON & CO. INC.

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Made in Great Britain
at The Temple Press Letchworth
and decorated by Eric Ravilious
for
J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd.
Aldine House Bedford St. London
First Published in this Edition 1910
Reprinted 1912, 1917, 1923, 1925, 1927,
1931, 1934

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CHAPTER XXXIX

OF THE MARVELLOUS SERMON THAT ST. ANTHONY OF PADUA, A
FRIAR MINOR, PREACHED IN THE CONSISTORY

THAT wondrous vessel of the Holy Spirit, St. Anthony of Padua, one of the chosen disciples and companions of St. Francis, he that St. Francis called his vicar, was once preaching in the consistory before the pope and the cardinals, in which consistory were men of divers nations, to wit, French, Germans, Sclavonians, and English, and divers other tongues throughout the world. Inflamed by the Holy Spirit, he expounded the word of God so effectually, so devoutly, so subtly, so sweetly, so clearly, and so wisely, that all they that were in the consistory, albeit they were of divers nations, clearly understood all his words distinctly, even as though he had spoken to each one of them in his native tongue; and all were filled with wonder, for it seemed that that miracle of old were renewed when the Apostles, on the day of Pentecost, spake, by the power of the Holy Spirit, in every tongue. And marvelling, they said one to another, "Is not he that preacheth a Spaniard? How then hear we all the tongue of our native land in his speech?" The pope likewise, considering and marvelling at the depth of his words, said, "Verily this friar is the ark of the covenant and the treasury of divine scriptures."

CHAPTER XL

OF THE MIRACLE THAT GOD WROUGHT, WHEN ST. ANTHONY,
BEING AT RIMINI, PREACHED TO THE FISHES IN THE SEA

CHRIST the blessed, being pleased to show forth the great holiness of His most faithful servant, St. Anthony, and with what devotion his preaching and his holy doctrine were to be heard, one time, among others, rebuked the folly of infidel heretics by means of creatures without reason, to wit, the fishes; even as in days ago, in the Old Testament, he rebuked the ignorance of Balaam by the mouth of an ass. Wherefore it befell, on a time when St. Anthony was at Rimini, where was a great multitude of heretics whom he desired to lead to the light of the



Fr. Marie Bernard, sculp.

MERCIFUL HEART OF MARY

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you. To you was it granted, by commandment of God, to preserve Jonah the prophet, and after the third day to cast him forth on dry land, safe and whole. Ye did offer the tribute money to Christ our Lord, to Him, poor little one, that had not wherewithal to pay. Ye, by a rare mystery, were the food of the eternal King, Christ Jesus, before the resurrection and after, For all those things much are ye held to praise and bless God, that hath given you blessings so manifold and so great; yea, more even than to any other of His creatures." At these and the like words and admonitions from St. Anthony, the fishes began to open their mouths and bow their heads, and by these

true faith and to the paths of virtue, that he preached for many days and disputed with them concerning the faith of Christ and of the Holy Scriptures: yet they not only consented not unto his words, but even hardened their hearts and stubbornly refused to hear him. Wherefore St. Anthony, by divine inspiration, went one day to the bank of the river, hard by the sea-shore, and standing there on the bank of the river, between it and the sea, began to speak to the fishes after the manner of a preacher sent by God, "Hear the word of God, ye fishes of the sea and of the river, since the miscreant heretics scorn to hear it." And when he had thus spoken, anon there came towards the bank such a multitude of fishes, great and small, and middling, that never before in those seas, nor in that river, had so great a multitude been seen; and all held their heads out of the water in great peace and gentleness and perfect order, and remained intent on the lips of St. Anthony: for in front of him and nearest to the bank were the lesser fishes; and beyond them were those of middling size; and then behind, where the water was deepest, were the greater fishes. The fishes being then mustered in such order and array, St. Anthony began to preach to them solemnly, and spake thus, "Ye fishes, my brothers, much are ye held, according to your power, to thank God our Creator, who hath given you so noble an element for your habitation; for at your pleasure have ye waters, sweet and salt, and He hath given you many places of refuge to shelter you from the tempests; He hath likewise given you a pure and clear element, and food whereby ye can live. God, your Creator, bountiful and kind, when He created you, commanded you to increase and multiply, and gave you His blessing; then, in the universal deluge and when all other animals were perishing, you alone did God preserve from harm. Moreover, He hath given you fins that ye may fare whithersoever it may please you. To you was it granted, by commandment of God, to preserve Jonah the prophet, and after the third day to cast him forth on dry land, safe and whole. Ye did offer the tribute money to Christ our Lord, to Him, poor little one, that had not wherewithal to pay. Ye, by a rare mystery, were the food of the eternal King, Christ Jesus, before the resurrection and after. For all those things much are ye held to praise and bless God, that hath given you blessings so manifold and so great; yea, more even than to any other of His creatures." At these and the like words and admonitions from St. Anthony, the fishes began to open their mouths and bow their heads, and by these

who had fallen met them, carrying the log on his head and singing *Te Deum laudamus* with a loud voice. And seeing the friars marvel greatly, he related to them, in order, all the manner of his fall, and how St. Francis had delivered him from all peril. Then all the friars came with him together to that place, singing most devoutly the aforesaid psalm, *Te Deum laudamus*, praising and giving thanks to God, and to St. Francis, for the miracle he had wrought for one of his friars.

St. Francis then, as hath been told, persevered in that fast, and albeit he endured many assaults of the devil, none the less did he receive many consolations from God, not only by visits of angels, but likewise of wild birds; for all the time of that lent, a falcon that had built her nest hard by his cell awoke him every night, a little before matins, by her singing and by beating her wings against his cell, and she departed not until he had risen up to say matins. And when St. Francis was more weary at one time than another, or more sick, or more feeble, this falcon, after the manner of a discreet and compassionate person, sang later. And so St. Francis had great pleasure of this clock; for the great solicitude of this falcon drove all sloth away from him and urged him to prayer, and beyond this, she oftentimes by day dwelt familiarly with him. Finally, as to this second consideration, St. Francis, being much weakened in body, in part by his great abstinence, and in part by the assaults of the devil, and being fain to comfort his body with the spiritual food of the soul, began to meditate on the ineffable glory and joy of the blessed in the life eternal; and he began to beseech God to grant him the grace of some foretaste of that joy. And while he remained thus meditating, anon an angel appeared to him with exceeding great splendour, that held a viol in his left hand and a bow in his right; and as St. Francis stood all dazed at this vision, the angel drew his bow once upwards across the viol; and straightway St. Francis heard such sweet melody that it ravished his soul and lifted him beyond all bodily sense, so that, as he afterwards related to his companions, he doubted lest his soul had wholly parted from his body, by reason of the unbearable sweetness, if the angel had drawn the bow downwards again. And this is all that concerneth the second consideration.

III. *Touching the third consideration of the sacred, hallowed stigmas.*

Coming to the third consideration, to wit, of the seraphic vision, and of the imprinting of the sacred, hallowed stigmas, be it known that the feast of the Most Holy Cross in the month of

spying on me? Tell me, by holy obedience, if thou didst see or hear aught?" Friar Leo answered, "Father, I heard thee speak and say many times, 'Who art Thou, my God most sweet? What am I, thy unprofitable servant and vilest of worms?' " And then Friar Leo knelt down before St. Francis and confessed his sin of disobedience, for that he had done contrary to his commands, craving forgiveness of him with many tears. And thereafter he entreated him devoutly to interpret to him those words he had heard, and tell him those he had not understood. Then St. Francis, seeing that God had revealed to this lowly Friar Leo, because of his purity and simplicity, or in sooth had suffered him to hear and behold certain things, deigned to reveal to him and interpret to him all those things he asked of him. And he spake thus, "Know thou, friar, little sheep of Jesus Christ, that when I was saying those words that thou didst hear, two lights were shown to me within my soul—one, the knowledge and understanding of myself; the other, the knowledge and understanding of the Creator. When I said, 'Who art Thou, my God most sweet?' then was I illumined by the light of contemplation, whereby I beheld the depths of the infinite goodness and wisdom and power of God. And when I said, 'What am I, etc.?' I was in the light of contemplation, whereby I beheld the deplorable depths of my own vileness and misery; and therefore I said, 'Who art Thou, Lord, infinite in goodness and wisdom, that deignest to visit me that am a vile and abominable worm?' And God was in that flame thou sawest, who spake to me in that vision even as of old He had spoken to Moses. And among other things He said, He asked of me to make Him three gifts; and I answered, 'My Lord, I am wholly Thine; well Thou knowest I have naught save tunic, cord, and breeches, and even these three things are Thine; what, then, can I offer or give unto Thy Majesty?' Then God said, 'Search in thy bosom and offer Me what thou findest there.' I sought there and found a ball of gold, and this I offered to God; and thus did I thrice, according as God had thrice bidden me. And then thrice knelt I down, and blessed and gave thanks to God that had given me wherewithal to offer to Him. And straightway it was given me to know that those three offers signified holy obedience, most exalted poverty, and most resplendent chastity, which God had vouchsafed to me by His grace to observe so perfectly that my conscience reproved me of naught. And even as thou sawest me place my hands in my bosom and offer to God those three virtues signified

by the three balls of gold that God had placed in my bosom, even so hath God given me this virtue in my soul—that for all the good and for all the grace He hath bestowed upon me by His most holy goodness, I ever in my heart and with my lips do praise and magnify Him. These are the words thou didst hear when thou sawest me lift up my hands thrice. But beware, friar, little sheep; go thou not spying upon me, but return to thy cell with God's blessing, and have diligent care of me: for yet a few days and God shall work such great and wondrous things on this mountain that all the world shall marvel thereat; for He shall do things, new and strange, such as never hath He done to any creature in this world." These things said, St. Francis had the book of the gospels brought to him, for God had put it into his soul that by opening the book of the gospels thrice, those things that God was pleased to do with him should be shown forth. And when the book was brought, St. Francis betook himself to prayer, and the prayer ended, he had the book opened thrice by the hand of Friar Leo, and in the name of the most holy Trinity; and even as it pleased the divine providence, ever in those three openings the Passion of Christ was displayed to him. Through which thing it was given him to understand that even as he had followed Christ in the acts of his life, so was he to follow Him and conform himself unto Him in the afflictions and sorrows of the Passion, ere he passed from this life. And from that time forth St. Francis began to taste and feel more bounteously the sweetness of divine contemplation and of divine visitations. Among which, he had one, immediate and preparatory to the imprinting of the divine stigmas, in this form. The day that goeth before the feast of the Most Holy Cross in the month of September, as St. Francis was praying in secret in his cell, the angel of God appeared to him and spake thus to him in God's name, "I am come to comfort and admonish thee that thou humbly prepare thee and make thee ready, with all patience, to receive that which God willeth to give thee and to work in thee." St. Francis answered, "I am ready to endure patiently all things that my Lord would do with me." This said, the angel departed. The day following, to wit, the day of the Most Holy Cross, St. Francis, on the morn before daybreak, knelt down betimes in prayer before the door of his cell; and turning his face eastwards, prayed in this wise, "O my Lord Jesus Christ, two graces do I pray Thee to grant unto me ere I die: the first, that while I live I may feel in my body and in my soul, so

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far as is possible, that sorrow, sweet Lord, that Thou didst suffer in the hour of Thy bitterest Passion; the second is, that I may feel in my heart, so far as may be possible, that exceeding love wherewith, O Son of God, Thou wast enkindled to endure willingly for us sinners agony so great." And remaining a long time thus praying, he knew that God would hear him; and that, so far as might be possible to a mere creature, thus far would it be vouchsafed to him to suffer the aforesaid things. St. Francis, having this promise, began to contemplate most devoutly the Passion of Christ and His infinite love; and the fervour of devotion waxed so within him that through love and through compassion he was wholly changed into Jesus. And being thus inflamed by this contemplation, he beheld, that same morning, a seraph with six resplendent and flaming wings come down from heaven; which seraph, with swift flight, drew nigh to St. Francis so that he could discern him, and he knew clearly that he had the form of a man crucified; and thus were his wings disposed: two wings were extended over his head; two were spread out in flight; and the other two covered the whole of the body. St. Francis, beholding this, was sore afraid, and yet was he filled with sweetness and sorrow mingled with wonder. Joy had he, exceeding great, at the gracious aspect of Christ that appeared to him thus familiarly and looked on him so graciously; but, on the other hand, seeing him nailed upon the cross, he suffered unspeakable grief and compassion. Thereafter, he marvelled greatly at so stupendous and unwonted a vision, well knowing that the infirmity of the Passion doth not accord with the immortality of the seraphic spirit. And being in this wonderment, it was revealed by the seraph who appeared to him, that that vision had been shown to him in such form, by divine providence, in order that he might understand he was to be changed into the express similitude of the crucified Christ in this wondrous vision, not by bodily martyrdom but by spiritual fire. Then the whole mount of La Verna seemed to flame forth with dazzling splendour, that shone and illumined all the mountains and the valleys round about, as were the sun shining on the earth. Wherefore when the shepherds that were watching in that country saw the mountain aflame and so much brightness round about, they were sore afraid, according as they afterwards told the friars, and affirmed that that flame had endured over the mount of La Verna for the space of an hour and more. Likewise, certain muleteers that were going to Romagna, arose up at the brightness of this

light which shone through the windows of the inns of that country, and thinking the sun had risen, saddled and loaded their beasts. And as they went their way, they saw the said light wane and the real sun rise. Now Christ appeared in that same seraphic vision, and revealed to St. Francis certain secret and high things that St. Francis would never, during his life, disclose to any man; but, after his death, he revealed them, according as is set forth hereafter. And the words were these, "Knowest thou," said Christ, "what I have done to thee? I have given thee the stigmas that are the marks of my Passion, in order that thou be My standard-bearer. And even as I, on the day of my death, descended into limbo and delivered all the souls I found there by virtue of these My stigmas, so do I grant to thee that every year, on the day of thy death, thou mayst go to purgatory and deliver all the souls thou shalt find there of thy three orders—Minors, Sisters, and Penitents—and others likewise that shall have had great devotion to thee, and thou shalt lead them up to the glory of paradise in order that thou be conformed to Me in thy death, even as thou art in thy life." This wondrous vision having vanished, after a great space, this secret converse left in the heart of St. Francis a burning flame of divine love, exceeding great, and in his flesh, a marvellous image and imprint of the Passion of Christ. For the marks of the nails began anon to be seen on the hands and on the feet of St. Francis, in the same manner as he had then seen them in the body of Jesus Christ crucified that had appeared to him in the form of a seraph: and thus his hands and feet seemed nailed through the middle with nails, the heads whereof were in the palms of his hands and in the soles of his feet, outside the flesh; and the points came out through the backs of the hands and the feet, so far, that they were bent back and clinched in such wise that one might easily have put a finger of the hand through the bent and clinched ends outside the flesh, even as through a ring: and the heads of the nails were round and black. In like fashion, the image of a lance-wound, unhealed, inflamed, and bleeding, was seen in his right side, whence thereafter blood came out many times from the holy breast of St. Francis and stained his tunic and his nether garments with blood. Wherefore his companions, before they learned these things from him, perceiving nevertheless that he never uncovered his hands or his feet, and that he could not put the soles of his feet to the ground, and finding thereafter that his tunic and nether garments were all bloody when they washed them,

a little more, and he had fallen swooning on the ground. And finally, as to this third consideration: St. Francis having completed the forty days' fast of St. Michael the Archangel, made ready by divine revelation to return to St. Mary of the Angels. Wherefore he called Friar Masseo and Friar Angelo to him, and after many words and many holy admonitions, commended the holy mountain to them with all the zeal in his power, saying that it behoved him, together with Friar Leo, to return to St. Mary of the Angels. This said, he took leave of them and blessed them in the name of the crucified Jesus; and deigned, in answer to their prayers, to stretch forth to them his most holy hands, adorned with those glorious and sacred and hallowed stigmas, that they might see them and touch them and kiss them, and leaving the friars thus comforted he departed from them and descended the holy mountain.

IV. *Touching the fourth consideration of the sacred, hallowed stigmas.*

Touching the fourth consideration, be it known, that after the true love of Christ had perfectly transformed St. Francis into God and into the true image of Christ crucified, that angelic man, having completed the fast of forty days in honour of St. Michael the Archangel on the holy mount of La Verna, came down from the mountain with Friar Leo and a devout peasant on whose ass he rode, because, by reason of the nails in his feet, he could not well go a-foot. And when he was come down from the mountain, forasmuch as the fame of his sanctity was noised abroad throughout the land (because the shepherds that had seen the mount of La Verna all aflame had said it was a sign of some great miracle God had wrought on St. Francis), the folk of that country-side all flocked to behold him as he passed by: men and women, small and great, all with great devotion and desire, strove to touch him and to kiss his hands. And St. Francis, being unable to deny his hands to the devotion of the people, albeit he had bound up the palms, nevertheless bound them over again, and covered them with his sleeves, and only held forth his uncovered fingers for them to kiss. But albeit he sought to conceal and hide the sacred mystery of the holy stigmas, that he might flee all occasion of worldly glory, it pleased God to show forth many miracles for His own glory, by virtue of the said sacred, hallowed stigmas, and notably on that journey from La Verna to St. Mary of the Angels. And very many other miracles thereafter were wrought in divers parts of the world, both during his life and after his glorious

devotion none could henceforth keep back his tears. And, from that time forth, he left the care and government of the Order in the hands of his vicar and of the ministers of the provinces, and then he said, "Now since I have laid aside the cares of the Order, because of my infirmities, I am henceforth held to naught save to pray to God for our Order, and to give a good example to the friars. And well I know, and truly, that if my sickness left me, the greatest aid I could give to the Order would be to pray unceasingly to God for it, and that He would defend it and guide it and preserve it." Now, as hath been said above, albeit St. Francis strove with all his might to conceal the sacred, hallowed stigmas, and, after he had received them, ever went about or remained with his hands swathed and his feet shod, it availed not but that many friars, in divers ways, saw and felt them; and especially the wound in his side, that he strove to conceal with the greatest diligence. Wherefore, a friar that served him, craftily contrived on a time to induce him to take off his tunic, that the dust might be shaken therefrom; and it being taken off in his presence, that friar saw clearly the wound in the side; and, putting forth his hand quickly, he touched his breast with three fingers, and felt the width and depth thereof; and in like manner his vicar saw it at that time. But Friar Ruffino, a man of very great contemplation, was most clearly certified thereof—he of whom St. Francis said on a time that there was no saintlier man in the world, and whom, for his holiness, he loved tenderly and granted to him all he desired. This Friar Ruffino certified himself and others in three ways of the sacred, hallowed stigmas, and especially of the wound in the side. The first way was this: The said Friar Ruffino, when he was about to wash the hose (which St. Francis wore so large that by drawing them well up he could cover the wound in his right side), was wont to look at them and consider them diligently; and every time he did so he found them stained with blood on the right side; wherefore he perceived, of a surety, that blood issued from the said wound: and St. Francis chid him, when he saw him unfold the clothes he took away from him, in order to see the said stains. The second way was, that the said Friar Ruffino on a time purposely put his fingers in the wound in the side, whereat St. Francis, for the pain he felt, cried out loudly, "God forgive thee, O Friar Ruffino, for that thou hast done this thing." The third way was, that on a time he craved with great earnestness that St. Francis would give him his cloak, as an exceeding great

knowest that two years now agone, when we were at Foligno, God revealed to thee the term of my life; and even so hath He revealed again to me that, yet a few days and the said term shall end during this sickness; and in this revelation God hath certified me that all my sins are remitted, and that I shall go to paradise. Until that revelation I bewailed my death and my sins; but since I had that revelation I am so filled with joy that I can weep no more; therefore do I sing, and will sing, to God, that hath given me the joy of His grace, and hath made me certain of the joys of the glory of paradise. Touching our departure hence, it pleaseth me well, and I consent thereto; but find ye some means to carry me, for by reason of my sickness I cannot walk." Then the friars took him in their arms, and so carried him, accompanied by many citizens. And when they came to an hospice that was on the way, St. Francis said to them that bore him, "Lay me down on the ground, and turn me towards the city." And when he was laid with his face towards Assisi, he blessed the city with many blessings, saying, "Blessed be thou of God, holy city, for many souls shall be saved because of thee, and in thee shall dwell many of God's servants; and from thee many shall be chosen to the kingdom of life everlasting." These words said, he had himself borne towards St. Mary of the Angels. And when they were come to St. Mary of the Angels they carried him to the infirmary, and there laid him down to rest. Then St. Francis called one of his companions to him, and spake to him thus, "Dearest friar, God hath revealed to me that on such a day in this sickness I shall pass from this life: and thou knowest that if the Lady Jacqueline of Settesoli, the dearest friend of our Order, came to hear of my death, and were not present, she would sorrow overmuch; therefore signify to her that she must straightway come hither, if she would see me alive." The friar answered, "Thou sayst but too true, father, for verily of the great devotion she hath for thee, it would be most unseemly if she were not present at thy death." "Go then," said St. Francis, "and fetch me ink and paper and pen, and write what I shall tell thee." And when he had brought them, St. Francis dictated the letter in this wise, "To the Lady Jacqueline, servant of God, greeting and fellowship of the Holy Ghost in our Lord Jesus Christ, from Friar Francis, Christ's poor little one. Know, dearest lady, that the blessed Christ hath revealed to me by His grace that the end of my life is at hand. Therefore, if thou wouldst find me yet alive, set forth when thou hast seen

as it pleased God, in that act of ready obedience he merited what by long years of prayer he had failed to merit. Wherefore no sooner were they outside the friary door than they encountered two stranger friars that seemed to have come from a far country; and one of them seemed young in years, the other aged and lean; and by reason of the bad weather, they were all bemired and wet. And this obedient friar, having great compassion on them, said to the companion with whom he went, "O my dearest brother, if the business wherefore we go may be delayed a while, forasmuch as these stranger friars have great need of being charitably received, prithee let me first go and wash their feet, and especially the feet of that aged friar that hath the greater need thereof, and you can wash the feet of this younger one: and then we will go our way on the affairs of the Order." This friar then consenting to the charity of his companion, they returned within, and receiving these stranger friars very charitably, they led them to the kitchen fire to warm and dry themselves; and at this fire eight other friars were warming themselves. And after they had stood a while at the fire, they drew them aside to wash their feet, according as they had agreed together. And as that obedient and devout friar was washing the feet of the aged stranger, and cleansing them from the mire, he looked, and beheld his feet marked with the sacred and hallowed stigmas; and straightway embracing them tenderly, for very joy and amazement, he began to cry, "Either thou art Christ, or thou art St. Francis." At this cry and at these words the friars that were by the fire rose up and with great trembling and reverence drew nigh to behold those glorious stigmas. And at their entreaties this aged friar suffered them to see them clearly and to touch them and kiss them. And as they marvelled yet more for very joy, he said to them, "Doubt not, nor fear, dearest friars, my children; I am your father, Friar Francis, who, according to God's will, established three Orders. And forasmuch as I have been entreated, these eight years past, by this friar that washeth my feet, and this day more fervently than ever, that I would reveal to him those secret words the seraph said to me, when he gave me the stigmas, which words I would never reveal during my life, this day, by commandment of God, and because of his perseverance and his ready obedience, when he renounced the sweetness of contemplation, I am sent by God to reveal to him, in your sight, what he asked of me." And St. Francis, turning towards that friar, spake thus, "Know, dearest friar, that when I was on the mount of La Verna, all

rapt in the contemplation of the Passion of Christ, in this seraphic vision I was by Christ thus stigmatised in my body; and then Christ said to me, 'Knowest thou what I have done to thee? I have given thee the marks of my Passion in order that thou mayst be My standard-bearer. And even as I, on the day of My death, descended into limbo and drew thence all the souls I found therein, by virtue of my stigmas, and led them up to paradise, so do I grant to thee from this hour (that thou mayst be conformed to Me in thy death as thou hast been in thy life) that after thou hast passed from this life thou shalt go every year, on the day of thy death, to purgatory, and shalt deliver all the souls thou shalt find there of thy three Orders, to wit, Minors, Sisters, and Penitents, and likewise the souls of thy devoted followers, and this, in virtue of thy stigmas that I have given thee; and thou shalt lead them to paradise.' And those words I told not while I lived in the world." This said, St. Francis and his companion vanished; and many friars thereafter heard this from those eight friars that were present at the vision and heard the words of St. Francis.

X. How St. Francis appeared after his death to Friar John of La Verna while he was at prayer.

On the mount of La Verna, St. Francis appeared on a time to Friar John of La Verna, a man of great sanctity, while he was at prayer, and remained and held converse with him a very long space; and at last being willed to depart, he spake thus, "Ask of me what thou wilt." Said Friar John, "Father, I pray thee, tell me that which for a long time I have desired to know, to wit, what you¹ were doing, and where you were, when the seraph appeared to you." St. Francis answers, "I was praying in that place where the chapel of Count Simon of Battifolle now stands, and I was craving two graces of my Lord Jesus Christ. The first was, that he would vouchsafe to me, during my life, to feel in my soul and in my body, so far as might be, all that pain He had felt in Himself at the time of His bitterest Passion. The second grace I asked of Him was that I should likewise feel in my heart that exceeding love wherewith he was enkindled to endure that Passion so great, for us sinners. And then God put in my heart that He would grant me to feel the one and the other, so far as might be possible to a mere creature: which thing was well fulfilled in me by the imprinting of the stigmas." Then Friar John asks of him if those secret words that the seraph said to him were after the manner that the aforesaid holy

¹ See note, p. 3.

a great company of angels and saints. And gazing at these things with great amaze he sees that when Christ passes before the chapter, St. Francis and all those friars kneel down; and St. Francis saith these words, "I pray Thee, my dearest Father and Lord, by that inestimable love Thou didst show forth to the generations of men when Thou didst die on the wood of the cross, have mercy on the soul of this my friar that burneth in this fire." And Christ answered naught but passed on. And He returns a second time, and passing before the chapter-room, St. Francis again kneels down with his friars as before and entreats Him in this wise, "I pray Thee, pitying Father and Lord, by the ineffable love Thou didst show to the generations of men when Thou didst die on the wood of the cross, have mercy on the soul of this my friar." And Christ, in like manner, passed on and heard him not. And going round the cloister He returned a third time and passed before the chapter-room; and then St. Francis, kneeling down as before, showed Him his hands and feet and breast, and spake thus, "I pray Thee, pitying Father and Lord, by that great pain and great consolation I felt when Thou didst imprint these stigmas on my flesh, have mercy on the soul of this my friar that is in this purgatorial fire." Marvellous to tell! Christ, being entreated this third time by St. Francis, in the name of his stigmas, straightway stays His steps and looks on the stigmas and answers his prayer and saith these words, "To thee, Francis, I grant the soul of thy friar." And thereby of a surety He willed to confirm and honour the glorious stigmas of St. Francis and openly signify that the souls of his friars that go to purgatory are delivered from their pains in no other way more readily than by virtue of his stigmas, and led to the glories of paradise; according to the words that Christ said to St. Francis when He imprinted them upon him. Wherefore, these words said, straightway that fire in the cloister vanished, and the dead friar came to St. Francis, and all that company of the blessed ascended to heaven with him, and with Christ their glorious King. Whereat this friar, his companion, that had prayed for him, had exceeding great joy when he beheld him delivered from the pains of purgatory and taken up to heaven; and thereafter he related this vision in due order to the other friars, and together with them gave praise and thanks to God.

XII. *How a noble knight, that had devotion to St. Francis, was certified of his death and of the sacred and hallowed stigmas.*

A noble knight of Massa di San Pietro, named Rudolph, that

had a great devotion to St. Francis, and who at length had received the habit of the third Order at his hands, was thuswise certified of the death of St. Francis and of his sacred and hallowed stigmas: When St. Francis was nigh unto death, the devil at that time entered into a woman of the said burg and tormented her cruelly, and withal made her speak with such subtle learning that she overcame all the wise men and learned doctors that came to dispute with her. And it fell out that the devil departed from her and left her free two days: and the third day he returned to her and afflicted her more cruelly than before. Rudolph, hearing this, goes to this woman, and asks of the devil that possessed her, for what cause he had departed from her two days, and then returned and tormented her more harshly than before. The devil answers, "When I left her, it was because I, with all my companions that are in these parts, assembled together and went in mighty force to the death-bed of the beggar Francis, to dispute with him and capture his soul; but his soul being surrounded and defended by a multitude of angels, greater than we were, was carried by them straight to heaven, and we went away confounded; so I restore and make up to this miserable woman what I let pass by during those two days." Then Rudolph conjured him in God's name to tell the whole truth of the holiness of St. Francis, who he said was dead, and of St. Clare that was alive. The devil answers, "Willy-nilly, I will tell thee what there is of truth in this. God the Father was so wroth against the sinners of this world that it seemed He would, in brief time, give His last judgment against men and women, and, if they did not amend, destroy them from the face of the earth. But Christ, His Son, praying for sinners, promised to renew His life and His Passion in a man, to wit, in Francis, the poor little one and a beggar, through whose life and teaching He would bring back many from all over the world to the way of truth, and many also to repentance. And now, to show forth to the world what He had wrought in St. Francis, He hath willed that the stigmas of His Passion that He had imprinted on St. Francis's body during his life, might, at his death, be seen and touched by many. Likewise, the Mother of Christ promised to renew her virginal purity and her humility in a woman, to wit, in Sister Clare, in such wise that by her example she would deliver many thousands of women from our hands. And thus God the Father, being softened, did delay His final sentence." Then Rudolph, desiring to know of a surety if the devil, that is the abode and

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of that way only once did he satisfy his hunger, by reason of the great poverty of all that land. Wherefore, asking alms and finding none that would give him charity, he happened by chance that evening on a threshing floor, where some few grains of beans were left: these he gathered up, and these were his supper. And here he slept that night, for he was ever fain to abide in solitary places, far from the haunts of men, that he might the better give himself up to prayer and to vigils. And in that supper he was so greatly comforted by God, that if he had eaten of divers viands he deemed he would not have eaten so full a meal. And journeying on, he finds by the way a poor man that craves alms, for love of God; and Friar Giles, most charitable of men, having naught save his habit to cover his body, cut off the cowl from his cloak, and gave it to that poor man for love of God; and thus, sans cowl, he journeyed for twenty days together. And returning by way of Lombardy, he was hailed by a man, to whom he went right gladly, thinking to receive some alms of him: and stretching forth his hand, this man put a pair of dice therein, and invited him to play a game. Friar Giles answered, very humbly, "God forgive thee this, my son." And so journeying through the world, he was much mocked at, and endured all these things meekly.

III. *Of Friar Giles's way of life when he went to the Holy Sepulchre.*

Friar Giles went, by leave of St. Francis, to visit the Holy Sepulchre of Christ, and came to the port of Brindisi, and there stayed over many days, for there was no ship ready. And Friar Giles, desiring to live by his labour, begged a pitcher, and filling it with water, went about the city crying, "Who lacks water?" And for his toil he received bread and things needful for the life of the body, both for himself and for his companion. And then he crossed the seas, and visited the Holy Sepulchre of Christ, and the other holy places, with great devotion. And journeying back, he abode many days in the city of Ancona; and forasmuch as he was wont to live by the labour of his hands, he made baskets of rushes and sold them, not for money, but for bread for himself and for his companion; and he carried the dead to burial for the aforesaid price. And when these things failed him, he returned to the table of Jesus Christ, asking alms from door to door. And thus, with much toil and poverty, he came back to St. Mary of the Angels.

IV. *How Friar Giles praised obedience more than prayer.*

A friar on a time was at prayer in his cell, and his warden

bade tell him, by obedience, to go questing for alms. Whereupon he straightway went to Friar Giles and said, "Father mine, I was at prayer, and the warden hath bidden me go for bread, and meseems 'twere better to remain at prayer." Friar Giles answered, "My son, hast thou not yet learned or known what prayer is? True prayer is to do the will of our superior; and it is a token of great pride in him who, having put his neck under the yoke of holy obedience, refuseth it for any cause, in order to work his own will, even though it may seem to him that he is working more perfectly. The perfectly obedient religious is like unto a knight mounted on a mighty steed, by whose power he passeth fearlessly through the midst of the fray; and contrariwise, the disobedient and complaining and unwilling religious is like unto one that is mounted on a lean and infirm and vicious horse, because with a little striving he is slain or taken by the enemy. I say unto thee, were there a man of such devotion and exaltation of mind that he spake with angels, and while thus speaking he were called by his superior, straightway he ought to leave his converse with the angels and obey his superior."

V. How Friar Giles lived by the labour of his hands.

Friar Giles, being on a time in the friary at Rome, was minded to live by bodily toil, even as he was ever wont to do since he entered the Order, and he wrought in this wise: Betimes, in the morning, he heard mass with much devotion, then he went to the wood that was eight miles distant from Rome and carried a faggot of wood back on his shoulders, and sold it for bread, or aught else to eat. One time, among others, when he was returning with a load of wood, a woman asked to buy it; and being agreed on the price, he carried it to her house. The woman, notwithstanding the bargain, gave him much more than she had promised, for she saw he was a religious. Saith Friar Giles, "Good woman, I would not that the sin of avarice overcame me, therefore I will not take a greater price than I bargained with thee." And not only would he take no more, but he took only the half of the price agreed upon, and went his way; wherefore that woman conceived a very great devotion for him. Friar Giles did any honest work for hire, and always gave heed to holy honesty; he gave a hand to gather olives and to tread the wine-press for the peasants. Standing on a day in the marketplace, a certain man sought hands to beat down his walnuts, and begged one to beat them down for him, at a price; but he made excuse, saying it was very far away, and the trees were

God." But Friar Giles was minded to go forth, and he went out of Rome to the top of a high mountain where in days of old stood a burg, and he found there a deserted church that was called St. Lawrence, and therein he and his companion entered, and remained in prayer and in many meditations; and for that they were not known, small reverence or devotion was shown to them. Wherefore they suffered great want; and moreover there fell a great snowstorm that endured many days. They could not issue from the church, and naught was sent them to live upon, and of themselves they had no store; and so they remained, shut in for three mortal days. Friar Giles, seeing he could not live by his labour, and for alms could not go forth, said to his companion, "My dearest brother, let us call on our Lord Jesus Christ with a loud voice, that of His pity He may provide for us in this sore extremity and need; for certain monks, being in dire need, have called on God, and divine providence did provide for them in their needs." And after the example of these, they betook them to prayer, and besought God, with all affection, that He would provide a remedy in so sore a need. God, that is all-pitiful, had regard to their faith and devotion and simplicity and fervour in this wise: A certain man was looking towards the church where Friar Giles and his companion were, and being inspired by God, said within himself, "Haply in that church there be some good souls doing penance and, in this season of heavy snows, have naught for their needs, and by reason thereof may die of hunger." And urged by the Holy Ghost he said, "Certes, I will go and learn if my foreboding be true or not." And he took some loaves and a vessel of wine and set forth on his journey, and with very great difficulty he won his way to the aforesaid church, where he found Friar Giles and his companion devoutly engaged in prayer; and they were so ravaged by hunger that in their aspect they had the semblance of dead rather than of living men. He had great compassion on them, and having refreshed and comforted them, he returned and told his neighbours of the extreme poverty and need of these friars, and besought them, for love of God, to provide for them; whereupon many, after the example of this man, brought them bread and wine and other necessities to eat, for love of God; and through all that lent they ordered among themselves that the needs of these friars should be provided for. And Friar Giles, considering the great mercy of God and the charity of these folk, said to his companion, "My dearest brother, but now have we prayed to God

him because he had not revealed the virtue and the glory of Friar Giles, he sent for the friars minor, and there came to him five couples of them; and having called them, together with the preaching friars, he declared the aforesaid vision to them with great devotion, and seeking very diligently they found that on that selfsame day these twain had passed from this life.

X. *How God had given certain graces to Friar Giles and of the day of his death.*

Friar Bonaventura of Bagnoreggio was wont to say of Friar Giles that God had given and vouchsafed singular grace to him for all those that commended themselves to him, with devout intent, in the things that appertained to the soul. He wrought many miracles during his life and after his death, as appeareth from his legend; and he passed from this life to supernal glory, in the year of our Lord one thousand two hundred and fifty-two, on the day of the feast of St. George; and he is buried at Perugia in the house of the friars minor.

HERE BEGINNETH THE CHAPTERS OF CERTAIN DOCTRINES
AND NOTABLE SAYINGS OF FRIAR GILES

I. *Chapter of vices and virtues.*

The grace of God and the virtues are the way and the ladder whereby we ascend to heaven; but the vices and the sins are the way and the ladder whereby we descend to the depths of hell. Vices and sins are poison and deadly venom; but virtues and good works are healing treacle.¹ One grace bringeth and draweth after it another. Grace desireth not to be praised, and vice cannot endure to be despised. The mind is at peace and resteth in humility: patience is her daughter. Holy purity of heart seeth God; but true devotion savoureth him. If thou lovest, thou shalt be loved. If thou servest, thou shalt be served. If thou fearest, thou shalt be feared. If thou bearest thyself well towards others, it behoves that others bear themselves well towards thee. But blessed is he that truly loveth and desireth not to be loved. Blessed is he that serveth and desireth not to be served. Blessed is he that feareth and desireth not to be feared. Blessed is he that beareth himself well towards others, and desireth not that others bear themselves well towards him. But forasmuch as these things are exceeding high, and

¹ Compare Chaucer, "Christ which that is to every harm treacle." The Venetians were famed for their skilful preparation of this medicinal compound, which was universally regarded in the Middle Ages as an antidote against snake bites and other poisons.

of great perfection, the fool can neither know them nor attain to them. Three things are exceeding high and useful, and he that shall have attained to them shall never fall. The first is, if thou endure willingly, and with gladness, every tribulation that shall befall thee, for love of Jesus Christ. The second is, if thou humble thyself every day in all things thou doest, and in all things thou seest. The third is, if thou love steadfastly, and with all thy heart, that highest celestial and invisible good, which cannot be seen with mortal eyes. Those things that are most despised and most reviled by worldly men are verily most acceptable and pleasing to God and to His saints; and those things that are most honoured and most loved and are most pleasing to worldly men, those are most despised and scorned and most hated by God and by His saints. This foul unseemliness proceedeth from the ignorance and the wickedness of men, for the wretched man loveth most those things he should hate, and hateth those things he should love. Once on a time, Friar Giles asked another friar, saying, "Tell me, dearest, is thine a good soul?" That friar answered, "This I know not." Then said Friar Giles, "My brother, I would have thee to know that holy contrition and holy humility and holy charity and holy devotion and holy joy make the good and blessed soul."

II. *Chapter of faith.*

All things whatsoever that can be thought in the heart or told with the tongue, or seen with the eyes, or touched with the hands—all are as naught in respect of, and in comparison with, those things that cannot be thought, nor seen, nor touched. All the saints and all the sages that have passed away, and all those that are in this present life, and all that shall come after us, that spake or wrote, or that shall speak or write, of God, ne'er told nor e'er can tell of God so much as a grain of millet would be in respect of, or in comparison with, the heavens and the earth, nay, even a thousand thousandfold less. For all scripture that speaketh of God, speaketh of Him with stammering voice, as the mother doth who prattles with her child, that could not understand her words if she spoke in other fashion. Friar Giles said, on a time, to a worldly judge, "Believest thou that the gifts of God are great?" The judge answered, "Yea, I believe." Whereat Friar Giles said, "I will show thee how that thou believest not faithfully." And then he said to him, "What price is all thou possessest in this world worth?" The judge answered, "'Tis worth, perchance, a thousand pounds." Then said Friar Giles, "Wouldst thou give those thy possessions

head, to wit, through disobedience; and again by the Pharisee, whereof Christ speaketh in the gospel, and by many other ensamples. And so contrariwise: for all the great and good things that have e'er come to pass in this world, have come to pass through the abasement of the head, to wit, through the humility of the mind, even as is proven by the blessed and most humble Virgin Mary, and by the publican, and by the holy thief on the cross, and by many other ensamples in the scriptures. And, therefore, it were well if we could find some great and heavy weight that we might ever hang about our necks, in order that it might ever bear us down, to wit, that it might ever make us humble ourselves. A friar asked Friar Giles, "Tell me, father, how shall we flee from this sin of pride?" To whom Friar Giles answered, "My brother, be persuaded of this: never hope to be able to flee from pride, except thou first place thy mouth where thou hast set thy feet; but if thou wilt consider well the blessings of God, then shalt thou know that of thy duty thou art held to bow thy head. And, again, if thou wilt think much on thy faults and on thy manifold offences against God, most of all wilt thou have cause to humble thyself. But woe unto those that would be honoured for their wickedness! One degree in humility hath he risen that knoweth himself to be the enemy of his own good; another degree in humility is to render to others those things that are theirs, and not to appropriate them to ourselves, to wit, that every good thing and every virtue a man findeth in himself, he ought not to own it to himself, but to God alone, from whom proceedeth every grace and every virtue and every good thing; but all sin or passion of the soul, or whatsoever vice a man find in himself, this should he own to himself, since it proceedeth from himself and from his own wickedness, and not from others. Blessed is that man that knoweth himself, and deemeth himself vile in the sight of God, and even so in the sight of men. Blessed is he that ever judgeth himself and condemneth himself, and not others, for he shall not be judged at that dread and last judgment eternal. Blessed is he that shall bend diligently under the yoke of obedience and under the judgment of others, even as the holy apostles did before and after they received the Holy Spirit." Likewise said Friar Giles, "He that would gain and possess perfect peace and rest must needs account every man his superior; he must ever hold himself the subject and inferior of others. Blessed is that man who in his deeds and in his words desireth not to be seen or known, save only in that

unalloyed being, and in that simple adornment which God created and adorned him with. Blessed is the man that knoweth how to treasure up and hide divine revelations and consolations, for there is nothing so hidden but that God shall reveal it, when it pleaseth Him. If a man were the most perfect and the holiest man in the world, and yet deemed and believed himself the most miserable of sinners and the vilest wretch on the earth—therein is true humility. Holy humility knoweth not how to prate, and the blessed fear of God knoweth not how to speak." Said Friar Giles, "Methinks humility is like unto a thunderbolt; for even as the bolt maketh a terrible crash, breaking, crushing, and burning all that it findeth in its path, and then naught of that bolt is found, so, in like manner, humility smiteth and scattereth and burneth and consumeth every wickedness and every vice and every sin; and yet is found to be naught in itself. The man that possesseth humility findeth grace in the sight of God, through that humility, and perfect peace with his neighbour."

IV. Chapter of the holy fear of God.

He that feareth naught showeth that he hath naught to lose. The holy fear of God ordaineth, governeth, and ruleth the soul and maketh it to come to a state of grace. If any man possess any grace or divine virtue, holy fear is that which preserveth it. And he that hath not yet gained virtue or grace, holy fear maketh him to gain it. The holy fear of God is the bringer of divine graces, for it maketh the soul, wheresoever she abideth, to attain quickly to holy virtue and divine graces. All creatures that have fallen into sin would never have fallen if they had had the holy fear of God. But this holy gift of fear is given only to the perfect; for the more perfect a man is, the more godfearing and humble he is. Blessed is he that knoweth he is in a dungeon in this world, and ever remembereth how grievously he hath offended his Lord. A man ought ever to fear pride with a great fear, lest it thrust against him and make him fall from the state of grace wherein he standeth; for a man can never stand secure being girt about with enemies; and our enemies are the seductions of this miserable world and our own flesh that, together with the devil, is ever the enemy of the soul. A man hath need of greater fear lest his own wickedness overcome him and beguile him than of any other of his enemies. It is impossible that a man can rise and ascend to any divine grace, or virtue, or persevere therein, without holy fear. He that feareth not God goeth in danger of perishing, and in yet greater peril of ever-

lasting perdition. The fear of God maketh a man to obey humbly, and maketh him bow down his head under the yoke of obedience; and the greater the fear a man hath, the more fervently doth he worship. Not a little gift is prayer to whosoever it is given. The virtuous words of men, however great they may appear to me, are not therefore accounted nor rewarded according to our measure, but according to the measure and good pleasure of God; for God regardeth not the sum of our toils, but the sum of our love and humility. Therefore, the better part for us is to love always, and fear with great humility, and never put trust in ourselves for any good thing; ever having suspicion of those thoughts that are begotten in the mind under the semblance of good.

V. Chapter of holy patience.

He that with steadfast humility and patience suffereth and endureth tribulation, through fervent love of God, soon shall attain to great grace and virtues, and shall be lord of this world, and shall have a foretaste of the next and glorious world. Everything that a man doeth, good or evil, he doeth it unto himself; therefore, be not offended with him that doeth thee an injury, for rather oughtest thou to have humble patience with him, and only grieve within thee for his sin, taking compassion on him and praying God earnestly for him. The stronger a man is to endure and suffer patiently injuries and tribulations, for love of God, the greater is he in the sight of God, and no more; and the weaker a man is to endure pain and adversity, for love of God, the less is he in the sight of God. If any man praise thee, speaking well of thee, render thou that praise to God alone; and if any man speak evil of thee, or revile thee, aid thou him, speaking evil of thyself, and worse. If thou wilt make good thine own cause, strive ever to make it appear ill, and uphold thy fellow's cause, ever imputing guilt to thyself, and ever praising and truly excusing thy neighbour. When any man would contend or have the law of thee, if thou wouldst win, lose; and then shalt thou win; but if thou wouldst go to law to win, when thou thinkest to win, then shalt thou find thou hast lost heavily. Therefore, my brother, believe of a surety, the straight way of salvation is the way to perdition. But when we are not good bearers of tribulation, then we cannot be seekers after everlasting consolations. Much greater consolation and a more worthy thing it is to suffer injuries and revilings patiently, without murmuring, for love of God, than to feed a hundred poor folk and fast continually every day.

But how shall it profit a man, or what shall it avail him, to despise himself and afflict his body with great fastings and vigils and scourgings, if he be unable to endure a small injury from his neighbour? For which thing, a man shall receive a much greater reward and greater merit than for all the afflictions a man can give to himself of his own will; because to endure the revilings and injuries of one's neighbour, with humble patience and without murmuring, purgeth sin away much more quickly than doth a fount of many tears. Blessed is the man that ever holdeth before the eyes of the mind the memory of his sins and the good gifts of God; for he will endure with patience every tribulation and adversity, whereby he looketh for great consolations. The truly humble man looketh for no reward nor merit from God, but striveth ever only how he can give satisfaction in all things, owning himself God's debtor: and every good thing he hath, that, he knoweth he hath through the goodness of God, and not through any merit of his own; and every adversity he endureth, he knoweth it to be truly because of his sins. A certain friar asked Friar Giles, saying, "If in our time any great adversity, or tribulation, should befall, what should we do in that case?" To whom Friar Giles answered, saying, "My brother, I would have thee know that if the Lord rained down stones and arrows from heaven, they could not injure nor do any hurt to us, if we were such men as we ought to be; for if a man were verily what he ought to be, he would transmute every evil and every tribulation into good; for we know what the apostle said, that all things work together for good to them that love God: even so all things work together for ill and to the condemnation of him that hath an evil will. If thou wilt save thyself and go to celestial glory, thou shalt desire no vengeance nor punishment of any creature; for the heritage of the saints is ever to do good and ever to suffer evil. If thou knewest in very truth how grievously thou hast offended thy Creator, thou wouldst know that it is a worthy and just thing that all creatures should persecute thee and give thee pain and tribulation, in order that these creatures might take vengeance for the offences thou hast done to their Creator. A high and great virtue it is for a man to overcome himself; for he that overcometh himself shall overcome all his enemies, and attain to all good. And yet a greater virtue would it be if a man suffered himself to be overcome by all men; for he would be lord over all his enemies, to wit, his vices, the devil, the world, and his own flesh. If thou wilt save thyself,

renounce and despise all consolation that the things of this world and all mortal creatures can give thee; for greater and more frequent are the falls that come through prosperity and through consolation than are those that come through adversity and tribulation." Once on a time a religious was murmuring against his superior, in the presence of Friar Giles, by reason of a harsh obedience he had laid upon him; to whom Friar Giles said, "My dearest, the more thou murmurest the heavier is the weight of thy burden, and the harder shall it be to thee to bear; and the more humbly and devoutly thou shalt place thy neck under the yoke of holy obedience, the lighter and easier will that obedience be to bear. But methinks thou wouldst not be rebuked in this world, for love of Christ, and yet wouldst be with Christ in the next world; thou wouldst not be persecuted or cursed for Christ's sake in this world, and in the next, wouldst be blessed and received by Christ; thou wouldst not labour in this world, and in the next, wouldst rest and be at peace. I tell thee, friar, friar, thou art sorely beguiled; for by the way of poverty and of shame and of reviling a man cometh to true celestial honour; and by enduring patiently mocking and cursing, for love of Christ, a man shall come to the glory of Christ. Therefore, well saith a worldly proverb,

He whose gifts cost him no woe,
Good gifts from others must forgoe.

How useful is the nature of the horse! for how swiftly soever the horse runneth, he yet letteth himself be ruled and guided, and leapeth hither and thither, and forward and backward, according to the will of his rider: and so, likewise, ought the servant of God to do, to wit, he should let himself be ruled, guided, turned aside, and bent, according to the will of his superior, or of any other man, for love of Christ. If thou wouldst be perfect, strive diligently to be full of grace and virtue, and fight valiantly against vice, enduring patiently every adversity for the love of thy Lord, that was mocked and afflicted and reviled and scourged and crucified and slain for love of thee, and not for His own sin, nor for His glory, nor for His profit, but only for thy salvation. And to do all this that I have told thee, above all things it is necessary that thou overcome thyself; for little shall it profit a man to lead and draw souls to God, if first he overcome not himself, and lead and draw himself to God."

VI. *Chapter of sloth.*

The slothful man loseth both this world and the next; for himself beareth no fruit and he profiteth not another. It is impossible for a man to gain virtue without diligence and great toil. When thou canst abide in a safe place stand not in a perilous place: he abideth in a safe place who striveth and suffereth and worketh and toileth through God, and for the Lord God; and not through fear of punishment, or for a price, but for love of God. The man that refuseth to suffer and labour for love of Christ, verily he refuseth the glory of Christ; and even as diligence is useful and profitable to us, so is negligence ever against us. Even as sloth is the way that leads to hell, so is holy diligence the way that leads to heaven. A man ought to be very diligent to gain and keep virtue and the grace of God, ever labouring faithfully with this grace and virtue; for many times it befalleth that the man who laboureth not faithfully loseth the fruit for the leaves, or the grain for the straw. To some God giveth of His grace good fruit with few leaves; to others He giveth fruit and leaves together; and there are others that have neither fruit nor leaves. Methinks 'tis a greater thing to know how to guard and keep well the good gifts and graces given to us by the Lord, than to know how to gain them. For albeit a man may know well how to gain, yet if he know not how to save and treasure up, he shall never be rich; but some there be that make their gains little by little, and are grown rich because they save well their gains and their treasure. Oh, how much water would the Tiber have stored up if it flowed not away to the sea! Man asketh of God an infinite gift, that is without measure and without bounds, and yet will not love God, save with measure and with bounds. He that would be loved of God and have infinite reward from Him, beyond all bounds and beyond all measure, let him love God beyond all bounds and beyond all measure, and ever serve Him infinitely. Blessed is he that loveth God with all his heart and with all his mind, and ever afflicteth his body and his mind for love of God, seeking no reward under heaven, but accounting himself only a debtor. If a man were in sore poverty and need, and another man said to him, "I will lend thee a very precious thing for the space of three days: know that if thou use well this thing within this term of three days thou shalt gain an infinite treasure, and be rich evermore," is it not a sure thing that this poor man would be very careful to use well and diligently this thing so precious, and would strive much to make it fruitful and profit him well:

so do I say likewise that this thing lent unto us by the hand of God is our body, which the good God hath lent us for three days; for all our times and years are but as three days in the sight of God. Therefore if thou wouldst be rich and enjoy the divine sweetness everlastingly, strive to labour well and make this thing, lent by the hand of God, bear good fruit; to wit, thy body, in this space of three days; to wit, in the brief time of thy life: for if thou art not careful of gain in this present life, while thou hast yet time, thou shalt not enjoy that everlasting riches nor find holy rest in that celestial peace everlastingly. But if all the possessions of the world were in the hands of one person that never turned them to account himself, nor put them out for others to use, what fruit or what profit would he have of those things? Of a surety, neither profit nor fruit would he have. But it might well be that a man, having few possessions and using them well, should have much profit and a great abundance of fruit for himself and for others. A worldly proverb saith, "Never set an empty pot on the fire hoping thy neighbour will come and fill it." And so likewise God willeth that no grace be left empty; for the good God never giveth a grace to any man that it be kept empty, rather doth he give it that a man may use it and bring forth fruit of good works; for good-will sufficeth not except a man strive to pursue it and use it to a profit of holy words. On a time a wayfarer said to Friar Giles, "Father, I pray thee give me some consolation." Whereto Friar Giles answered, "My brother, strive to stand well with God and straightway shalt thou have the consolation thou needest; for if a man make not a pure dwelling-place ready in his soul, wherein God may abide and rest, never shall he find an abiding place nor rest nor true consolation in any creature. When a man would work evil he never asketh much counsel for the doing thereof; but, ere they do good, many folk seek much counsel and make long delay." Once Friar Giles said to his companions, "My brethren, methinks, in these days, one findeth no man that would do those things that he seeth are most profitable, and not only for the soul but also for the body. Believe me, my brethren, I can swear, of a truth, that the more a man flees and shuns the burden and the yoke of Christ the more grievous he maketh it to himself and the more heavily it weigheth upon him, and the greater is the burden; but the more ardently a man taketh up his burden, ever heaping up more weight of his own will, the lighter and the more pleasant he feeleth it to bear. Would to God that men would labour to win the good

things of the body, since they would win also those of the soul; forasmuch as the body and the soul, without any doubt, must ever be joined together, either to suffer or to enjoy; to wit, either ever to suffer together in hell everlasting pains and boundless torments, or, through the merits of good works, to enjoy perpetual joys and ineffable consolations with the saints and angels in paradise. Because, if a man laboured well, or forgave well, yet lacked humility, his good deeds would be turned to evil; for many have there been that have wrought many works that seemed good and praiseworthy, but since they lacked humility they were discovered and known to be done through pride; and their deeds have shown this, for things done through humility are never corrupted." A friar said to Friar Giles, "Father, methinks we know not yet how to understand our own good." To whom Friar Giles answered, "My brother, of a surety each man worketh the art he hath learned, for no man can work well except he have first learned: wherefore I would have thee know, my brother, that the noblest art in this world is the art of working well; and who could know that art except first he learn it? Blessed is that man in whom no created thing can beget evil; but yet more blessed is he that receiveth in himself good edification from all things he sees or hears."

VII. *Chapter of the contempt of temporal things.*

Many sorrows and many woes will the miserable man suffer that putteth his desire and his heart and his hope in earthly things, whereby he forsaketh and loseth heavenly things, and at last shall e'en lose also these earthly things. The eagle soareth very high, but if she had tied a weight to her wings she would not be able to fly very high: and even so for the weight of earthly things a man cannot fly on high, to wit, he cannot attain to perfection; but the wise man that bindeth the weight of the remembrance of death and judgment to the wings of his heart, could not for the great fear thereof go astray nor fly at the vanities nor riches of this world, which are a cause of damnation. Every day we see worldly men toil and moil much and encounter great bodily perils to gain these false riches; and after they have toiled and gained much, in a moment they die and leave behind all that they gained in their lives; therefore put not thy trust in this false world that beguileth every man that believeth therein, for it is a liar. But whoso desireth and would be great and truly rich, let him seek after and love everlasting riches, and good things that ever savour sweetly and never satiate and never grow less. If we would not go astray,

let us take pattern from the beasts and the birds, for these, when they are fed, are content and seek not their living save from hour to hour when their need cometh: even so should a man be content with satisfying his needs temperately, and not seek after superfluities. Friar Giles said that the ant was not so pleasing to St. Francis as other living things because of the great diligence she hath in gathering together and storing up, in the time of summer, a treasure of grain for the winter; but he was wont to say that the birds pleased him much more, because they laid not up one day for the next. But yet the ant teacheth us that we ought not to be slothful in the summer of this present life, so that we be not found empty and barren in the winter of the last day and judgment.

VIII. *Chapter of holy chastity.*

Our miserable and frail human flesh is like unto the swine that ever rejoiceth to wallow and bemire himself in filth, choosing the mire for his own delight. Our flesh is the devil's knight-errant, for it fighteth and resisteth all those things that pertain to God and to our salvation. A friar asked Friar Giles, saying unto him, "Father, teach me in what manner we may guard ourselves from carnal sin." To whom Friar Giles answered, "My brother, he that would move any great weight or any great stone from one place to another, it behoveth him to strive to move it by skill rather than by force. And so likewise, if we will overcome carnal sin and gain the virtue of chastity, we shall rather gain it by humility and by good and discreet spiritual guidance, than by our presumptuous austerities and by the violence of penance. Every sin cloudeth and darkens holy and shining chastity, for chastity is like unto a bright mirror that is clouded and darkened, not only by the touch of foul things, but also by the breath of man. It is impossible for a man to attain to any spiritual grace so long as he findeth him inclined to carnal lust; therefore, thou mayst turn and turn again, as it please thee, and thou shalt find no other remedy, nor be able to attain to spiritual grace, except thou trample under foot every carnal sin. Therefore, fight valiantly against thy sensual and frail flesh, thy proper enemy, that ever striveth against thee, day and night; let him that overcometh this flesh, our mortal foe, know of a surety that he hath overcome and routed all his enemies, and soon shall attain to spiritual grace and to every good state of virtue and of perfection." Said Friar Giles, "Among all the other virtues I most do prize the virtue of chastity; for sweetest chastity hath in itself alone some per-

fection; but no other virtue can be perfect without chastity." A friar asked Friar Giles, saying, "Father, is not charity a greater and more excellent virtue than chastity?" And Friar Giles said, "Tell me, brother, what thing in this world is found more chaste than holy charity?" Many a time did Friar Giles chant this little song—

O holy chastity,
How great a good thou holdest!
How precious to possess!
For such sweet fragrance issueth forth from thee,
The taste thereof the wise alone can know:
Therefore the foolish never learn thy worth.

A friar asked Friar Giles, saying, "Father, thou that commendest so the virtue of chastity, prithee make plain to me what chastity is." Whereto Friar Giles answered, "My brother, I tell thee that the diligent custody and continual watching of our bodily and spiritual senses, keeping them pure and spotless before God—that is truly called chastity."

IX. *Chapter of temptations.*

The great graces that a man receiveth from God cannot be possessed in peace and quietness, for many contrary things and many tribulations and many adversities rise up against these graces, because the more acceptable a man is in the sight of God, the more mightily is he assailed and warred against by the devil. Therefore it behoveth a man never to cease from fighting, that he may pursue that grace he hath received from God; for the fiercer the battle the more precious shall be the crown, if he conquers in the fight. But we have not many battles, nor many hindrances, nor many temptations; for we are not such as we ought to be in the spiritual life. But, nevertheless, true it is that if a man walk warily and well in the way of God, he shall have neither toil nor weariness on his journey; but the man that walketh in the way of the world shall ne'er be able to flee from the many toils, the weariness, the anguish, the tribulations, and sorrows, even to the day of his death. Said a friar to Friar Giles, "My father, methinks thou sayest two things, one contrary to the other; for thou didst first say that the more acceptable and the more virtuous a man is in the sight of God, the more hindrances and the more battles he hath in the spiritual life, and then thou saidst the contrary; to wit, that the man who walked warily and well in the way of God would feel neither toil nor weariness on his journey." Whereto Friar Giles made plain the contrariness of these two sayings, and

answered thus, "My brother, of a surety the devils assail men of good will with mightier temptations than they do others that have not good will, I mean, in the sight of God. But the man that walketh warily and fervently in the way of God, what toil, what weariness, and what hurt can the devils and all the adversities of the world bring on him? Doth he not know and see that he selleth his wares for a price a thousandfold higher than they are worth? But I tell thee more: of a surety he that were kindled with the fire of divine love, the more mightily he were assailed by sins, the more would he hate and abominate them. The worst devils are wont to pursue and tempt a man when he is weighed down by some infirmity or bodily weakness, or by great cold, or anguish, or when he is ahungred or athirst, or when he hath suffered some injury, or shame, or temporal or spiritual hurt; for these evil spirits know that it is in hours and moments such as these that a man is more apt to receive temptations. But I say unto thee that for every temptation and for every sin thou overcomest thou shalt gain a virtue; and that if thou conquer that sin that warreth against thee, thou shalt receive therefore the greater grace and a greater crown of victory." A friar asked counsel of Friar Giles, saying, "Father, oftentimes am I tempted by a sore temptation, and oft have I prayed to God to be delivered therefrom, and yet the Lord taketh it not away from me. Give me thy counsel, father, what ought I to do?" Whereto Friar Giles answered, "My brother, the more richly a king harnesseth his knights with noble armour and strong, the more valiantly he desireth they should fight against his enemies, for love of him." A friar asked Friar Giles, saying, "Father, what remedy can I find that I may go more willingly to prayer and with a more fervent desire? for when I go to pray, I am hard, slothful, withered, and slack." Whereto Friar Giles answered, saying, "A king hath two servants, and the one is armed for battle, but the other hath no arms wherewith to fight; and both would go forth to battle and fight against the enemies of the king. He that is armed goeth forth to battle and fighteth valiantly; but the other that is unarmed saith thus to his lord, 'My lord, thou seest I am naked and without arms, but for love of thee fain would I join the battle and fight thus unarmed as I am.' And then the good king, beholding the love of his trusty servant, saith to his ministers, 'Go with this my servant, clothe him with all those arms that are needful for the fight, in order that he may hie securely forth to battle; and mark ye all his arms with my

royal scutcheon, that he be known as my trusty knight.' And even so, ofttimes it befalleth a man, when he goeth forth to pray and findeth himself naked, indevout, slothful, and hardened in spirit; but, nevertheless, let him gird himself, for love of the Lord, and go forth to the battle of prayer; and then our good King and Lord, beholding the wrestling of his knight, giveth him fervent devotion and good will by the hands of his ministering angels. Some time this befalleth: a man setteth about some great work of heavy labour, as to clear and till the ground, or a vineyard, that in due season he may be able to gather the fruit thereof. And many men, because of the great labour and the many toils, grow a-weary and repent them of the work they have begun; but if a man sweat and toil till the time of harvest, then he forgetteth all his heaviness; he is consoled and glad, beholding the fruit he shall enjoy. Even so, a man that is strong under temptations shall attain to many consolations; for after tribulation, saith St. Paul, cometh consolation and the crown of eternal life: and not only in heaven shall the reward be given to them that resist temptation, but also in this life, even as the psalmist saith, 'Lord, in the multitude of my temptations and my sorrows thy comforts delight my soul;' so that the greater the temptation and the fight, the more glorious shall be the crown." A friar asked counsel of Friar Giles touching a temptation, saying, "O father, I am tempted by two sore temptations: one is, that when I do some good thing, anon I am tempted by vainglory; the other is, when I work any evil I fall into such sadness and such dejection that I well-nigh sink into despair." Whereto Friar Giles answered, "My brother, well dost thou and wisely to grieve for thy sin, but I counsel thee to grieve temperately and discreetly, and ever shouldst thou remember that God's mercy is greater than thy sin. But if, in His infinite mercy, God accepteth the repentance of a man that is a great sinner and one that sinneth wilfully, when he repents, thinkest thou this good God will forsake the good sinner that sinneth against his will, when he is contrite and repentant? I counsel thee, also, faint not in well-doing through fear of vainglory; for if a man said, when he should sow his seed, 'I will not sow, for if I were to sow, haply the birds would come and eat thereof'; and, if saying thus, he sowed not his seed, of a surety he would gather no corn that year. But if he sowed his seed, albeit the birds did eat of that seed, yet the labourer would reap the greater part; even so a man, assailed by vainglory, if he do good not for the sake of vainglory, but

ever fighteth against it, I say he shall not lose the merit of the good he hath done, because he is tempted." A friar said to Friar Giles, "It is told that St. Bernard once recited the seven penitential psalms with such peace of mind and such devotion that he thought of naught save the proper meaning of the aforesaid psalms." Whereto Friar Giles thus made answer, "My brother, I deem there is much more prowess in a lord that holdeth his castle when it is besieged and assaulted by his enemies, defending it so valiantly that he letteth not one of his enemies enter therein, than there is in one that liveth in peace and hath no enemy."

X. Chapter of holy penitence.

A man ought ever to afflict himself much and mortify his body, and suffer willingly every injury, tribulation, anguish, sorrow, shame, contempt, reproach, adversity, and persecution, for love of our good Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, who gave us the example in Himself; for from the first day of His glorious Nativity, until His most holy Passion, He ever endured anguish, tribulation, sorrow, contempt, pain, and persecution, solely for our salvation. Therefore, if we would attain to a state of grace, above all things it is necessary that we walk, as far as lieth in us, in the paths and in the footsteps of our good Master, Jesus Christ. A secular once asked of Friar Giles, saying, "Father, in what way can we men in the world attain to a state of grace?" Whereto Friar Giles answered, "My brother, a man ought first to grieve for his sins, with great contrition of heart, and then he should confess to the priest with bitterness and sorrow of heart, accusing himself sincerely, without concealment and without excuse: then he must fulfil the penance perfectly that is given and laid upon him by his confessor. Likewise, he must guard himself against every vice and every sin, and against every occasion of sin; and also he must exercise himself in good and virtuous works before God and towards his neighbour; and, doing these things, a man shall attain to a state of grace and of virtue. Blessed is that man that hath continual sorrow for his sins, bemoaning them ever, day and night, in bitterness of heart, solely for the offences he hath done to God! Blessed is the man that hath ever before the eyes of his mind the afflictions and the pains and the sorrows of Jesus Christ, and that for love of Him neither desireth nor receiveth any temporal consolation in this bitter and stormy world, until he attain to that heavenly consolation of life eternal, where all his desires shall be fully satisfied with gladness."

XI. *Chapter of holy prayer.*

Prayer is the beginning, middle, and end of all good: prayer illumines the soul, and through prayer the soul distinguishes good from evil. Every sinful man ought to make this prayer with a fervent heart, every day unceasingly; to wit, let him pray humbly to God to give him a perfect knowledge of his own misery and of his sins and of the blessings he hath received, and doth receive, from this good God. But the man that knoweth not how to pray, how shall he know God? All those that would be saved, if they are persons of true understanding, above all things it is necessary that they be at last converted to holy prayer. Friar Giles said, "If a man had a son, guilty of so many offences that he was condemned to death, or to be banished from the city, of a surety this man would be very diligent, and strive with all his might, both day and night, and at every hour, to obtain pardon for this his son, and save him from death or banishment, making earnest prayers and supplications, and giving presents or paying fines, to the uttermost of his means, both of himself or through his friends and kinsfolk. Therefore, if a man do this for his son that is mortal, how much more diligent ought a man to be in beseeching God, by his own prayers and through the prayers of good men in this world, and through His saints in the other world, for his own soul that is immortal, when she is banished from the celestial city, or doomed to everlasting death for sin and wickedness." A friar said to Friar Giles, "Father, methinks a man ought to grieve much, and be exceeding sorrowful, when he cannot have the grace of devotion in his prayers." Whereto Friar Giles answered, "My brother, I counsel thee, go very gently about thy business; for if thou hadst a little good wine in a cask, and in that cask the lees were still below this good wine, of a surety thou wouldst not shake or move that cask about, lest thou mingle the good wine with the lees. And so I say: as long as prayer is not free from all carnal and sinful lust it shall receive no divine consolation; for that prayer which is mingled with the lees of fleshly lusts is not clear in the sight of God. Therefore, a man ought to strive, with all his might, to free himself from all lees of vicious lusts, in order that his prayers be pure in the sight of God, and that he receive devotion and divine consolation therefrom." A friar asked Friar Giles, saying, "Father, wherefore doth this thing come to pass: that when a man is worshipping God he is more sorely tempted, assailed, and troubled in his mind than at any other time?" Whereto Friar Giles thus

answered, "When any man hath a suit to further before a judge, and he goeth to plead his own cause, as 'twere asking counsel and aid, and his adversary heareth this, doth he not straightway appear before the judge and oppose and gainsay the petition of that man, and so give him great hindrance, as 'twere disproving all he said? Even so it befalleth when a man goeth forth to pray; forasmuch as he asketh God's help in his cause, straightway his adversary, the devil, appeareth with his temptations and maketh great resistance and opposition, and striveth, with all his might and cunning and devices, to hinder this prayer, so that it be not acceptable in God's sight, and that the man may have neither merit nor consolation from his prayers. And this we can see clearly, for when we speak of worldly things, then do we suffer no temptation nor distraction of mind, but if we go to prayer to delight and comfort the soul with God, anon we feel our soul smitten with divers arrows, to wit, divers temptations, which the devils put in our way to warp our minds, in order that the soul have neither joy nor consolation from those things that the said soul hath uttered to God." Friar Giles said that a prayerful man was like unto a good knight at battle, who, albeit he were pierced or smitten by his enemy, departeth not straightway from the battle, but rather resisteth manfully to gain the victory over his enemy, in order that the victory won, he may be comforted and rejoice in that victory; but if he departed from the battle when he was smitten or wounded, of a surety he would suffer confusion and shame and dishonour. And so should we do likewise; to wit, never depart from prayer for any temptation, but rather resist stoutly; for blessed is the man that endureth temptations, as the Apostle saith, for by overcoming them he shall receive the crown of eternal life; but if a man cease from prayer because of temptations, of a surety he shall suffer confusion, defeat, and discomfiture at the hands of his enemy, the devil." A friar said to Friar Giles, "Father, I have seen certain men that have received from God the grace of devotion and tears in their prayers, and none of these graces can I feel when I pray unto God." Whereto Friar Giles answered, "My brother, I counsel thee, labour faithfully and humbly in thy prayers, for the fruits of the earth are not to be had without much toil and labour beforehand; and even after this labour the desired fruit followeth not straightway, before the time and season are come: even so God giveth not this grace forthwith to a prayerful man until the convenient time be come, and the mind be purged from

every carnal affection and sin. Therefore, my brother, labour humbly in thy prayer; for God, who is all-good and all-gracious, knoweth all things and discerneth the better way: when the time and the season are come, He, of His loving-kindness, will give much fruit of consolation." Another friar said to Friar Giles, "What art thou doing, Friar Giles? What art thou doing?" He answered, "I am doing ill." And that friar said, "What ill art thou doing?" Then Friar Giles turned to another friar and bespake him thus, "Tell me, my friar, who thinkest thou is the readier, our God to grant us His grace, or we to receive it?" And that friar answered, "Of a surety, God is more ready to give us His grace than we are to receive it." And then Friar Giles said, "Then do we well?" And that friar said, "Nay, we do ill." And then Friar Giles turned to the first friar and said, "Behold, friar, it is clearly shown that we do ill; and what I answered was true, to wit, that I am doing ill." Said Friar Giles, "Many works are commended and praised by Holy Scripture, to wit, the works of mercy and other holy works; but when the Lord spake of prayer, He spake thus, 'Your heavenly Father seeketh and desireth of men that they worship Him on earth in spirit and in truth.'" Friar Giles said likewise that the true religious are like unto wolves; for they seldom issue forth in public places save for hard necessity, and incontinently do strive to return to their hiding-place without much converse or dwelling with men. Good works adorn the soul, but, above all other works, prayer adorns and illumines the soul. A friar, the companion and familiar of Friar Giles, said, "Father, wherefore goest thou not sometimes to discourse of the things of God, and teach and win the salvation of Christian souls?" Whereto Friar Giles answered, "My brother, I desire to fulfil my duty to my neighbour with humility and without hurt to my soul, I mean by prayer." And that friar said to him, "At least if thou went sometimes to visit thy kinsfolk!" And Friar Giles answered, "Knowest thou not that Christ saith in the gospel, 'Every one that hath forsaken father or mother, or brethren or sisters, or possessions, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold.'" Again he said, "A man of noble birth entered the Order, whose riches were worth perchance sixty thousand pounds: therefore, great rewards await them that forsake great riches, for love of God; since God giveth them a hundredfold more. But blind are we that when we behold any man virtuous and gracious in the sight of God, we cannot understand his perfection because of our own imperfection and

blindness. But if a man were truly spiritual, hardly would he desire to behold or to hear any man save for great necessity; for the truly spiritual man desireth ever to dwell apart from men, and to be one with God through contemplation." Then said Friar Giles to another friar, "Father, fain would I know, what is contemplation?" And that friar said, "Father, that truly know not I." And then Friar Giles said, "Methinks the high grace of contemplation is a divine flame and a sweet emanation of the Holy Ghost, and a rapture and an exaltation of the mind, which is inebriated in the contemplation of that ineffable savour of divine sweetness; 'tis a sweet and peaceful and gentle delight of the soul that is lifted up and rapt in great marvel at the glory of supernal and celestial things—a burning inward sense of celestial and unspeakable glory."

XII. *Chapter of holy spiritual prudence.*

O servant of the King of heaven, thou that wouldst learn the mysteries and the profitable and virtuous lessons of holy spiritual doctrine, open well the ears of the understanding of thy soul, and receive with thy heart's desire, and carefully keep in the chamber of thy memory, the precious treasure of these doctrines and precepts and spiritual admonitions which I declare to thee: thereby shalt thou be illumined and guided on thy journey—the journey of the spiritual life—and shalt be defended from the wicked and cunning assaults of thine enemies, real and shadowy, and shalt walk securely, with humble boldness, voyaging on this stormy sea, to wit, of this present life, until thou come to the longed-for haven of salvation. Therefore, my son, hearken and mark well what I say unto thee. If thou wouldst see well, pluck out thine eyes and be blind; if thou wouldst hear well, be deaf; if thou wouldst speak well, be dumb; if thou wouldst walk well, stand still and walk with thy mind; if thou wouldst work well, cut off thy hands and work with thy heart; if thou wouldst love well, hate thyself; if thou wouldst live well, mortify thyself; if thou wouldst gain well and grow rich, lose and be poor; if thou wouldst enjoy well and take thine ease, afflict thyself and be ever sorrowful; if thou wouldst dwell secure, be ever afeard and in dread of thyself; if thou wouldst be exalted and have great honour, abase and decry thyself; if thou wouldst be held in great reverence, despise thyself and do reverence unto them that revile thee and spitefully use thee; if thou wouldst have good always, suffer ill always; if thou wouldst be blessed, desire that all men curse thee and speak evil of thee; if thou wouldst have true and everlasting peace,

turned his face to heaven and spoke thus to Christ, "Lord, said I not well to Thee that they would not believe me?" Then all heard the voice of Christ answering in the air, "So do it, there is nought of thine in the Rule, but whatever is there is Mine, and I will that the Rule should thus be observed to the letter, without a gloss, without a gloss!" And He added, "What human weakness can, do I know, and how much I wish to help them; let those therefore who will not obey it, go out from the Order!" Then blessed Francis turned himself to those brethren and said to them, "Will you that I should cause it to be said to you again?" Then the Ministers, looking upon one another, went back confused and terrified.

strive with them, but suffered, unwillingly, their will, and excused himself before the Lord. But that the word which the Lord had put into his mouth for the benefit of the brethren might not return unto Him empty, he wished to fulfil it in himself that from thence some reward might be obtained from the Lord, and in the end his spirit found rest herein and was consoled.

CHAPTER III

HOW HE ANSWERED A MINISTER WHO WISHED TO HAVE BOOKS WITH HIS LEAVE; AND HOW THE MINISTERS WITHOUT HIS KNOWLEDGE CAUSED THE CHAPTER OF THE PROHIBITIONS OF THE GOSPEL TO BE REMOVED FROM THE RULE

BUT on a time, when blessed Francis was returned from overseas, a certain Minister was speaking with him of the Chapter of Poverty, wishing to know his will and understanding thereon, and chiefly—for at that time a certain chapter of the Prohibitions of the Holy Gospel was written in the Rule, namely, “Take nothing with ye in the way.” And the blessed Father answered, “I understand it thus, that friars should possess naught save a robe with a cord and breeches, as says the Rule, and if they are forced by necessity they may wear sandals.” And the Minister said to him, “What shall I do, who have so many books that they be worth more than fifty pounds?” (but this he said for that he would have them with a good conscience, since against it he had owned so many books, knowing that blessed Francis understood the Chapter of Poverty so strictly). And blessed Francis said to him, “I neither will, nor ought, nor can, go against my conscience and the perfection of the Holy Gospel which we have professed.” Hearing these things the Minister became sad. But the blessed one, seeing him thus troubled, with great fervour of spirit said to him in the presence of all the brethren, “You would be seen of men as Friars Minor, and be called observants of the Holy Gospel, but for your works you wish to have store-chests!”

Yet though the Ministers knew that according to the Rule friars were bound to observe the Holy Gospel, nevertheless they caused that chapter to be removed from the Rule, “Take nothing with you in the way,” believing that therefor they would not be held to the observance of the perfection of the Gospel. Knowing which by the Holy Spirit, blessed Francis

psalter. And blessed Francis said to him, "After you have a psalter, you will desire and wish to have a breviary. Then you will sit in your chair, like a great prelate, and say to your brother, 'Bring me the breviary'?" So saying, blessed Francis with great fervour of spirit took up some ashes and put them on his head, and drawing his hand over his head in a compass like one who washes the head, said, "I, a breviary, I, a breviary!" And he repeated it thus many times, drawing his hand over his head. And that brother was amazed and ashamed. Afterwards blessed Francis said to him, "Brother, I likewise was tempted to have books, but when I might not know the will of the Lord concerning this, I took up a book wherein the Gospels of the Lord were written, and I prayed the Lord that in the first opening of the book He would show me His will concerning this thing. And when the prayer was finished in the first opening of the book I lighted on that saying of the Holy Gospel: *Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God, but unto others in parables.*" And he said, "There are so many who willingly rise unto knowledge, that he shall be blessed who makes himself barren for the love of God." But many months having passed, when blessed Francis was at the dwelling of St. Mary of the Portiuncula, near the cell beyond the house in the street, the aforesaid brother spoke again to him of the psalter. To whom blessed Francis said, "Go and do concerning this what thy Minister tells thee." And when he heard this, that brother began to return by the road whence he had come. And blessed Francis remaining in the street began to consider what he had said to that brother, and immediately called after him, saying, "Wait for me, brother, wait!" And he came up to him, and said to him, "Turn back with me, brother, and show me the place where I said unto thee that thou shouldst do in the matter of the psalter as thy Minister should say." When therefore they had arrived at the place, blessed Francis kneeled before that brother, and said, "*Mea culpa*, brother, *mea culpa*, for whosoever will be a Friar Minor should have nothing except a tunic, as the Rule concedes to him, and a cord and breeches, and those who are forced by manifest necessity, sandals." Whence as often as friars came to him to have his counsel on these matters, he used to answer them on this wise, because, as he often used to say, "As much knowledge hath a man as he doth work, and a Religious is as good a speaker as his works proclaim, for the worker is known by his fruit."

CHAPTER V

OF KEEPING POVERTY IN BOOKS AND BEDS AND UTENSILS

THE most blessed Father used to say that we should look for proof and not price in books, edification not ornament. He wished that few be owned and those in common, befitting the poverty and necessity of friars. In beds and bedding so great poverty abounded, that he who had half-worn-out rags over his chaff reputed them mattresses.

He taught further his friars to make their huts poor and their little cabins of wood, not of stone, and he would have them be constructed and built of mean appearance, and not only did he hate pride in dwellings, but also he did much abhor many or choice utensils. He loved that they should preserve in their tables or in their vessels nothing of worldly seeming, by which they should recall the world, so that all things should end in poverty, should sing out to them of their pilgrimage and exile.

CHAPTER VI

HOW HE MADE ALL THE FRIARS DEPART FROM A CERTAIN HOUSE
WHICH WAS CALLED THE HOUSE OF THE FRIARS

WHEN he was passing through Bologna he heard that a House of Friars had been newly builded there. And immediately when he had heard that house called the House of the Friars, he turned on his steps and went out of the city, and ordered most strictly that all the friars should depart in haste, and no longer dwell therein. Therefore all the friars went out, so that even the sick did not remain there, but were turned out with the others, until Dom Hugo, Bishop of Ostia, and Legate in Lombardy, publicly announced that the said house belonged to him. And a sick friar who was turned out from that same house bears witness to these things and wrote these words.

CHAPTER XLIII

OF THE HUMBLE ANSWER OF BLESSED FRANCIS AND DOMINIC
WHEN THEY WERE ASKED AT THE SAME TIME BY THE
CARDINALS, WHETHER THEY WOULD THAT THEIR BRETHREN
SHOULD BE PRELATES OF THE CHURCH

IN the city of Rome when those two renowned lights, blessed Francis and blessed Dominic, were together before my Lord of Ostia, who was afterwards Pope, and each in turn had poured forth sweet things concerning God, then my Lord of Ostia said to them, "In the primitive church the pastors and prelates were poor, and men fervent in charity, not greed. Why therefore should we not make bishops and prelates of your friars, who should prevail over all others for a document and example?" Then was there between the saints a humble and devout contention concerning their answer, not indeed a pushing forward, but each in turn turning to the other, and forcing him to answer. But at the last the humility of Francis conquered, so that he did not answer first, and Dominic conquered, who by answering first did humbly obey. Blessed Dominic therefore answering said, "My Lord, my brethren have been exalted to a good condition if they will but know it, and, as far as lies in my power, I shall never permit them to attain any form of dignity." Then blessed Francis, inclining himself before the aforesaid Lord, said, "My Lord, my brethren be called Minors for this reason, that they should not presume to become greater. For their vocation teaches them to remain lowly, and to imitate the footsteps of the humility of Christ, that hereby at last they may be exalted more than others in the sight of the saints. For if you would that they bring forth fruit in the Church of God, hold and keep them in the state of their calling, and if they strive for high things, cast them down violently to the ground, and never permit them to rise to any prelacy." These were the answers of the saints. And when they were ended, my Lord of Ostia, much edified by the responses of them both, gave exceeding great thanks to God. Both going away together, blessed Dominic asked blessed Francis to deign to give him the cord by which he was girded. And blessed Francis denied it him from humility, as he had demanded it from charity. Yet the happy devotion of him who asked did conquer, and blessed Dominic having received the cord of blessed Francis by the violence of his charity,

girded it under his tunic, and from that time forth devoutly wore it. Then either of them placed his hands between the hands of the other, and commended each to the other with the sweetest mutual commendations. And so holy Dominic said to holy Francis, "I would, brother Francis, that thine and mine should make one Order, and that we should live in like manner in the church." Then when they were separated from one another, Dominic said to several who were standing by, "In truth I say unto you, that all religious ought to imitate this holy man Francis, so great is the perfection of his holiness."

CHAPTER XLIV

THAT AS A FOUNDATION OF HUMILITY, HE WILLED
HIS FRIARS TO SERVE THE LEPERS

BLESSED Francis, from the beginning of his conversion, the Lord aiding him, founded himself like a wise builder upon the rock, that is, on the exceeding great humility and poverty of the Son of God, calling his Order that of the Friars Minor by cause of his great humility. Whence in the beginning of the Order he wished that the friars should abide in leper houses to serve them, and there lay a foundation of holy humility. For when gentle and simple came to the Order, amongst the other things which were announced to them, he was wont to say that it behoved them to serve lepers, and abide in their houses; as it was contained in the first Rule, "Willing to have naught under heaven except holy poverty, whereby they may be fed by the Lord in this world with bodily and spiritual food, and in the life to come attain their heavenly heritage." And thus he chose for himself and others a foundation on the greatest humility and poverty, inasmuch as when he might have been a great prelate in the Church of God, he chose and wished to be lowly, not only in the Church, but also among his brethren. For this lowliness, in his opinion and desire, was very great exaltation in the sight of God and man.

CHAPTER XLV

THAT HE WISHED THE GLORY AND HONOUR OF ALL HIS GOOD
WORKS AND DEEDS TO BE GIVEN TO GOD ALONE

WHEN he had been preaching to the people in Rieti in the market place of the city, after the preaching was finished, the bishop of that city straightway rose up, a man both discreet and spiritual, and said to the people, "The Lord, from the first day in which He planted and built up His church, has always adorned it with holy men, to nourish it by word and example. But now, in this latest hour, He has adorned it with this poor and despised and unlettered man, Francis, and therefore are we bound to love and honour the Lord, and beware of sin. For he hath not done after this manner to any nation." Having finished these words, the bishop came down from the place where he had preached, and entered the Cathedral. And blessed Francis coming to him, throwing himself at his feet, bowed down before him, and said, "In truth I say unto you, my Lord Bishop, that no man has done so much honour to me in this life, as you have done to me to-day, for those men say, 'This is a holy man,' attributing to me glory and sanctity, and not to the Creator. But you, as one discreet, have separated the precious from the vile."

For when the holy Father used to be praised and called holy, he was wont to answer to such speeches, saying, "I am not yet so secure, that I ought not to have sons and daughters. For at whatever hour the Lord should take away from me the treasure which He has commended to me, what else would remain to me but body and soul, which even infidels have? Nay, I ought to believe that if the Lord should have granted so many and so great gifts to a thief or an infidel as to me they would have been more faithful to their Lord than I. For, as in the picture of the Lord and the Blessed Virgin painted on wood, the Lord and the Blessed Virgin are honoured, and yet the wood and the picture take nothing of it to themselves, so the servant of God is in a manner a picture of God, wherein God is honoured on account of His goodness. But he ought to take nothing of this to himself, since in respect of God, he is less than the wood and the picture, nay, he is pure nothing. And therefore unto God alone must the glory and honour be rendered, but unto him only shame and tribulation while he lives among the miseries of this life."

have granted what thou hast asked. But if the Lord shall multiply this congregation, we would that this place should be the chief of all your dwellings." And the speech pleased blessed Francis and his brethren, and the blessed Father rejoiced greatly concerning the place conceded to the friars, especially on account of the name of the church, of the Mother of Christ, and because it was so small and poor a church, and also because it was named the Portiuncula, in which it was prefigured that it should be the head and the mother of the poor Friars Minor. For the Church was called the Portiuncula, because of that court which was formerly called "the little portion." Whence the blessed Father was wont to say, "The Lord wished that no other church should be conceded to the friars, and that the first friars should not as then build a new church nor have any other except that, since by this, through the advent of the Friars Minor, a certain prophecy was fulfilled." And though it was poor and now destroyed, yet for a great time the men of the city of Assisi and of all its lordship had had great devotion to that church, and they have a greater to-day, and daily doth it wax. Whence as the brethren went there to dwell, forthwith the Lord multiplied their number almost daily, and the odour of their fame was wonderfully scattered through all the valley of Spoleto, and many parts of the land. Yet of old it was called St. Mary of the Angels because, as it was said, the songs of Angels and of celestial spirits were there heard of those coming to the place.

(But now, because the friars are colder in prayer and virtuous works and more lax and idle, and given to uttering idle words and the news of this world, than they were used, that place itself is not held in so great reverence and devotion, as heretofore it has been of custom, and as I would wish it to be.)

When the blessed Father had said these words, forthwith with great fervour he concluded, saying, "I would that this place should always be immediately under the power of the Minister-General and servant, for the reason that he should have greater care and solicitude in providing there a good and holy family. Let clerks be chosen among the better and more holy and more fitting friars, those of the whole Order who can best say the Office, that not only lay folk but also the other friars may willingly and with great devotion see and hear them. But of the lay brothers, let holy men discreet and humble and decent be chosen, who may serve them. I will also that no woman and no friar enter that place except the General Minister

CHAPTER LVII

OF THE RUSTIC WHO FOUND HIM SWEEPING A CHURCH, AND
BEING CONVERTED ENTERED THE ORDER, AND WAS A
SAINTLY FRIAR

BUT when he had gone to a certain village belonging to the city of Assisi, he began to sweep it and clean it. And immediately a rumour of him went through the whole village, for he was gladly seen of those men and more willingly heard. But when a certain rustic of strange simplicity, who was ploughing in his field, John by name, heard this he went straightway to him and found him sweeping the church humbly and devoutly. And he said to him, "Brother, give me the broom, for I wish to help thee." And taking the broom from his hands he swept out the remainder. And while they were sitting together he said to blessed Francis, "Brother, it is now a long time that I have had the will to serve God, and especially after I have heard the rumour of thee and thy brethren, but I knew not how to come to thee. Now therefore, since it has pleased the Lord that I should see thee, I have the will to do whatever shall be pleasing to thee." But the blessed Father, considering his fervour, rejoiced in the Lord, especially for that he had then few brethren, and it seemed to him that for his simplicity and purity this should be a good Religious. But he said to him, "Brother, if thou wilt be of our life and society, thou must strip thee of all that which thou mayest not own without scandal, and give it to the poor, according to the counsel of the Holy Gospel, since all my brethren that were able have done the same." When he had heard this, he went straightway to the field where he had left his cattle, and loosened them and led one of them before blessed Francis, and said to him, "Brother, so many years have I served my father and all them of my house, and though this portion of my heritage be small, I wish to take this ox for my part, and give it to the poor as may seem best to thee." But his parents and his brothers, who were still little, and all of his house, seeing that he would leave them, began to weep so sore and to utter such plaintive noises with grief, that blessed Francis was moved by it to pity, because it was a large family, and feeble. And blessed Francis said to them, "Prepare a feast for us all, and let us all eat together, and weep not, for I will make you truly joyful." So they prepared it forthwith, and

to say anything on account of the fear and reverence of the holy Father. He who saw this wrote it down, and bears testimony of these things.

CHAPTER LIX

HOW HE PUT THE DEMONS TO FLIGHT WITH
HUMBLE WORDS

ON a certain time blessed Francis went to the church of blessed Peter of Bovara near the castle of Trevi in the valley of Spoleto, and with him went Brother Pacificus, who in the world used to be called the King of Verse, a noble and courtly doctor of singers. But that church was abandoned. Therefore the blessed Father said to Brother Pacificus, "Return to the leper hospital, for I wish to remain here alone to-night, and to-morrow very early return to me." But when he had been left alone there, and had said complines and other prayers, he wished to be quiet and to sleep, but he was not able. For his spirit began to fear and to feel diabolical suggestions, and immediately he went out of the church and crossed himself, saying, "On the part of Almighty God I say unto you, O Demons, that ye may work on my body whatever is given to you to do by the Lord Jesus Christ, since I am ready to sustain all things. For since I hold that my body is my greatest enemy, ye shall but avenge me on my adversary and worst enemy." And immediately those suggestions altogether ceased, and having returned to the place where he was lying, he slept in peace.

CHAPTER LX

OF THE VISION OF FRIAR PACIFICUS WHICH HE SAW, AND HOW
HE HEARD THAT THE SEAT OF LUCIFER WAS RESERVED
FOR BLESSED FRANCIS

BUT when it was morn Brother Pacificus returned to him. He was then standing before the altar in prayer, and Brother Pacificus waited for him without the choir praying likewise before a crucifix. And when he began to pray, he was raised up and snatched into Heaven, *whether in the body or out of the body God only knoweth*. And he saw in Heaven many seats, among which he saw one more notable than the others, and beyond

General by blessed Francis, he spoke to that brother Peter, ordering him by obedience, that he should without contradiction do whatever he should say to him. Brother Peter answered him, "Brother, I neither may nor ought, will or do anything concerning thee and me, except as it may please thee." Casting off therefore his tunic, blessed Francis bade him drag him unclad before the people with a cord bound round his neck to the place where he had preached. He bade another friar that he should take a dish full of ashes and should go up to the place where he had preached, and when he should have been drawn up to that place to throw the ashes over his face. Yet this last did not obey him in this on account of the great compassion by which he was moved towards him. And Brother Peter, taking the cord bound to his neck, dragged him after him as he had ordered him. But he was weeping very sore, and the other friars with him shed tears of compassion and of bitterness. When he was thus led naked in the sight of all men up to the place where he had preached, he said, "You, and all those who, after my example, leave this world and enter religion and the life of the friars, believe me to be a holy man, but I confess to God and to you that I have eaten in this my infirmity flesh and broth made with flesh." And all began to weep over him for great pity and compassion, especially because it was then winter time and a very intense frost, and he was not yet recovered from the quartan fever. And striking their breasts they accused themselves, saying, "If this saint, for just and manifest necessity, accuses himself with so much shame of body, whose life we know to be holy, whom even we know to be living in the flesh as if almost dead on account of the great abstinence and austerity which he has made to his body from the beginning of his conversion to Christ, what shall we wretched ones do, who for the whole time of our life have lived and still live according to the desires of the flesh."

CHAPTER LXII

HOW HE WISHED THAT WHATEVER OF COMFORT HIS
BODY RECEIVED SHOULD BE KNOWN

LIKEWISE on a certain time when he had eaten in a certain hermitage in the Advent fast (St. Martin's Lent), cakes cooked with lard on account of his infirmities, for which oil was very

For in this blessed Francis had his chief and highest study, that he should not be a hypocrite before God, and though on account of his infirmity an allowance would have been necessary to him, yet he took thought with himself, always to show a good example to the friars and to others, whence he sustained all poverty patiently that he might take away from all any occasion of murmuring.

CHAPTER LXIV

HOW HE DESCRIBED THE STATE OF PERFECT HUMILITY
IN HIMSELF

WHEN the time of the Chapter was drawing near, the holy Father said to his fellow, "It seemeth not to me that I am a Friar Minor, unless I be in the state which I will tell thee. Behold, the friars invite me with great devotion to the Chapter, and moved by their devotion I go to the Chapter with them. But they, being gathered together, ask me to announce to them the Word of God, and to preach amongst them. And rising up, I preach to them as the Holy Spirit shall have taught me. Having finished therefore my sermon, put it that all cry out against me, 'We will not have thee to reign over us, for thou art not eloquent, as is becoming, and thou art too simple and idiotic, and we fear greatly to have so simple and despised a superior over us, whence henceforth, presume not to call thyself our prelate!' And so they cast me out with blame and reproach. It would seem to me that I was not a Friar Minor, if I did not rejoice to the same extent when they reproached me and cast me out with shame, unwilling that I should be their prelate, as when they venerate and honour me; holding their profit and usefulness to be equal in either case. For if I am glad when they exalt and honour me on account of their profit and devotion, where yet there may be a danger to my soul, much more ought I to rejoice and be glad of the profit and salvation of my soul when they blame me, where is certain gain of my soul."

CHAPTER LXV

HOW HE WISHED TO GO HUMBLY TO FOREIGN PARTS AS HE HAD SENT OTHER FRIARS, AND HOW HE TAUGHT THE FRIARS TO GO HUMBLY AND DEVOUTLY THROUGH THE WORLD

WHEN that Chapter was finished in which many friars were sent to certain provinces over sea, blessed Francis, remaining with certain friars, said to them, "Dearest brethren, it behoves me to be the form and example of all friars. If therefore I have sent some of them to distant parts to bear labours and shame, hunger and thirst, and other privations; it is just, and holy humility requires it, that I should go likewise to some distant province, so that the friars may the more patiently sustain adversity when they shall have heard that I bear the same. Go, therefore, and pray the Lord that He may give me to choose that province which should be most to His praise and the profit of souls and the good example of our body." (For it was the manner of the most holy Father when he would go to any province, to pray first the Lord, and to set the friars to pray that the Lord would direct his heart to that same place which was most pleasing to Him.) The brethren therefore went to pray, and when it was finished they returned to him, and straightway he said to them, "In the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the glorious Virgin Mary His Mother, and of all saints, I choose the province of France in which is a Catholic folk, especially because amongst all other Catholics they show great reverence to the Body of Christ, wherefore I shall converse with them most willingly."

For the holy Father had so much reverence and devotion to the Body of Christ, that he wished it to be written in the Rule that friars should have care and solicitude in the provinces where they should stay concerning this thing; and that they should admonish clerks and priests, to keep the Body of Christ in a good and decent place, which if they neglected, the friars should do it. He wished it also to be placed in the Rule that wherever friars should find the names of the Lord, and these words by which the body of the Lord is made, not well and decently placed, that they themselves should collect them and decently put them away, honouring the Lord in His words. And though these things were not written in the Rule, because it did not seem good to the Ministers that the friars should have this in com-

mand, yet he wished to leave his will to the friars concerning these things in his testament and in his other writings. Nay, on a certain time, he wished to send some friars through all the provinces carrying many fair and clean pyxes; and wherever they should find the Body of the Lord unsuitably preserved, they should put it honourably in those pyxes. Also he wished to send some other friars with good and new wafer-irons to make fair and clean hosts.

When therefore the holy Father chose those brethren whom he wished to take with him, he said to them, "In the name of the Lord, go two and two on the way humbly and decently, and especially with strict silence from the dawn till past the hour of tierce, praying the Lord in your hearts, and let not idle and useless words be so much as named amongst you. For though you walk, let your conversation be as humble and seemly as if you were in a hermitage or in a cell. For wherever we are and walk, we may have always our cell with us. For Brother Body is our cell; and our soul is the hermit, who remains within his cell, to pray to God and to meditate on Him. Whence if the soul does not remain in quiet in its cell, little profits the Religious a cell made with hands?" And when he had arrived at Florence he found there Lord Hugo, the Bishop of Ostia, who was afterwards Pope Gregory. Who, when he had heard from the blessed man, that he wished to go into France, forbade him to go, saying, "Brother, I do not wish you to go beyond the mountains, because there are many prelates who would willingly hinder the good of thy fellowship in the Roman Court. But I and the other Cardinals, who love that body, will more gladly protect and aid it, if you remain in the circuit of this province." And blessed Francis said to him, "My Lord, it is great shame to me to send my other brethren to remote provinces if I remain in these provinces, and am not partaker of the tribulations which they shall suffer on the Lord's behalf." But the Bishop said to him, as if reproving him, "Why hast thou sent thy brethren so far to die with hunger and to sustain other tribulations?" Blessed Francis answered him with great fervour and with the spirit of prophecy, saying, "My Lord, think you that the Lord sent the friars on account of these provinces alone? But I say unto you in truth, that God chose out and sent the friars for the profit and welfare of the souls of all men of this world; and they shall be received, not only in the lands of the faithful, but even among the infidels, and shall gain many souls." Then the Bishop of Ostia wondered at his words, affirming that he spoke

the truth. And thus he did not permit him to go into France, though blessed Francis sent thither Brother Pacificus with many other friars, but he himself returned to the valley of Spoleto.

CHAPTER LXVI

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HOW HE TAUGHT CERTAIN FRIARS TO GAIN THE SOULS
OF SOME THIEVES BY HUMILITY AND CHARITY

To a certain hermitage of friars above the Borgo San Sepolcro there came from time to time thieves, who used to lie in the woods and spoil the passers-by. And some of the friars used to say that it was not good to give them charity, but others gave out of compassion, that they might admonish them to penitence. In the meantime blessed Francis came to that place, whom the friars asked whether it were right to give charity to them. And the holy Father said to them, "If you will do as I will tell you, I trust in the Lord that you shall gain their souls. Go therefore and get some good bread and good wine, and carry them into the wood where they dwell, and shout, saying, 'Brother thieves, come to us, because we are friars, and we bring you good bread and good wine.' They will come forthwith, but you spread a cloth on the earth, and place on it the bread and wine, and serve them humbly and joyfully until they have eaten. But after the meal ye shall speak to them of the Word of the Lord, and finally ye shall ask of them for the love of God that they will promise you this first petition, that they shall not strike nor do evil to any one, in his body. For if ye ask all things at once, they will not hear you, but on account of your humility and charity they will immediately promise you this. Then on another day on account of their good promise, you will carry to them with the bread and wine some eggs and cheese; and ye shall serve them until they have eaten, and after the meal ye shall say to them, 'Why stay ye here all the day to die of hunger and to bear so much adversity, and do many evil things for the which ye shall lose your souls except ye be converted to the Lord? Better is it that ye should serve the Lord, Who will give you in this life the necessities of the body, and in the end will save your souls.' Then the Lord shall inspire them; so that for your humility and charity that ye have shown them they shall be converted." And so the friars did all these things as the holy Father bade them; and those robbers, through the

orders to daily carry food to him and his fellow. And when the blessed Father had gone there with his fellow; on the first night when he would sleep there, came demons and beat him very sore. And calling his fellow he said to him, "Brother, demons have beaten me very sore, and therefore I will that thou remain with me, for I fear to stay alone." And that night his fellow abode near him. For blessed Francis trembled as a man who suffers fever, wherefore both watched through the whole night. In the meantime the holy Father said to his fellow, "Why have the demons beaten me, and why is that power of hurting me given them by the Lord?" And he said, "The demons are the sergeants of our Lord. For as the Podesta sends his sergeants to punish him who has sinned, so the Lord by sergeants, that is, by the demons who in this world are His ministers, corrects and chastens those whom He loves. For many times he who is a perfect Religious sins ignorantly; whence since he knows not his sin, he is chastened by demons, that he may diligently see and consider, within and without, those things in which he has offended, for whom the Lord loves with a true love, nothing in them He leaves unpunished. But by the mercy and grace of God, I know not that I have offended in anything which I have not amended by confession and satisfaction, nay, by His mercy God has granted me this gift that I may receive in prayer a clear knowledge of all things in which I may please or displease Him. But it may be that He now chastises me by His sergeants for that though my Lord Cardinal willingly showed me mercy, and though it is necessary to my body to receive this rest, yet my brethren who go through the world bearing hunger and many tribulations and the other friars who live in hermitages and poor little dwellings, when they shall hear that I live with my Lord Cardinal, may have an occasion of murmuring, saying, 'We bear so many adverse things, and he has his consolations.' But I am bound always to give them a good example, because for this reason I was given unto them. For the brethren are more edified when I abide in their own poor little dwellings amongst them, than in others; and they bear their tribulations more patiently when they hear that I bear also the same." And it was, therefore, the highest and continual study of our Father, that in all things he might afford a good example, and that he might take away any occasion of murmuring concerning him from other friars. And on account of this, well or ill, he suffered so much, that whichever friars knew him as we who were with him to the day of his death did, as often as they read

another way than by this science. But God will confound you through your wisdom and knowledge, and I trust in the sergeants of the Lord that God will punish you by them, and that you will yet return to your state with reproach, willye, nillye." Then the Cardinal was much amazed; and answered nothing, and all the friars feared greatly.

CHAPTER LXIX

HOW HE FORESAW AND PREDICTED THAT LEARNING
WOULD BE THE RUIN OF THE ORDER

BLESSED Francis grieved greatly if any one, neglecting virtue, sought after the science which puffeth up, especially if any one did not persist in that vocation to which he was called from the beginning. For he was wont to say, "My brethren who are led by desire of learning shall find their hands empty in the day of tribulation." I would therefore, that they be rather strengthened in virtues, that when the time of tribulation shall come they shall have the Lord with them in their straits. For a time of tribulation is to come, when books shall be useful for nothing, and shall be thrown in windows and cupboards." (This he did not say, for that the reading of Holy Scriptures displeased him, but that he might draw back all from overmuch care of learning. For he wished them rather to be good by charity than smatterers through the desire of knowledge. For he weighed beforehand the time shortly to come, in which already he foreknew that knowledge which puffeth up should be an occasion of ruin. Whence appearing after his death to one of his fellows too intent on the study of preaching, he reproved and prohibited him, and ordered him that he should study to tread the path of humility and simplicity.)

CHAPTER LXX

HOW IN THE TIME OF THE TRIBULATION TO COME, THOSE WHO
SHALL ENTER THE ORDER SHALL BE BLESSED, AND THOSE
WHO SHALL BE PROVED SHALL BE BETTER THAN THEIR
PREDECESSORS

BLESSED Francis used to say, "The time shall come in which this Order beloved by God shall be so defamed by the bad example of evil friars, that it will be ashamed to go forth in

public. But they who in that time shall come to join the Order, shall be led only by the working of the Holy Spirit, and flesh and blood shall raise no stain on them, and they shall be blessed by the Lord. Though meritorious deeds be not found in them, since charity grows cold which made the saints work fervently, very great temptations shall come upon them; and those who in that time shall have been found worthy shall be better than their predecessors. But woe unto those, who, with the form and appearance only of religious conversation, applauding themselves in their wisdom and confident in their learning, be found idle (that is, not exercising themselves in virtuous works, in the way of penitence, and in the pure observance of the Gospel; which by their profession they are bound to observe pure and simply). For these will not resist with constancy the temptation which shall be permitted to happen for the proving of the elect; but those who have been tried and approved shall receive the crown of life, to which in the meantime the malice of the reprobate urges them on."

CHAPTER LXXI

HOW HE ANSWERED HIS FELLOW WHO ENQUIRED WHY HE DID NOT CORRECT THE EXCESSES WHICH WERE IN THE ORDER IN HIS OWN DAY

A CERTAIN companion once said to blessed Francis, "Father, forgive me that I would say unto you, which already many have thought." And he said, "Thou knowest how formerly through the grace of God, the whole Order flourished in the purity of perfection; how all friars with great fervour and solicitude observed holy poverty in everything, in small and poor buildings and garniture, in few and poor books and clothes; and as in these so in all other externals they were of one will and fervour, and in the solicitude of observing all things which pertain to our profession and vocation and the example of all; and thus they were of one mind in the love of God and their neighbour, as men truly apostolical and evangelical. But now of late this purity and affection begin to change, though many speak and excuse the friars on account of their multitude, saying that on this account the Rule cannot be observed by them. Nay, many friars have come to such blindness that they think that people will be edified and turn to devotion by this rather than by the

former way, and it seems to them that they on this account live more decently, despising and counting for naught the way of holy simplicity, humility, and poverty, which was the beginning and foundation of our Order. Whence we, considering these things, believe that they are displeasing to thee; but we wonder much if they do displease thee, why thou dost allow and not correct them." The holy man answered and said to him, "May the Lord have mercy on thee, brother, since thou wilt be contrary and adversary to me, and mix me up in those things which pertain not to my office. For as long as I had the office of prelacy over the friars, and they remained in their vocation and profession, though from the beginning of my conversion I was always infirm, yet with my small solicitude I satisfied them by example and preaching. But after I saw that the Lord multiplied the number of the friars, and that they, on account of their lukewarmness and want of spirit, began to depart from the right and secure way by which they had been used to walk, and entering on the broader way which leads to death, were not following their vocation and profession and a good example, nor did they wish to abandon that dangerous and deadly journey which they had begun for my preaching and admonition and the example which I showed to them continually, therefore, I handed over the rule of the Order to the Lord and the Ministers. Whence, though at the time when I gave up the office of the prelacy of the friars, I excused myself before them in the Chapter-General, that on account of my infirmities I was not able to have the charge of them, yet if the friars wish to walk according to my will even now, for their consolation and utility, I would not that they should have any other Minister except me until the day of my death." (For from when a faithful and good subject knows and observes the will of his superior, the prelate need have little solicitude concerning him.) "Nay, so much would I rejoice at the profit and the welfare of the brethren on account of their and my gain, that if I were lying ill in bed I should not be ashamed to satisfy them, because my office (that is of prelacy) is spiritual only (namely, to keep under faults and to correct and amend them spiritually). But since I am not able to correct and amend them by preaching, admonition, and example, I will not become an executioner, punishing and flogging them, like the magistrates of this world. For I trust in the Lord that the invisible enemies, who are the sergeants of the Lord for punishment in this world and the next, will take vengeance on those who have transgressed the commands of

God and the vow of their profession, and will make them to be corrected by the men of this world to their disgrace and shame, and thus shall they return to their vocation and profession. Yet truly, until the day of my death I will not cease at once by example and the good works which the Lord has shown me to teach the brethren, and walk by that way which I have taught and shown them by word and example; that they may be inexcusable before God; and I am not bound to give account of them in the presence of God."

After this are written the words which Brother Leo, the companion and confessor of St. Francis, wrote for Brother Conrad of Offida, at Saint Damian near Assisi, saying that he had them from the mouth of the blessed man, the which holy Father was standing near Assisi behind the pulpit of the church of St. Mary of the Angels in prayer, lifting his hands on high to Christ, that He should have mercy on the people, in the great tribulation which must needs come.

And the Lord said, "Francis, if thou wouldst that I should have mercy on the Christian people, do this for Me, that thy Order may remain in that state in which it was placed, because of the whole world there will remain nothing more to Me, and I promise thee, that for the love of thee and of thine Order, I will not permit the world to suffer any tribulation. But I say unto thee, that they must needs go back from the way in which I have placed them, and they will provoke Me to such wrath, that I shall rise against them, and I shall call the demons and I shall give them the power which they have desired, and they shall place such a scandal between them and the world, that there shall be no one who may wear thy habit except in the woods. And when the world loses faith there will not remain any other light except that of thine Order, because I have placed them for a light to the world." And St. Francis said, "On what shall my brethren live who shall dwell in the woods?" And Christ said, "I will feed them as I fed the sons of Israel, with manna in the desert; because they will be like them, and then shall they return to the first state, in which thy Order was founded and begun."

CHAPTER LXXII

THAT THOSE SOULS ARE CONVERTED BY THE PRAYERS AND TEARS OF THE HUMBLE AND SIMPLE BRETHREN WHICH SEEM TO BE CONVERTED BY THE KNOWLEDGE AND PREACHING OF OTHERS

THE most holy Father was unwilling that his friars should be desirous of knowledge and books, but he willed and preached to them that they should desire to be founded on holy humility, and to imitate pure simplicity, holy prayer, and our Lady Poverty, on which the saints and first friars did build. And this, he used to say, was the only safe way to one's own salvation and the edification of others, since Christ, to Whose imitation we are called, showed and taught us this alone by word and example alike. For the blessed Father himself, looking forward to the future, knew by the Holy Spirit, and many times used to say to the brethren, that friars by occasion of teaching others, lose their own vocation, that is, holy humility, pure simplicity, prayer, and devotion, and our Lady Poverty. "And it will happen to them, that they will think themselves to be more filled with devotion and fired with love, and illuminated with the knowledge of God on account of their understanding of the Scriptures. Thence on occasion they will remain cold and empty within, and they cannot return to their first vocation, because they have wasted their time of living according to their vocation in vain and false study. And I fear that that which they seem to have will be taken away from them; because that which was given to them, that is, to hold and to imitate their vocation, they have altogether neglected." And he said, "There are many friars who place all their study and care in acquiring knowledge, leaving their holy vocation, and wandering with mind and body out of the way of humility and of holy prayer. Who, when they shall have preached to the people, and shall have learnt that some are thence edified or turned to penitence, will be puffed up or extol themselves for their work and another's profit, as for their own; when yet they have preached rather to their own condemnation and prejudice, and have done nothing more in truth, except as instruments of those by whom the Lord truly acquired this fruit. For those whom they believe to be edified and converted to penitence by their knowledge and preaching, the Lord has taught and

converted by the prayers and tears of holy, poor, and humble and simple friars, though those holy friars, for the most part, know not of it. For thus it is the will of God that they know it not lest they grow proud. These are my brethren of the Table Round, who lie hidden in deserts and hidden places, that more diligently they may give place to prayer and meditation, deploring their own and others' sins, living simply and conversing humbly, whose sanctity is known of God, even when it is unknown to their brethren and to men. And when their souls are brought by the angels to the Lord, then the Lord shall show them the fruit of their labours, namely the many souls which by their example, prayers, and tears, are saved. And He shall say to them, 'My beloved sons, such and so many souls have been saved by your prayers, tears, and example; and because ye have been faithful over few things I will make you rulers over many things. Others, indeed, have preached and have laboured by the speeches of their wisdom and knowledge, and I, by your merits, have brought about the fruit of salvation. Therefore receive the reward of their labours and the fruit of your merits, which is an everlasting kingdom; which you have taken by the force of the violence of your humility and simplicity, and of your prayers and tears.' And thus these, carrying their sheaves (that is, the fruits and merits of their holy humility and simplicity), shall enter into the joy of the Lord rejoicing and exulting. But they who have taken no thought except to know and to show to others the way of salvation, doing nothing for themselves, shall stand naked and empty before the tribunal of Christ, bringing only sheaves of confusion, shame, and grief. Then shall the truth of holy humility and simplicity, and holy prayer and poverty, which is our vocation, be exalted and glorified and magnified, which truth those puffed up with the wind of science condemned with their life, and with the vain speeches of their wisdom, saying that the truth was falsehood, and like blind men, persecuting cruelly those who have walked in the truth. Then the error and falsity of their opinions by which they have walked, which they have preached for truth, by which they have thrown many into the pit of blindness, shall be ended in grief, confusion, and shame, and they themselves with their opinions shall be plunged in outer darkness with the spirits of darkness." Whence blessed Francis often used to say concerning that word: *then the barren hath born many, and she that hath many children is waxed feeble:* "the barren is a good Religious, simple, humble, poor, and

despised, who by his holy prayers and virtues continually edifies others, and brings forth good fruit with dolorous sighs." This word he used to say very often before the Ministers and other friars, especially in the Chapter-General.

CHAPTER LXXIII

HOW HE WILLED AND TAUGHT THAT PRELATES AND PREACHERS
SHOULD EXERCISE THEMSELVES IN PRAYER AND WORKS OF
HUMILITY

THE faithful servant and perfect imitator of Christ, Francis, feeling himself to be most thoroughly transformed by the virtue of holy humility in Christ: above all other virtues desired this humility in his brethren, and that they might love, desire, acquire, and preserve this grace, he animated them incessantly both with word and example, and especially did he admonish and induce the Ministers and preachers to exercise works of humility. For he used to say that they ought not on account of the duty of their prelacy and their solicitude of preaching to neglect holy and devout prayer, or going for alms, working sometimes with their hands, and doing other works like the rest of the friars, for the sake of the good example and the profit of their own and others' souls. And he said, "For subject friars are much edified, when their Ministers and preachers spend time in prayer, and bend themselves willingly to works of utility, and lightly-esteemed duties. But otherwise they cannot without confusion, prejudice, and condemnation of themselves, admonish other friars concerning works; for it becomes us by the example of Christ rather to do than to teach, and to do and teach together."

CHAPTER LXXIV

HOW HE TAUGHT THE FRIARS TO KNOW WHEN HE WAS
THE SERVANT OF GOD AND WHEN NOT

BLESSED Francis once called together many friars, and said to them, "I have asked the Lord, that He would deign to show me when I am His servant. But the most gracious Lord in His condescension answered me, 'I know that thou art truly

My servant when thou thinkest, speakest, and doest holy things.' Therefore have I called you, brethren, and have shown this to you, that I may be put to shame before you, when you shall see me wanting in any of the aforesaid things."

CHAPTER LXXV

HOW HE WILLED EXPRESSLY THAT FRIARS LABOUR NOW AND THEN WITH THEIR HANDS

HE used to say that lukewarm ones who did not apply themselves to any task busily and humbly would quickly be spewed out from the mouth of the Lord; so that no idle man could appear before him, without being immediately attacked with biting tooth. And thus he, the example of all perfection, laboured humbly with his hands, permitting nothing of the best gift of time to flow to waste. For he said, "I wish all my friars to labour and be exercised humbly in good works, that we be the less burdensome to men, and that neither heart nor tongue may wander in ease. But let those who know nothing learn to work." For he used to say that the profit and reward of the labour should not be left to the will of the labourer, but to the judgment of the warden or the community.

SECTION V
CONCERNING HIS ZEAL FOR THE PERFECTION OF THE
RULE AND THE WHOLE ORDER

CHAPTER LXXVI

AND FIRSTLY, HOW HE USED TO PRAISE THE PROFESSION OF
THE RULE AND WISH THE FRIARS TO KNOW IT, AND THAT
IT SHOULD BE KEPT BY ALL FRIARS

BLESSED Francis, perfectly zealous and a lover of the Observance of the Holy Gospel, was most ardently zealous for the common profession of our Rule, which is none other than the perfect Observance of the Gospel; and he endowed those who are and shall be true enthusiasts for it with his singular benediction. For he used to say to his imitators that this our profession was the book of life, the hope of salvation, the foretaste of Glory, the marrow of the Gospel, the way of the cross, the state of perfection, the key of Paradise, and the pact of the eternal covenant. This he wished to be held and known of all, and he wished his brethren to confer concerning it very often in their conversation against weariness, and in memory of their first oath full often to talk of it with their inner man. He taught them also that it should always be carried before their eyes in commemoration and memory of leading the life, and of the due Observance of the Rule, and what is more, he wished and taught that the friars should die with it.

CHAPTER LXXVII

OF A HOLY LAYMAN WHO WAS MARTYRED HOLDING
THE RULE IN HIS HAND

NOT unmindful therefore of the teaching of the most blessed Father, a certain lay brother, whom we believe undoubtedly to have been taken into the choir of martyrs, when he was amongst the infidels for the desire of martyrdom, and while he was being led to martyrdom by the Saracens, holding the Rule with great

fervour in both his hands, his knees humbly bent, said to his fellow, "I confess myself guilty, dearest brother, before the eyes of the Divine Majesty and before thee, of all things which I have done against this Rule." To this short confession succeeded the sword, by which, finishing his life, he attained the crown of martyrdom. For he had entered the Order so young, that he was hardly able to bear the yoke of the Rule, and yet a youth he bore a shirt of mail next his flesh. Happy boy, who happily began, and more happily ended!

CHAPTER LXXVIII

HOW HE WISHED HIS ORDER TO BE ALWAYS SUBJECT TO THE PROTECTION AND CORRECTION OF THE ROMAN CHURCH

BLESSED Francis used to say, "I will go and commend the Order of the Friars Minor to the holy Roman Church, by whose mighty rod its evil wishers may be terrified and kept in check, and the sons of God may rejoice everywhere with full liberty, to the increase of their eternal salvation. Let my sons recognise from this the sweet benefits of their mother, and ever embrace her reverend footsteps with spiritual devotion towards her. For under her protection, no evil son of Belial shall come into the Order, the impious shall pass through the vineyard of the Lord. That mother shall gather up the glory of our poverty and will not permit the joy of obedience and the reward of humility in any way to be darkened by the cloud of pride. She will preserve untouched the bonds of charity and of peace among us; striking with her strictest censure the unwilling, and the holy Observation of Evangelical purity shall continually flourish in her sight, nor will she suffer the odour of good fame and holy conversation to be lost at any time."

CHAPTER LXXIX

OF THE FOUR PREROGATIVES WHICH THE LORD GAVE TO THE ORDER REVEALING THEM TO SAINT FRANCIS

BLESSED Francis said that he had obtained from the Lord these four things, announced to him by an angel: namely, that the Order and profession of Friars Minor should never fail even to

the Day of Judgment. Also that no one setting himself with all his might to persecute the Order should live long. Also that no evil man, wishing to live evilly in the Order, should be able to remain in it long. Also whoever from his heart should love the Order, although he should be a sinner, yet he should at the last obtain mercy.

CHAPTER LXXX

OF WHAT SORT THE MINISTER-GENERAL SHOULD BE

SUCH was the zeal which he had for the preservation of perfection in the Order, and such seemed to him the perfection of the profession of the Rule, that he often used to consider who would be sufficient after his death for the governance of the whole Order, and to the conservation of perfection in it with the help of God; and he could come upon none fit.

Whence near the end of his life, a certain friar said to him, "Father, thou wilt pass away to the Lord, and this family which has followed thee will remain in the vale of tears. Point out any one in the Order, if thou knowest one, in whom thy mind might be at rest, on whom the burden of the Minister-General may be worthily imposed." Blessed Francis answered, pointing all his words with sighs, "My son, I behold no sufficient leader of so great and various an army, no shepherd of so wide and scattered a flock, but I will paint to you one in whom should shine out how the leader and shepherd of this family ought to be. This man (he said) ought to be of most grave life, of great discretion, of laudable report, without private affections, lest while he loves more dearly on one side, scandal may grow in the whole body. There should be in him friendly zeal for prayer, yet so that he distribute certain hours to his own soul, and certain to his flock. For early in the morning, he should put before all things the most holy sacrifice of the Mass, and there, with long devotion, most earnestly commend himself and his flock to the divine protection. But after prayer he shall place himself in the midst that he may be questioned by all, answer to all, to provide for all with charity and patience and gentleness.

"For he should be no acceptor of persons, so that he should take no less heed of the simple and foolish than of the wise and learned. To whom if the gift of learning be granted, yet let him bear in his manner the stamp of piety and simplicity, of

through his great weakness and affliction, they said to him with the greatest grief and shedding of tears, "Father, what shall we do without thee? Thou wast ever our father and mother, begetting and bringing us forth in Christ. Thou wast a leader and a shepherd to us, a master and a corrector, teaching and correcting us more by example than by word. Whither therefore shall we go, sheep without a shepherd, orphans without a father, rude and simple men without a leader? Where shall we go to seek thee, O glory of poverty, praise of simplicity, and honour of our vileness? Who shall show us, blind ones, henceforth the way of truth; where will the speaking mouth be, and the tongue that counselled us? Where will be the fervent spirit, directing us in the way of the cross; and strengthening us to evangelical perfection? Where wilt thou be that we may come to thee, light of our eyes; that we may seek thee, consoler of our souls? Behold, Father, thou diest; behold, thou desertest us thus desolate, leaving us thus sad and bitter; behold, that day, the day of weeping and bitterness, the day of desolation and sadness draweth near! Behold the bitter day which we have always been fearing to see since we have been with thee; even when we were not able to think of it. Nor is it strange, truly, because thy life is a continuous light to us, and thy words were torches, burning and guiding us continually to the way of the cross and evangelical perfection, to the love and imitation of the most sweet Crucified One! And therefore, Father, forthwith bless us and thy other friars whom thou hast begotten in Christ; and leave to us some memorial of thy will; that thy brethren may have thee always in memory, and that they may say, 'These words our Father left to his brethren and his sons at his death.'" Then the most pious Father, turning his paternal eyes on his sons, said to them, "Call to me Brother Benedict of Pirato." For that brother was a priest, holy and discreet, who celebrated for blessed Francis while he lay there infirm (because always when he was able, he wished to have or hear a mass as long as he was sick). And when he had come to him, he said to him, "Write how I bless my brethren who are in the Order, and who shall come, unto the end of the world. And since on account of my weakness and the pain of my infirmity I may not speak, in these three words I make plain my will and intention briefly to all my brethren, present and to come; namely, that in token of my memory and benediction and will, they should always love one another like as I have loved and do love them; that they should always love

and observe our Lady Poverty, and always remain faithful subjects to the prelates and clergy of holy Mother Church."

For thus in the Chapter of the friars our Father had always been anxious at the end of the Chapter to bless and absolve all friars present and to come in the Order, and even out of Chapter he did the same many times in the fervour of his charity. But he used to warn the friars, that they should fear and guard themselves from evil example; and he cursed all those who by evil example provoked men to blaspheme the Order and life of the friars, because good and holy poor men are shamed by this and much afflicted.

CHAPTER LXXXVIII

OF THE LOVE WHICH HE SHOWED TO THE FRIARS WHEN NEAR HIS DEATH, GIVING TO EACH A MOUTHFUL OF BREAD BY THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST

On a certain night blessed Francis was so weighed upon by the pains of his infirmities, that he could neither rest nor sleep that whole night. But in the morning, when his pains had a little ceased, he caused all the friars in the dwelling to be called. And placing his right hand on the head of each of them, he blessed them all, present and absent, and those who should come to the Order up to the end of the world; and he seemed to have compassion on himself, because he was not able to see all his brethren and his sons before his death. But wishing in his death to imitate his Lord and Master, as he had perfectly imitated Him in his life, he ordered loaves to be brought to him, and blessed them, and made them to be broken into portions; because on account of his great weakness he was not strong enough to break it. And taking it, he handed to each of the friars a portion, bidding him eat the whole of it. Whence as the Lord before His death wished in token of His love to eat with His disciples on the Thursday, so blessed Francis, His perfect imitator, wished to show the same sign of love to his brethren. And that he wished to do this in the likeness of Christ appears manifestly, because he afterwards asked if it were then Thursday. But one of those friars kept back a particle of that bread, and after the death of blessed Francis, many sick who tasted thereof were immediately liberated from their infirmities.

ing. But a certain spiritually-minded man met him, and fearing lest he had pain of some ailment, said to him, "What is the matter, Brother?" But he answered, "Thus I go through the world without shame, lamenting the Passion of my Lord." Then they both began to weep together, and shed many tears. This man we have known, and have learnt this from him, who also showed much consolation and mercy to the blessed man and to us his fellows.

CHAPTER XCIII

HOW THE JOYS WHICH HE SOMETIMES HAD WERE TURNED INTO TEARS

DRUNKEN with the love and compassion of Christ, blessed Francis on a time did things such as these. For the most sweet melody of spirit boiling up within him frequently broke out in French speech and the veins of murmuring which he heard secretly with his ears, broke forth into French-like rejoicing. And sometimes he picked up a branch from the earth, and laying it on his left arm, he drew in his right hand another stick like a bow over it, as if on a viol or other instrument, and making fitting gestures, sang with it in French unto the Lord Jesus Christ. But all this playing ended in tears, and this joy dissolved in compassion for the Passion of Christ. In these times he would draw sighs continually; and with deep-drawn groans, forgetful of those things which he held in his hands, he was raised to Heaven.

SECTION VIII

OF HIS ZEAL FOR THE ORDER AND THE DIVINE WORK

CHAPTER XCIV

AND FIRSTLY, OF PRAYER AND THE DIVINE OFFICE

THOUGH for many years he had been afflicted with the aforesaid infirmities, yet was he so devout and reverent at prayer and the Divine Office, that every time he was praying or repeating the canonical Hours, he would never lean on the wall or doorpost. For he generally stood erect and bareheaded, though he was sometimes on his knees; more especially because he spent the greater part of the day and the night in prayer; nay, when he went through the world afoot he always stayed his steps when he wished to say his Hours. But if he were riding, on account of his ailment, he always alighted to say the Office. On a certain time it was raining very much, and he was riding by reason of his infirmity and very great necessity, and though he was wholly soaked through, he got off the horse when he wished to say his Hours, and said his Office with as great a fervour of devotion and reverence thus, standing on the road with the rain falling on him continually, as if he had been in a church or a cell. And he said to his companion, "If the body wishes to eat its food in peace and quietness, when both are but the food of worms, with how much quiet and peace, with how great a reverence and devotion, should the mind receive that food which is God Himself."

CHAPTER XCV

HOW HE EVER LOVED SPIRITUAL GLADNESS IN HIMSELF AND OTHERS

THE blessed Father ever used to have his highest and especial study in this, that apart from prayer and the Divine Office, he should continually have spiritual gladness; and this likewise

he singularly loved in his brethren, nay, he often reproveth them for sadness and outward grief. For he used to say that "if the servant of God would study to preserve within and without the spiritual joy which comes of cleanness of heart and is acquired by devoutness of prayer, the demons would not be able to harm him, for they would say, 'Since this servant of God has joy in tribulation as in prosperity, we can find no way of entering to him nor of hurting him.' But the demons exult when they can quench or hinder in any way the devotion and joy which arises from prayer and other virtuous works. For if the devil may have aught of his own in the servant of God, except he be a wise man and solicitous to take away and destroy it as soon as possible by the virtue of holy prayer, contrition, confession, and satisfaction, in a short time he will make from one hair a beam to throw upon him. Since, therefore, my brethren, this spiritual joy comes of cleanness of heart and the purity of continual prayer, ye should be first and foremost desirous to acquire and conserve these two things, that ye may have, within and without, that joy which with the greatest longing I desire and wish to know and feel in you and myself, to the edification of our neighbours and the reproach of the enemy. For it pertaineth to him and to his members, to grow sad, but to you ever to rejoice and be glad in the Lord."

CHAPTER XCVI

HOW HE REPROVED HIS FELLOW WHO WAS SAD OF FACE,
AND CONCERNING INTELLIGIBLE GLADNESS

THE holy Father used to say, "Although I know the demons envy me the blessings which the Lord has given me; yet I know and see that they cannot hurt me by myself, and they intend and desire to hurt me by my fellows. But if they cannot harm me by myself, or by my fellows, they retire with great confusion. Nay, if I am sometimes tempted or full of grief, when I perceive the gladness of my fellows immediately on account of their joy I return from my temptation and grief to my interior and exterior joy." On account of these things, the Father himself used often to blame those who made a show of sadness. For on a certain time he blamed one of his fellows who appeared sad of face, and said to him, "Why dost thou

make an outward show of sorrow and sadness for thy offences? Keep thou this sadness between thee and thy God, and pray to Him that by His mercy He may spare thee, and restore to thy soul the gladness of His salvation, which is taken away from thee on account of sin; but before me and others, study always to have joy, for it befits not the servant of God to show before his brother or another sadness or a troubled face."

Not that it should be thought or believed that our Father, a lover of all gravity and decency, would have wished this gladness to be shown by laughing or by the least vain word; since by this not spiritual gladness but rather vanity and folly is shown; nay, he even singularly abhorred laughing and idle words in the servant of God; since not only did he wish that he should not laugh, but not even afford to others the slightest occasion for laughing. Whence in a certain admonition of his, he laid down more clearly what should be the joy of the servant of God. For he said, "Blessed is that Religious, who has no joy nor gladness except in the most holy words and works of the Lord, and with these provokes man to the love of the Lord in joy and gladness. And woe to that Religious who rejoices in idle and vain words, and with these provokes men to laughter."

By gladness of face, therefore, he understood fervour and solicitude and the disposition and preparation of mind and body to doing freely all good works, because by fervour and disposition of this kind others are more provoked sometimes than by the good deed itself; nay, if an act, however good, does not seem to be done willingly and fervently, it rather causes disgust than provokes to good. And so he did not wish to see sadness in the face, which most often represents melancholy and indisposition of mind and idleness of body to all good. But he ever loved above all things gravity and maturity in face and in all the members of the body and the senses in himself and in others, and he induced others to do this as much as he could by word and example. For he had found out that gravity and modesty of manners of this kind was like a wall and a very strong shield against the shafts of the devil; and that the soul without the protection of this wall and shield was like a naked knight amongst very strong and well-furnished enemies, continually intent on his death.

CHAPTER XCVII

HOW FRIARS SHOULD SATISFY THE NECESSITIES
OF THE BODY

OUR most holy Father, considering that the body was created for the soul, and that bodily acts should be wrought on account of spiritual, used to say, "The servant of God, in eating and drinking and sleeping and satisfying the other necessities of the body, ought to satisfy his body with discretion, so that Brother Body may not be able to murmur against him, saying, 'I cannot stay erect and remain at prayer, nor rejoice in tribulations of the mind, nor work any other good works, because you do not satisfy my need.' For if the servant of God would satisfy his body with discretion and in a sufficiently good and fitting manner, and Brother Body should wish to be negligent and fat and sleepy in prayer, vigils, and good works, then he ought to punish it like a bad and fat beast for that he would eat and not be of profit, and bear a load. But if on account of want and poverty Brother Body cannot have his necessities in health and weakness, when he shall have humbly and honestly asked it from his brother or from his prelate for the love of God, and it is not given to him; let him bear it patiently for the love of God, Who should console him, Who sought it and also found it not; and this necessity with patience shall be counted to him by the Lord for martyrdom. And because he has done that which was his to do (that is, has humbly asked his need), he shall be excused, even if his body were thence made sore feeble."

place and habitation of those who know Thee truly, and glorify Thy most blessed and glorious Name, for ever and ever, Amen."

And having said this he was carried to St. Mary of the Angels, where, having completed forty years of his age and twenty years of perfect penitence, he, in the year of Our Lord 1227, on the fourth of the Nones of October, passed away to the Lord Jesus Christ, Whom he loved with his whole heart, with his whole mind, his whole soul, his whole strength, his most ardent desire, and fullest affection, following Him most perfectly, running after Him most swiftly, and at the last reaching Him most gloriously, Who with the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, for ever and ever, Amen.

Here endeth the Mirror of perfection of the state of the Friar Minor, in which one can sufficiently behold the perfection of his vocation and profession. All praise, all glory be to God the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

LIFE OF ST. FRANCIS

PROLOGUE

1. THE grace of God our Saviour hath in these latter days appeared in His servant Francis unto all such as be truly humble, and lovers of holy Poverty, who, adoring the overflowing mercy of God seen in him, are taught by his ensample to utterly deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live after the manner of Christ, thirsting with unwearied desire for the blessed hope. For God Most High regarded him, as one that truly was poor and of a contrite spirit, with so great condescension of His favour as that not only did He raise him up in his need from the dust of his worldly way of life, but also made him a true professor, leader, and herald of Gospel perfection. Thus He gave him for a light unto believers, that by bearing witness of the light he might prepare for the Lord the way of light and peace in the hearts of the faithful. For Francis, even as the morning star in the midst of a cloud, shining with the bright beams of his life and teaching, by his dazzling radiance led into the light them that sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, and, like unto the rainbow giving light in the bright clouds, set forth in himself the seal of the Lord's covenant. He preached the gospel of peace and salvation unto men, himself an Angel of the true peace, ordained of God to follow in the likeness of the Forerunner, that, preparing in the desert the way of sublimest Poverty, he might preach repentance by his ensample and words alike. For, firstly, he was endowed with the gifts of heavenly grace; next, enriched by the merits of triumphant virtue; filled with the spirit of prophecy and appointed unto angelic ministries; thereafter, wholly set on fire by the kindling of the Seraph, and, like the prophet, borne aloft in a chariot of fire; wherefore it is reasonably proven, and clearly apparent from the witness of his whole life, that he came in the spirit and power of Elias.

In like wise, he is thought to be not unmeetly set forth in the true prophecy of that other friend of the Bridegroom, the Apostle and Evangelist John, under the similitude of the Angel ascending from the sunrising and bearing the seal of the Living God. For at the opening of the sixth seal, I saw, saith John

in the Apocalypse, another Angel ascending from the sun-rising and bearing the seal of the Living God.

2. Now that this Angel was indeed that messenger of God, beloved of Christ, our ensample and the world's wonder, Francis, the servant of God, we may with full assurance conclude, when we consider the heights of lofty saintliness whereunto he attained, and whereby, living among men, he was an imitator of the purity of the Angels, and was also set as an ensample unto them that do perfectly follow after Christ. That this belief should be faithfully and devoutly held we are convinced by the vocation that he showed to call to weeping and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth, and to set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry, by the sign of his penitent's Cross and habit fashioned like unto a Cross. Moreover, it is further confirmed, with unanswerable witness unto its truth, by the seal of the likeness of the Living God, to wit, of Christ Crucified, the which was imprinted on his body, not by the power of nature or the skill of art, but rather by the marvellous might of the Spirit of the Living God.

3. Feeling myself unworthy and insufficient to relate the life most worthy of all imitation of this most venerable man, I should have in no wise attempted it, had not the glowing love of the Brethren moved me thereunto, and the unanimous importunity of the Chapter-General incited me, and that devotion compelled me, which I am bound to feel for our holy Father. For I, who remember as though it happened but yesterday how I was snatched from the jaws of death, while yet a child, by his invocation and merits, should fear to be convicted of the sin of ingratitude did I refrain from publishing his praises. And this was with me the chief motive for undertaking this task, to wit, that I, who own my life of body and mind to have been preserved unto me by God through his means, and have proved his power in mine own person, and knew the virtues of his life, might collect as best I could, albeit I could not fully, his deeds and words—fragments, as it were, overlooked in part, in part scattered—that they might not be utterly lost on the death of those that lived with the servant of God.

4. Accordingly, that the true story of his life might be handed down unto posterity by me the more assuredly and clearly, I betook me unto the place of his birth, and there did hold diligent converse with his familiar friends that were yet living, touching the manner of life of the holy man and his passing away; and with those in especial that were well acquainted with his holiness,

HERE BEGINNETH THE LIFE OF THE BLESSED FRANCIS

CHAPTER I

OF HIS MANNER OF LIFE IN THE SECULAR STATE

I. THERE was a man in the city of Assisi, by name Francis, whose memory is blessed, for that God, graciously preventing him with the blessings of goodness, delivered him in His mercy from the perils of this present life, and abundantly filled him with the gifts of heavenly grace. For, albeit in his youth he was reared in vanity amid the vain sons of men, and, after gaining some knowledge of letters, was appointed unto a profitable business of merchandise, nevertheless, by the aid of the divine protection, he went not astray among the wanton youths after the lusts of the flesh, albeit given up unto pleasures; nor among the covetous merchants, albeit intent on his gains, did he put his trust in money and treasure. For there was divinely implanted in the heart of the young Francis a certain generous compassion toward the poor, the which, growing up with him from infancy, had so filled his heart with kindliness that, when he came to be no deaf hearer of the Gospel, he was minded to give unto all that asked of him, in especial if they pleaded the love of God. But once on a time, when he had been busied with the cares of his trading, and, contrary unto his wont, had sent empty away a certain beggar who besought an alms for the love of God, he forthwith, returning unto his pitiful mind, ran after him, and bestowed alms in merciful wise upon him; promising unto the Lord God that thenceforward he would never, while he could, refuse any that asked of him, pleading the love of God. And this promise with unwearied goodness he did observe until his death, thereby winning abundant increase of the love and grace of God. For he was wont to say in after time, when he had perfectly put on Christ, that, even while he was in the secular state, he could scarce ever hear words telling of the love of God, and remain unmoved in heart. Assuredly the charm of his gentleness and his courtly bearing, his submissiveness and docility surpassing men's wont, his open-handed

largesse even beyond his means, were all clear tokens of the fair disposition of the youth, and seemed to be a presage of the abundance of divine blessing that should thereafter be poured out more richly upon him.

A certain citizen of Assisi, a simpleton as was believed, yet one taught of God, whensoever he met Francis going through the city, would doff his cloak and spread the garment before his feet, declaring that Francis was worthy of all honour, as one that should ere long do mighty deeds, and was on this account to be splendidly honoured by all the faithful.

2. But as yet Francis knew not the intent of God concerning him, forasmuch as he was both drawn away unto external things by his father's calling, and weighed down toward earthly things by the corruption inborn in our nature, and had not yet learned to contemplate heavenly things, nor accustomed himself to taste of divine. And, because the infliction of tribulation giveth understanding unto the spirit, the hand of the Lord was upon him and the changes of the right hand of the Most High, afflicting his body with protracted sickness, that so He might prepare his soul for the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Now when he had regained his bodily strength, and had made ready for himself in his wonted fashion meet apparel, he met a certain soldier, of noble birth, but poor and ill-clad; whereupon, compassionating his poverty, with a kindly impulse he forthwith did off his garments and put them on him, thus in one act fulfilling a two-fold ministry of kindness, insomuch as he both covered the shame of a noble knight, and relieved the destitution of a poor man.

3. Now on the night following, when he had yielded himself unto sleep, the divine mercy showed him a fair and great palace, together with military accoutrements adorned with the sign of the Cross of Christ, thus setting forth unto him that the mercy he had shown unto the poor soldier for the love of the King Most High was to be recompensed by this peerless reward. Accordingly, when he enquired whose were these things, answer was made him by a divine declaration that they all were his own and his soldiers'. Then, waking at early morn—since he had not yet practised his mind in examining the divine mysteries, and knew not how to pass through the appearance of things seen unto the beholding of the truth of things unseen—he accounted this strange vision a token of great good fortune. Wherefore he purposed, being as yet ignorant of the divine counsel, to betake himself into Apulia, unto a certain munificent Count, hoping in

his service to win glory in arms, as the vision shown unto him had betokened. With but little delay, he set forth on his journey and had gone as far as the neighbouring city; there he heard the Lord speaking unto him by night as with the voice of a friend, and saying, "Francis, who can do better for thee, the lord or the servant, the rich man or the poor?" And when Francis had made reply that alike the lord and the rich man could do the best, the Voice answered forthwith, "Why, then, dost thou leave the Lord for the servant, the rich God for a poor mortal?" And Francis said, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" And the Lord said unto him, "Return unto thy country, for the vision that thou hast seen betokeneth that which shall be spiritually wrought, and is to be fulfilled in thee not by mortal counsel, but by divine." So, when it was morning, he returned in haste toward Assisi, confident and rejoicing, awaiting the will of the Lord.

4. Thenceforward he withdrew him from the stir of public business, devoutly praying the heavenly mercy that it would deign to show him that which he ought to do. And so by the constant practice of prayer the flame of heavenly yearning was mightily kindled within him, and for the love of his heavenly fatherland he now contemned all earthly things as naught; for he felt that he had found the hid treasure and, like a wise merchant man, meditated selling all that he had to buy the pearl that he had found. But he knew not yet how to compass this, except that it was whispered unto his spirit that spiritual merchandise hath its beginning in the contempt of the world, and that the warfare of Christ is to be begun by victory over self.

5. Now on a day while he was riding over the plain that lieth beneath the city of Assisi, he met a certain leper, and this unforeseen meeting filled him with loathing. But when he recalled the purpose of perfection that he had even then conceived in mind, and remembered that it behoved him first of all to conquer self, if he were fain to become the soldier of Christ, he leapt from his horse and ran to embrace him. When the leper stretched forth his hand as though to receive an alms, he kissed it, and then put money therein. Then forthwith mounting his horse, he looked round him on all sides, and the plain was spread before him unbroken, and no trace of that leper might he see. Then, filled with wonder and joy, he began devoutly to chant praises unto the Lord, purposing from this to rise ever unto greater heights.

heart, outwardly also in his body. So all these things were wrought by the man of God, Francis, ere yet he had separated himself from the world in habit or way of life.

CHAPTER II

OF HIS PERFECT CONVERSION UNTO GOD, AND OF THE
REPAIRING OF THE THREE CHURCHES

I. FORASMUCH as the servant of the Most High had none to instruct him in this way except Christ, His mercy was now further vouchsafed unto him in visitations of His sweet grace. For on a certain day, when he had gone forth to meditate in the fields, he was walking nigh the church of Saint Damian, which from its exceeding great age was threatening to fall, and, at the prompting of the Spirit, went within to pray. Prostrating himself before an Image of the Crucified, he was filled with no small consolation of spirit as he prayed. And as with eyes full of tears he gazed upon the Lord's Cross, he heard with his bodily ears a Voice proceeding from that Cross, saying thrice, "Francis, go and repair My House, which, as thou seest, is falling utterly into ruin." Francis trembled, being alone in the church, and was astonished at the sound of such a wondrous Voice, and, perceiving in his heart the might of the divine speech, was carried out of himself in ecstasy. When at length he came unto himself again, he prepared to obey, and devoted himself wholly unto the behest to repair the material church; howbeit, the principal intent of the message had regard unto that Church which Christ had purchased with His own blood, even as the Holy Spirit taught him, and as he himself afterward revealed unto the Brethren.

Accordingly he rose up, and, fortifying himself with the sign of the Cross, he put together cloth stuffs for sale, and hastened unto the city that is called Foligno, and there sold the goods that he had brought and the horse whereon he had ridden. Then this joyful merchant, putting together his gains, departed on his return for Assisi, and there did reverently enter the church concerning whose repair he had received the command. Finding there a poor priest, he showed him due reverence, and proffered him the money for the repair of the church, and the use of the poor, humbly petitioning that he would permit him to sojourn with him for a time. The priest granted him to sojourn there,

not bring him back, he turned his thoughts unto the recovery of the money, the which, when he had at length found it on the window-ledge, somewhat soothed his rage, the thirst of avarice being relieved, as it were, by a draught of money.

4. Then this father according unto the flesh was fain to take this son of grace, now stripped of his wealth, before the Bishop of the city, that into his hands he might resign his claim unto his father's inheritance, and render up all that had been his. This that true lover of poverty showed himself right ready to do, and coming into the Bishop's presence, he brooked no delays, he was kept back of none, tarried for no speech, nor spake himself, but at once did off all his garments, and restored them unto his father. Then was the man of God seen to have a hair-shirt next his skin under his rich apparel. Yea more, as one drunk with wondrous fervour of spirit, he threw aside even his breeches, and stood up naked in the presence of all, saying unto his father, "Hitherto I have called thee my father on earth, but henceforth I can confidently say 'Our Father, Which art in heaven,' with Whom I have laid up my whole treasure, and on Whom I have set my whole trust and hope." The Bishop, seeing this, and marvelling at such exceeding fervour in the man of God, rose forthwith, and, weeping, put his arms round him; then, devout and kindly man as he was, covered him with the cloak wherewith he himself was clad, bidding his servants give him something to clothe his limbs withal, and there was brought unto him a mean and rough tunic of a farm-servant of the Bishop. This Francis gladly received, and with his own hand marked it with the sign of the Cross, with a piece of chalk that he chanced upon, thus making it a garment meet for a man crucified, poor, and half naked. Thus, then, the servant of the Most High King was left despoiled, that he might follow the Lord Whom he loved, Who had been despoiled and crucified; thus he was fortified with the Cross, that he might entrust his soul unto that wood of salvation, that should bring him forth unscathed from the shipwreck of the world.

5. Thereafter, this despiser of the world, loosed from the bonds of worldly desires, left the city, and, glad and free, sought an hidden solitude where he might hearken in loneliness and silence unto the hid treasures of the divine converse. And while the man of God, Francis, was making his way through a certain wood, chanting praises unto the Lord in the French tongue, and rejoicing, it chanced that some robbers rushed out on him from their hiding-places. With fierce mien they asked

the man of God who he was, and he, full of confidence, gave a prophetic answer, saying, "I am a herald of the great King." Then they fell upon him, and cast him into a ditch full of snow, crying, "Lie there, lout, thou herald of God!" But he, on their departure, climbed out of the ditch, and, uplifted with exceeding gladness, with yet louder voice began to make the woods echo with praises unto the Creator of all.

6. When he came unto a neighbouring monastery, he asked an alms as a beggar, and received it as one unrecognised and despised. Departing thence, he came unto Gubbio, where he was recognised and entertained by a friend of former days, and was clad by him with a poor tunic, such as became the little poor one of Christ.

Thence that lover of utterest humility betook himself unto the lepers, and abode among them, with all diligence serving them all for the love of God. He would bathe their feet, and bind up their sores, drawing forth the corrupt matter from their wounds, and wiping away the blood; yea, in his marvellous devotion, he would even kiss their ulcerated wounds, he that was soon to be a Gospel physician. Wherefore he obtained from the Lord such power as that he received a marvellous efficacy in marvellously cleansing both soul and body from disease. I will relate one instance out of many, whereby the fame of the man of God was afterward bruited abroad.

A man in the county of Spoleto had his mouth and jaw eaten away by the ravages of a loathsome disease, and received no succour from any remedy of the physicians. It chanced that, after visiting the shrines of the holy Apostles to implore their merits, he was returning from his pilgrimage, and met the servant of God. When out of devotion he was fain to kiss his footprints, Francis in his humility would not brook it, but kissed on the mouth him that had been fain to kiss his feet. Lo, as in his wondrous goodness the servant of the lepers, Francis, touched that loathsome sore with his holy lips, the disease utterly vanished, and the sick man at once regained his longed-for health. I know not which of these twain is the more rightly to be marvelled at, the depth of humility in such a gracious embrace, or the excellence of power in such an astounding miracle.

7. Francis, now stablished in the humility of Christ, recalled unto mind the obedience laid upon him by the Crucifix as to the repairing of the church of Saint Damian, and like one truly obedient returned unto Assisi, that he might, if even by begging,

obtain means to accomplish the divine behest. Laying aside all shamefastness for the love of the Poor Man Crucified, he went about begging from those who had known him in his affluence, bearing the loads of stones on his frail body, worn with fasting. When the church aforesaid had been repaired, the Lord helping him, and the devotion of the citizens coming unto his aid—that his body after its toil might not relax in sloth, he turned to repair the church of Saint Peter, at some distance from the city, by reason of the especial devotion that in the purity of his candid faith he had for the Prince of the Apostles.

8. When this church too was at length finished, he came unto the place that is called The Little Portion, wherein a church had been reared in days of old in honour of the most Blessed Virgin, Mother of God, but which was then deserted and cared for by none. When the man of God beheld it thus abandoned, by reason of the ardent devotion that he had toward the Sovereign Lady of the world, he took up his abode there, that he might diligently labour to repair it. Perceiving that Angels oftentimes visited it—according unto the name of that church, that from old time was called Saint Mary of the Angels—he abode there by reason of his reverence for the Angels, and his especial love for the Mother of Christ. This place the holy man loved before all other places in the world; for here he began in humility, here he made progress in virtue, here he ended in happiness, and, dying, commended it unto the Brethren as a place most beloved of the Virgin. Concerning this place a certain devout Brother, before his conversion, beheld a vision right worthy to be recounted. He beheld a countless host of men stricken with blindness, with their faces uplifted unto heaven, on bended knees, encircling this church, and they all, stretching out their hands on high, cried unto God with tears, beseeching His mercy and light. And lo, there came a great radiance from heaven, illumining all, and this gave light unto each one of them, and granted the longed-for salvation. This is the place wherein the Order of Brothers Minor was begun by Saint Francis according unto the impulse of the divine revelation. For at the bidding of the divine providence, by the which the servant of Christ was guided in all things, he built three material churches before that, instituting the Order, he preached the Gospel; thus not only did he make progress in ordered course from things perceived by the senses unto things perceived by the understanding, and from lesser things unto greater, but he did also prefigure in mystic wise by his

as I myself beheld with the witness of mine own eyes—as that he might be deemed to live among men an angelic rather than a mortal life.

5. Moreover, about that same time, a certain priest of the city of Assisi, Silvester by name, a man of honourable life, received of the Lord a vision not to be passed over in silence. For since, in his finite judgment, he had looked askance at the manner of life of Francis and his Brethren, he was visited—lest he should be imperilled by his rash verdict—by the regard of the heavenly grace. For in a dream he beheld the whole city of Assisi beset by a great dragon, whose huge bulk seemed to threaten all the countryside with destruction. Then he saw a Cross of gold proceeding out of the mouth of Francis, the top whereof touched heaven, and its arms outstretched at the side seemed to reach unto the ends of the world, and at its glittering aspect that foul and loathly dragon was utterly put to flight. When this had been thrice shown unto him, he deemed it a divine portent, and related it in order unto the man of God and his Brethren; and no long time thereafter he left the world, and clave so constantly unto the footsteps of Christ as that his life in the Order rendered true the vision that he had received while yet in the world.

6. When this vision was related unto him, the man of God was not puffed up with the glorying of men, but, recognising the goodness of God in the favours shown unto him, he was the more keenly incited to repel the craft of the ancient enemy, and to preach the glory of the Cross of Christ. Now on a day, while in a certain lonely place he was bitterly bewailing the remembrance of past years, the joy of the Holy Spirit came upon him, and he was assured of the full remission of all his offences. Then, carried out of himself, and wholly wrapt into a marvellous light, the horizons of his mind were enlarged, and he clearly beheld the future story of himself and of his sons. Returning after this unto the Brethren, “Be consoled,” saith he, “my dearest, and rejoice in the Lord, and be not sad for that ye be few in number, nor let my simpleness nor your own make you afeared, for the Lord hath verily shown me that God will cause us to wax into a great host, and will enlarge us in manifold wise with the grace of His blessing.”

7. Whereas about this time another good man did enter the Religion, the blessed family of the man of God reached the number of seven. Then the holy Father called all his sons unto him and told them many things concerning the Kingdom of

God, the contempt of the world, the sacrifice of their own wills and the chastisement of the body, and did lay before them his intent of sending them forth into the four quarters of the world. For now the barren and poor humble simpleness of the holy Father had brought forth seven sons, and he was fain to give birth unto the whole company of the faithful in the Lord Christ, calling them unto the mourning of penitence. "Go ye," saith the sweet Father unto his sons, "bringing tidings of peace unto men, and preach repentance for the remission of sins. Be ye patient in tribulation, watchful unto prayer, zealous in toil, humble in speech, sober in manner, and thankful for kindnesses, seeing that for all these an everlasting kingdom is prepared for you." Then they, humbly prostrating themselves on the ground before the servant of God, received with gladness of spirit the behest of holy obedience. And Francis said unto each one singly, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee." He was wont to say these words whensoever he was guiding any Brother unto obedience. Then he himself, knowing that he was set as an ensample unto the rest, that he might first do that which he had taught, set forth with one companion toward one quarter of the world, the remaining six being apportioned, after the fashion of a Cross, unto the other three parts. After some little time had passed, the kindly Father, longing for the presence of his beloved family—since he could not of himself call them together into one place—prayed that this might be accomplished by Him Who gathereth together the outcasts of Israel. And this came to pass. For, with no mortal summoning, and all unexpectedly, within a short time all came together according as he had desired, by the effectual working of the divine goodness, and to their no small marvel. Moreover, as four other honourable men joined them about that time, their number increased unto twelve.

8. Now when the servant of Christ perceived that the number of the Brethren was gradually increasing, he wrote for himself and for his Brethren a Rule for their life, in simple words. Herein the observance of the Holy Gospel was set as the inseparable foundation, and some few other points were added that seemed necessary for a consistent manner of life. But he was fain that what he had written should be approved by the Supreme Pontiff, wherefore he purposed to approach the Apostolic See with that his company of simple men, relying only on the divine guidance. God from on high had regard unto

we know it more surely, we will more confidently assent unto thy holy desires."

10. Then the servant of God Almighty, betaking himself wholly unto prayer, gained by devout intercession that which he might set forth outwardly, and the Pope feel inwardly. For when he had narrated a parable of a rich King that had of free will espoused a fair woman that was poor, and how the children she bare showed the likeness of the King that begat them, and so were brought up at his table, even as he had learnt this of the Lord—he added, as an interpretation thereof, "It is not to be feared that the sons and heirs of the everlasting King will perish of hunger, even they that have been born of a poor mother in the likeness of the King, Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, and that shall themselves beget sons through the spirit of Poverty in a little poor Religion. For if the King of heaven hath promised an everlasting kingdom unto them that follow Him, how much more shall He provide for them those things that He bestoweth alike on the good and on the evil?" When the Vicar of Christ had diligently hearkened unto this parable, and the interpretation thereof, he marvelled greatly, and perceived that Christ had of a truth spoken through a man. Moreover, he maintained, by the inspiration of the Divine Spirit, that a vision that at that time was shown unto him from heaven would be fulfilled in Francis. For in a dream he saw, as he recounted, the Lateran Basilica about to fall, when a little poor man, of mean stature and humble aspect, propped it with his own back, and thus saved it from falling. "Verily," saith he, "he it is that by his work and teaching shall sustain the Church of Christ." From this vision, he was filled with an especial devotion unto him, and in all ways disposed himself unto his supplication, and ever loved the servant of Christ with an especial affection. Then and there he granted his request, and promised at a later day to bestow yet more upon him. He sanctioned the Rule, and gave him a command to preach repentance, and made all the lay Brethren that had accompanied the servant of God wear narrow tonsures, that they might preach the word of God without hindrance.

CHAPTER IV

OF THE ADVANCEMENT OF THE ORDER UNDER HIS HAND, AND
OF THE CONFIRMATION OF THE RULE ALREADY SANCTIONED

1. THENCEFORWARD Francis, relying on the favour of heaven and on the Papal authority, took his way with all confidence toward the valley of Spoleto, that he might both live and teach the Gospel of Christ. While he was holding converse with his companions on the road, as to how they might observe in sincerity the Rule that they had professed, and how in all holiness and righteousness they might walk before God, how they might progress among themselves, and be an ensample unto others, their discussion was prolonged, and the hours slipped by. And at last they found themselves, wearied with the length of their toilsome way, and an hungered, in a certain lonely place. Then verily, when there was no means whereby they might provide them with the needful food, the providence of God came speedily unto their aid. For, on a sudden, there appeared a man carrying bread in his hand, the which he gave unto the little poor ones of Christ, and, also on a sudden, vanished, without any man knowing whence he came or whither he went. Hereby the Brethren in their poverty perceived that the guardian care of heaven was about the company of the man of God, and were refreshed more by the gift of the divine bounty than by the food of the body; moreover, they were filled with heavenly comfort, and firmly resolved, and strengthened themselves in the irrevocable determination, never to retreat from their vow of holy poverty for any goad of necessity or affliction.

2. Thus they returned in their holy intent unto the valley of Spoleto, and began to discuss whether they ought to live among men, or to betake them unto lonely places. But Francis, the servant of Christ, trusting not in his own efforts or those of his Brethren, with importunate prayer enquired the pleasure of the divine will concerning this. Then he was illumined by a divinely revealed oracle, and understood that he had been sent of the Lord unto this end, that he might win for Christ the souls that the devil was striving to carry off. Wherefore he chose to live rather for all men than for his single self, inspired by the ensample of Him Who brooked to die, One Man for all.

3. Accordingly, the man of God returned with the rest of his companions unto a certain deserted hut nigh the city of Assisi,

wherein, after the pattern of Holy Poverty, they lived in much toil and necessity, seeking to be refreshed rather with the bread of tears than of luxury. For they gave themselves up continuously unto divine prayers, being earnest in the practice of devout intercession—of the heart rather than of the lips—for they had not yet any ecclesiastical books wherein they might chant the Canonical Hours. Howbeit, in the place of such, they meditated day and night on the book of the Cross of Christ, continuously looking thereupon, by the ensample of their Father, and taught by his discourse, for he continually spake unto them concerning the Cross of Christ. When the Brethren besought him to teach them to pray, he said, “When ye pray, say ‘Our Father,’ and, ‘We adore Thee, O Christ, in all Thy churches that be in the whole world, and we bless Thee for that by Thy holy Cross Thou hast redeemed the world.’” Moreover, he taught them to praise God in all things and through all His creatures, to reverence priests with an especial honour, to firmly hold and simply confess the true faith, according as the Holy Roman Church doth both hold and teach it. The Brethren observed the instructions of the holy Father in all things, and, using the form of prayer that he had given unto them, would humbly prostrate themselves before all churches and crosses that they beheld, were it even from a distance.

4. Now while the Brethren were abiding in the place aforesaid, the holy man one Saturday entered the city of Assisi, to preach early on the Sunday, as was his wont, in the Cathedral Church. While the man devoted unto God was passing the night, after his wonted manner, in a hut within the Canons’ garden, praying unto God, and absent in the body from his sons—lo, about midnight, while some of the Brethren were taking rest, others keeping vigil in prayer, a chariot of fire of marvellous brightness, entering by the door of the house, turned thrice hither and thither through the dwelling, and over the chariot a shining ball of fire rested, in appearance like unto the sun, making the night radiant. The watchful Brethren were astounded, they that slept were awakened and alarmed at the same moment, and felt the light no less in their hearts than with their bodies, while by the power of that marvellous brightness the conscience of each was laid bare unto his fellow. For they all understood alike—all seeing in turn the hearts of each—that their holy Father was absent from them in body, but present in spirit, and that, transformed into such a likeness, illumined with heavenly rays, and flaming with ardent heat, he was shown unto them of the Lord with

supernatural might in a shining chariot of fire; so that they, as Israelites indeed, might follow after him who, like another Elias, had been made by God the chariot and the horseman of spiritual men. We must verily believe that He opened the eyes of those simple men at the prayers of Francis, that they might see the mighty deeds of God, Who aforetime opened the eyes of the young man that he might see the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha. When the holy man returned unto the Brethren, he began to scrutinise the secret things of their consciences, to console them with that marvellous vision, and to foretell many things that should come to pass concerning the progress of the Order. And as he revealed many things surpassing mortal sense, the Brethren perceived of a truth that the Spirit of the Lord had rested upon His servant Francis in such fulness as that they would walk most securely in following his teaching and life.

5. After this, Francis, shepherd of a little flock, led his band of twelve Brethren unto Saint Mary of the Little Portion—the favour of heaven going before him—that in the place wherein, by the merits of the Mother of God, the Order of Minors had taken its beginning, it might by her aid gain an increase. There too he became an herald of the Gospel, going round among cities and fortified places, proclaiming the Kingdom of God, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth. He seemed unto them that beheld him a man of another world, one, to wit, that had his heart ever set on heaven, and his face turned toward it, and that endeavoured to draw all men upwards. From this time, the vine of Christ began to bring forth pleasant savour of the Lord, and the flowers produced therefrom became the rich fruit of sweetness, honour, and righteousness.

6. For, enkindled by the fervour of his preaching, very many folk bound themselves by new rules of penitence, after the pattern received from the man of God, and that same servant of Christ ordained that their manner of living should be called the Order of the Brethren of Penitence. Of a truth, even as the way of penitence is known to be common unto all that strive after heaven, so it is noted of how much worth in the sight of God was this Order, embracing clerks and laymen, virgins, and married folk of either sex, by the many miracles wrought by some of its members. And there were maidens converted unto lifelong virginity, among whom that virgin dearest unto God, Clare, the first plant among them, like a snowy spring blossom,

breathed fragrance, and shone like a star exceeding bright. She is now glorified in heaven, and rightly honoured by the Church on earth, she that was the daughter in Christ of the holy Father Francis, the little poor one, and herself the Mother of the Poor Ladies.

7. Now many were not only smitten with devotion, but also kindled by yearning after the perfection of Christ, and, despising all the vanity of worldly things, followed in the footsteps of Francis; and these, increasing by daily additions, speedily reached unto the ends of the earth. For Holy Poverty, whom alone they took with them for their charges, made them swift unto all obedience, strong to labour, and speedy in journeying. And since they possessed no earthly things they set their affections on naught, and had naught that they feared to lose; they were everywhere at ease, weighed down by no fear, harassed by no care; they lived like men who were removed from vexations of the mind, and, taking no thought for it, awaited the morrow, and their night's lodging. Many reproaches were hurled upon them in divers regions of the world, as on men contemptible and unknown; howbeit, their love for the Gospel of Christ rendered them so longsuffering as that they sought rather to be in places where they would endure persecution in the body, than in those where their saintliness was recognised, and where they might be puffed up by the applause of the world. Their very destitution of possessions seemed unto them overflowing wealth, while, according unto the counsel of the Wise King, they were better pleased with little than with much.

On a time when some of the Brethren had come unto the regions of the infidels, it chanced that a certain Saracen, moved by kindly feeling, offered them money for their needful food. And when they refused to take it, the man marvelled, perceiving that they were penniless. But when at last he understood that they had become poor for the love of God, and were resolved not to own money, he associated himself with them in such affection as that he offered to supply all their needs, so long as he should have aught in his possession. O priceless value of poverty, by whose marvellous power the mind of a fierce barbarian was changed into such compassionate gentleness! How appalling and scandalous a crime it is, that any Christian should trample on this rare pearl, that a Saracen exalted with such honour!

8. About that time, a certain Religious of the Order of Cross-bearers, Morico by name, was lying in an hospital hard by Assisi

suffering from an infirmity so serious and so protracted as that he was given up unto death by the physicians; he became a suppliant of the man of God, beseeching him earnestly through a messenger that he would deign to intercede with the Lord on his behalf. The blessed Father graciously acceded thereunto, and, having first prayed, took some crumbs of bread, and mixed with them some oil taken from the lamp that burned before the altar of the Virgin, and sent it by the hand of the Brethren unto the sick man, as though it were an electuary, saying, "Carry this medicament unto our brother Morico, by the which the power of Christ shall not only restore him unto full health, but shall also render him a hardy warrior, who shall cleave with constancy unto our ranks." Forthwith, so soon as the sick man tasted of that remedy made by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he rose up healed, and gained from God such strength of mind and body as that shortly thereafter he entered the Religion of the holy man, and, clothing himself with one tunic alone—beneath the which he wore for a long space of time a shirt of mail—and satisfied with but uncooked fare—herbs to wit, and vegetables and fruits—he thus for many years tasted neither bread nor wine, and yet remained strong and sound.

9. As the merits of the virtues of these little ones of Christ waxed greater, the fragrance of their good repute was spread on all sides, and drew much folk from divers parts of the world to see the holy Father in person. Among whom was a certain skilled composer of secular songs, who by reason of this gift had been crowned by the Emperor, and thence called "King of Verse," and he now was minded to seek the man of God, the despiser of worldly things. And when he had found him preaching in a Monastery at Borgo San Severino, the hand of the Lord was upon him, and he beheld that same preacher of the Cross of Christ, Francis, marked after the likeness of a Cross with two exceeding shining swords set crosswise, whereof the one reached from his head unto his feet, the other across his breast from hand to hand. He had not known the servant of Christ by face, but speedily recognised him when signalled out by so great a portent. Forthwith, all astonished at this sight, he began to resolve on better things, and, at length, pricked by the power of his words, and pierced as though by the sword of the Spirit proceeding out of his mouth, he did utterly despise worldly glories, and clave unto the blessed Father, professing his vows. Wherefore the holy man, seeing that he had utterly

turned from the disquiet of the world unto the peace of Christ, called him Brother Pacifico. He afterward made progress in all holiness, and, before that he became Minister in France—being the first who held the office of Minister there—he merited to behold once more a great T on the forehead of Francis, the which, marked out by a diversity of colours, adorned his face with its marvellous beauty. This sign, in sooth, the holy man revered with deep affection, praised it often in his discourse, and, in the letters that he dictated, signed it with his own hand at the end, as though all his care was, in the prophet's words, to set a mark¹ upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry, and that be truly converted unto Christ Jesus.

10. Now as time went by, and the Brethren were multiplied, their watchful shepherd began to call them together unto Chapters-General in the place of Saint Mary of the Little Portion, so that, God dividing them an inheritance by line in the land of poverty, he might allot unto each his portion of obedience. Here, albeit there was destitution of all things needful, a company of more than 5000 Brethren came together at one time, and, the divine mercy succouring them, there was both a sufficiency of victual, and bodily health together with it, while gladness of spirit abounded. In the provincial Chapters, albeit Francis could not there show himself present in the body, yet in spirit—by his zealous care for their ruling, by his urgency in prayer, and the efficacy of his blessing—he was present there; yea, and once, by the operation of God's marvellous power, he did visibly appear. For while that glorious preacher, who is now a noted Confessor of Christ, Antony, was preaching unto the Chapter of the Brethren at Arles on the title inscribed on the Cross, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews," a certain Brother of proved uprightness, Monaldo by name, looking, by a divine impulse, toward the door of the Chapter-house, beheld with his bodily eyes the Blessed Francis uplifted in the air, his hands outstretched after the manner of a Cross, blessing the Brethren. All the Brethren felt that they had been filled with a consolation of spirit so great and so new as that the Spirit bore indubitable witness within them of the true presence of the holy Father, albeit this was further assured, not alone by manifest tokens, but also by external testimony through the words of that same holy Father. We must verily believe that the almighty power of God—that vouchsafed unto the

¹ Vulg. Ezek. ix. 4. Signa thou (T) super frontes, etc., the letter T being in form like a Cross.

holy Bishop Ambrose to be present at the burial of the glorious Martin, that he might honour the holy Pontiff with his holy ministry—did also make His servant Francis to appear at the preaching of His true herald Antony, that he might sanction his preaching of the truth, and in especial his preaching of the Cross of Christ, whereof he was a supporter and servant.

11. Now as the Order was spreading abroad, Francis was minded to make the Rule of their life, that the lord Innocent had sanctioned, be confirmed in perpetuity by his successor Honorius, and he was admonished by a revelation from God on this wise. He seemed unto himself to have gathered from the ground some very small crumbs of bread, and to have to part them among many famished Brethren that stood round about him. While he hesitated, fearing to part among them such minute crumbs, lest haply they might slip between his hands, a Voice from above said unto him, "Francis, make one Host out of all the crumbs, and give it unto these that would fain eat." This he did, and such as did not receive it devoutly, or despised the gift as they received it, were speedily stricken with leprosy, and so marked out from the rest. At morn, the holy man narrated all these things unto his companions, grieving that he could not interpret the mystic meaning of the vision. But on the day following, as he kept prayerful vigil, he heard a Voice speaking unto him from heaven on this wise, "Francis, the crumbs of the night past are the words of the Gospel, the Host is the Rule, the leprosy is sin." Being fain, therefore, to reduce unto more convenient form the Rule that was to be confirmed—it having been somewhat diffusely compiled by putting together the words of the Gospel—and being directed thereunto by the vision that had been shown him, he went up into a certain mountain with two companions, the Holy Spirit leading him. There, fasting, or living on bread and water alone, he made the Rule be compiled, according unto what the divine Spirit had taught him in prayer. When he came down from the mountain, he entrusted this Rule unto the keeping of his Vicar, who, when a few days had gone by, affirmed that he had lost it through negligence. Then the holy man returned unto the lonely place, and there drew up the Rule again, like the former one, as though he had received the very words from the mouth of God; and he obtained its confirmation, as he had desired, from the lord Pope Honorius aforesaid, in the eighth year of his pontificate. When persuading the Brethren with ardour to observe this Rule, he would say that he had set naught

therein of his own devising, but that he had made all things be written according as they had been divinely revealed unto him. And that this might be more assuredly confirmed by the witness of God, it was but a few days thereafter that the stigmata of the Lord Jesus were imprinted upon him by the finger of the Living God—the seal, as it were, of the Chief Pontiff, Christ, to sanction in all ways the Rule, and to approve its author, even as is described in its own place below, after the recital of his virtues.

CHAPTER V

OF THE AUSTERITY OF HIS LIFE, AND OF HOW ALL CREATED THINGS AFFORDED HIM COMFORT

I. WHEN therefore the man of God, Francis, perceived that by his ensample many were incited to bear the Cross of Christ with fervour of soul, he himself was incited, like a good leader of the army of Christ, to reach unto the palm of victory by the heights of unconquered valour. For, considering that saying of the Apostle, "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts," and being fain to wear the armour of the Cross upon his body, he restrained his sensual appetites with such strict discipline as that he would barely take what was necessary to support life. For he was wont to say that it was difficult to satisfy the needs of the body without yielding unto the inclinations of the senses. Wherefore he would hardly, and but seldom, allow himself cooked food when in health, and, when he did allow it, he would either sprinkle it with ashes, or by pouring water thereupon would as far as possible destroy its savour and taste. Of his drinking of wine what shall I say, when even of water he would scarce drink what he needed, while parched with burning thirst? He was alway discovering methods of more rigorous abstinence, and would daily make progress in their use, and albeit he had already attained the summit of perfection, yet, like a novice, he was ever making trial of some new method, chastising the lusts of the flesh by afflicting it. Howbeit, when he went forth abroad, he adapted himself—as the Gospel biddeth—unto them that entertained him, in the quality of their meats, yet only so as that, on his return unto his own abode, he strictly observed the sparing frugality of abstinence. In this wise he showed himself harsh toward his

such things a weak spirit is broken, and a strong one oftentimes weakened. He said that one who held converse with women—unless he were of an especial uprightness—could as little avoid contamination therefrom as he could, in the words of Scripture, go upon hot coals and his feet not be burned. He himself so turned away his eyes that they might not behold vanity after this sort that he knew the features of scarce any woman—thus he once told a companion. For he thought it was not safe to dwell on the appearance of their persons, that might either rekindle a spark of the vanquished flesh, or spot the radiance of a chaste mind. For he maintained that converse with women was a vain toy, except only for confession or the briefest instruction, such as made for salvation, and was in accord with decorum. “What dealings,” saith he, “should a Religious have with a woman, except when she seeketh, with devout supplication, after holy penitence, or counsel anent a better life? In overweening confidence, the enemy is less dreaded, and the devil, if so be that he can have a hair of his own in a man, soon maketh it wax into a beam.”

6. He taught the Brothers zealously to shun sloth, as the sink of all evil thoughts, showing by his ensample that the rebellious and idle body must be subdued by unceasing discipline and profitable toil. Wherefore he would call his body “brother ass,” as though it were meet to be loaded with toilsome burdens, beaten with many stripes, and nourished on mean fare. If he beheld any man wandering about in idleness, and fain to feed on the toil of others, he thought he ought to be called “brother fly,” for that, doing no good himself, and spoiling the good done by others, he made himself an hateful pest unto all. Wherefore he oftentimes said, “I would that my Brethren should labour and employ themselves, lest, being given up unto sloth, they should stray into sins of heart or tongue.” He was minded that a Gospel silence should be observed by the Brethren, such as, to wit, that they should at all times diligently refrain from every idle word, as those that shall give account thereof in the Day of Judgment. But if he found any Brother prone unto vain words, he would sharply chide him, declaring a shamefast sparingness of speech to be the guard of a pure heart, and no small virtue, seeing that death and life are in the power of the tongue, not so much with regard unto taste as with regard unto speech.

7. But albeit he sought with all his might to lead the Brethren unto the austere life, yet the utmost rigour of severity pleased

him not—such rigour as hath no bowels of compassion, nor is flavoured with the salt of discretion. Thus, on a certain night, when one of the Brethren by reason of his excessive abstinence was so tormented by hunger that he could take no repose, the kindly shepherd, perceiving the danger that threatened his sheep, called the Brother, set bread before him, and, that he might remove any cause for his confusion of face, began first to eat himself, then gently bade him partake. The Brother, laying aside his shamefastness, took the food, rejoicing exceedingly that, through the wise kindliness of his shepherd, he had both escaped that bodily peril, and had received no small ensample of edification withal. When morning came, and the Brethren had been called together, the man of God related that which had befallen in the night, adding the sage exhortation, “Be the act of love, not the food, an ensample unto you, my Brethren.” Moreover, he taught them to follow discretion, as the charioteer of the virtues—not that discretion unto which the flesh persuadeth, but that which Christ taught, Whose most holy life is acknowledged to be the express image of perfection.

8. And since it is not possible for a man beset with the infirmity of the flesh so perfectly to follow the Crucified Lamb without spot as to escape contracting some defilement, by his own firm ensample he made declaration that they who keep watch over the perfection of their life ought to cleanse themselves daily with floods of tears. For, albeit he had already attained a wondrous purity of heart and body, yet would he not abstain from continual floods of tears whereby to cleanse the mental vision, not weighing the detriment unto his bodily sight. For when by incessant weeping he had sustained a very grievous injury unto the eyes, and the physician would fain have persuaded him to refrain from tears, if he wished to escape blindness of his bodily sight, the holy man made answer, “It is not meet, brother physician, that for the love of that light that we have in common with the flies, the visitation of the eternal light should be impaired, be it but by little. For the spirit did not receive the blessing of light for the sake of the flesh, but the flesh for the sake of the spirit.” He preferred rather to lose the light of his bodily vision than, by thwarting the devotion of the spirit, to check the tears whereby the inner eye is cleansed, that it may avail to see God.

9. Now on a time when he was counselled by the physicians, and urgently importuned by the Brethren, to permit himself to be succoured by the remedy of a cautery, the man of God did

humbly assent thereunto, forasmuch as he perceived it to be alike salutary and arduous. The surgeon, then, was summoned, and, having come, laid his iron instrument in the fire to prepare for the cautery. Then the servant of Christ—consoling his body that at the sight shuddered in fear—began to address the fire as a friend, saying, "My brother fire, the Most High hath created thee beyond all other creatures mighty in thine enviable glory, fair, and useful. Be thou clement unto me in this hour, and courteous. I beseech the great Lord, Who created thee, that He temper thy heat unto me, so that I may be able to bear thy gentle burning." His prayer ended, he made the sign of the Cross over the iron instrument, that was glowing at white heat from the fire, and then waited fearlessly. The hissing iron was impressed on the tender flesh, and the cautery drawn from the ear unto the eyebrow. How much suffering the fire caused him, the holy man himself told: "Praise the Most High," saith he unto the Brethren, "for that of a truth I say unto you, I felt neither the heat of the fire, nor any pain in my flesh." And, turning unto the surgeon, "If," saith he, "the cautery be not well made, impress it again." The surgeon, finding such mighty valour of spirit in his frail body, marvelled, and exalted this divine miracle, saying, "I tell ye, Brethren, I have seen strange things to-day." For, by reason that Francis had attained unto such purity that his flesh was in harmony with his spirit, and his spirit with God, in marvellous agreement, it was ordained by the divine ruling that the creature that serveth its Maker should be wondrously subject unto his will and command.

10. At another time, when the servant of God was afflicted by a very grievous sickness, at the hermitage of Saint Urban, and, feeling his strength failing, had asked for a draught of wine, answer was made him that there was no wine there that could be brought unto him; whereupon he bade that water should be brought, and, when brought, he blessed it, making the sign of the Cross over it. At once that which had been pure water became excellent wine, and that which the poverty of the lonely place could not provide was obtained by the purity of the holy man. Tasting thereof, he forthwith so easily recovered his strength as that the new flavour and the renewed health, by the sense of taste and by the miracle renewing him that tasted, attested, with twofold witness, his perfect laying aside of the old man and putting on of the new.

11. Nor did created things alone obey the servant of God at

his beck, but everywhere the very providence of the Creator stooped unto his good pleasure. Thus, on a time when his body was weighed down by the suffering of many infirmities together, he had a yearning for some tuneful sound that might incite him unto gladness of spirit, yet discreet decorum would not allow this to be rendered by human agency—then the Angels gave their services to fulfil the good pleasure of the holy man. For one night while he was wakeful, and meditating on the Lord, on a sudden was heard the sound of a lyre of wondrous harmony and sweetest tune. No one was to be seen, but the coming and going of a lyrist was betokened by the volume of sound, now here, now there. With his mind uplifted unto God, he enjoyed such sweetness from that melodious strain as that he thought him to have exchanged this world for another. This was not hidden from the Brethren that were his close companions, who oftentimes perceived, by assured tokens, that he was visited of the Lord with such exceeding and continual consolations as that he could not utterly hide them.

12. On another time, while the man of God, with a Brother for companion, was making his way to preach between Lombardy and the March of Treviso, and was nigh the Po, the shadowy darkness of night surprised them. And since their way was beset by many and great dangers by reason of the darkness, the river, and the marshes, his companion said unto the holy man, "Pray, Father, that we be delivered from instant peril." Unto whom the man of God made answer with great confidence, "God is able, if it be His sweet will, to put to flight the thick darkness, and to grant us the blessing of light." Scarce had he ended his speech ere, lo! such a great light began to shine around them with heavenly radiance that, while for others it was dark night, they could see in the clear light not their road only, but many things round about. By the leading of this light they were guided in body and consoled in spirit, until they arrived safely, singing divine hymns and lauds, at their place of lodging that was some long way distant. Consider how wondrous was the purity of this man, how great his merits, that at his beck the fire should temper its heat, water should change its flavour, angelic music should afford him solace, and light from heaven leading; thus it was evident that the whole frame of the world was obedient unto the consecrated senses of the holy man.

body in secret." Accordingly, he arose, kindled with the spirit of holy humility, and, calling the folk together in an open space of the city of Assisi, he, together with many Brethren that he had brought with him, made a solemn entrance into the Cathedral Church, and then, with a rope tied round his neck, and naked save for his breeches, bade them drag him in the sight of all unto the stone whereupon criminals were wont to be set for punishment. Mounting it, albeit he was suffering from quartan fever and weakness, and the season was bitterly cold, he preached with much power of spirit, and, while all gave ear, declared that he ought not to be honoured as a spiritual man, but that rather he ought to be despised of all as a fleshly glutton. Then they that were present and beheld this amazing sight, marvelled, and, for that they had long known his austerities, were devoutly pricked to the heart, exclaiming that humility after this sort were easier admired than imitated. Yet, albeit this seemed rather like unto the prodigy foretold of the prophet than an ensample, it set forth a pattern of perfect humility, whereby the follower of Christ was taught that he ought to despise the vaunting of a transient praise, and restrain the pomp of swelling pride, and refute the lies of a deceitful semblance.

3. Many things after this sort he oftentimes did, that outwardly he might become as it were a vessel that perisheth, while inwardly he possessed the spirit of sanctification. He sought to hide in the secret places of his heart the favours of his Lord, loth to reveal them and so gain praise, that might be an occasion of falling. Ofttimes, when he was glorified of many, he would speak after this wise, "I may yet have sons and daughters, praise me not as one that is safe. No man should be praised before that his end be known." This unto them that praised him, unto himself this, "Had the Most High shown such favours unto a robber, he would have been better pleasing than thou, Francis." Ofttimes he would say unto the Brethren, "Concerning all that a sinner can do, none ought to flatter himself with undeserved praise. A sinner (he saith) can fast, pray, lament, and mortify his own body—this one thing he cannot do, to wit, be faithful unto his Lord. In this, then, we may glory, if we render unto the Lord the glory that is His due, and if, while serving Him faithfully, we ascribe unto Him whatsoever He giveth."

4. Now this Gospel merchant—that he might in many ways make profit, and make the whole time that now is be turned into merit—was fain not so much to be set in authority as to

be set under authority, not so much to command as to obey. Wherefore, giving up his office unto the Minister-General, he sought a Warden, unto whose will he might submit him in all things. For he maintained that the fruit of holy obedience was so rich as that they who placed their necks under her yoke spent no portion of their time without profit; wherefore he was ever wont to promise and to render obedience unto the Brother that was his companion. He said once unto his companions, "Among other gifts that the divine goodness hath deigned to bestow upon me, it hath conferred this grace, that I would as heedfully obey the novice of an hour, were he appointed unto me for Warden, as I would the oldest and wisest Brother. The subordinate (saith he) ought to regard him that is set in authority over him not as a man, but as Him for love of Whom he doth make himself subject. And the more despicable is he that commandeth, the more acceptable is the humility of him that obeyeth."

When once it was enquired of him what man should be esteemed truly obedient, he set before them as an ensample the similitude of a dead body. "Lift up," saith he, "a dead body, and place it where thou wilt. Thou shalt see it will not murmur at being moved, it will not complain of where it is set, it will not cry out if left there. If it be set in a lofty seat, it will look not up, but down. If it be clad in purple, it but redoubleth its pallor. This (saith he) is the truly obedient man, who reasoneth not why he is moved, who careth not where he be placed, who urgeth not that he should be transferred; who, when set in authority, preserveth his wonted humility, and the more he is honoured, considereth himself the more unworthy."

5. He said once unto his companion, "I esteem not myself to be a Brother Minor unless I be in the state that I shall describe unto thee. Lo now, I suppose me to be one set in authority over the Brethren; I go unto the Chapter, I preach unto the Brethren and exhort them, and at the end they speak against me, saying, 'Thou misliketh us, for that thou art unlettered, slow of speech, a fool, and simple,' and thus I am cast forth with reviling, little esteemed of all. I tell thee—unless I can hear such words with unchanged countenance, with unchanged gladness of spirit and unchanged holy intent—I am vainly called a Brother Minor." And he added, "In exalted place there is the fear of fall, in praises a precipice, in the humility of a submissive spirit there is profit. Why, then,

each in turn, that Brother, not unmindful of his vision, enquired of him discreetly what he thought of himself. And the humble servant of Christ answered him, "I think myself the chief of sinners." When the Brother said in opposition that he could not, with a sound conscience, say or feel this, Francis added, "If any man, howsoever guilty, had received such mercy from Christ as I, I verily think he would have been far more acceptable unto God than I." Then, by the hearing of such marvellous humility, the Brother was assured of the truth of the vision that had been shown him, knowing by the witness of the Holy Gospel that the truly humble shall be exalted unto that excellent glory wherefrom the proud is cast down.

7. On another time, when that he was praying in a deserted church in the province of Massa, nigh Monte Casale, he learnt through the Spirit that certain holy relics had been deposited there. Perceiving with sorrow that for a long time past they had been deprived of the reverence due unto them, he bade the Brethren bring them unto the place, with all honour. But when, need arising, he had departed from them, his sons were forgetful of their Father's behest, and neglected the merit of obedience. Then on a day, when they were fain to celebrate the holy mysteries, and the upper covering of the altar was removed, they found, not without amazement, some bones right fair and fragrant, beholding the relics that the power of God, not men's hands, had brought thither. Returning shortly after, the man devoted unto God began to make diligent enquiry whether his behest concerning the relics had been carried out. The Brethren humbly confessed their sin of neglected obedience, and gained pardon, with an award of penance. And the holy man said, "Blessed be the Lord my God, Who Himself hath fulfilled that which ye ought to have done." Consider heedfully the care of the divine providence for our dust, and weigh the goodness of the humble Francis, that did excel in the sight of God. For when man obeyed not his bidding, God fulfilled his desires.

8. Coming on a time unto Imola, he approached the Bishop of the city, and humbly besought him that, with his sanction, he might call the people together to preach unto them. The Bishop answered him harshly, saying, "It sufficeth, Brother, that I myself preach unto my people." Francis, in his true humility, bowed his head, and went forth; howbeit, after a short space, he returned into the house. When the Bishop, as one in wrath, asked of him what he meant by coming again, he

CHAPTER VII

OF HIS LOVE FOR POVERTY, AND OF THE WONDROUS
SUPPLYING OF HIS NEEDS

1. AMONG other gifts of graces that Francis had received from the bounteous Giver, he merited to abound, as by an especial prerogative all his own, in the riches of simplicity, through his love of sublimest Poverty. The holy man regarded Poverty as the familiar friend of the Son of God, and as one now rejected by the whole world, and was zealous to espouse her with such a constant affection as that not only did he leave father and mother for her sake, but he did even part with all that might have been his. For none was ever so greedy of gold as he of poverty, nor did any man ever guard treasure more anxiously than he this Gospel pearl. One thing more than aught else was displeasing in his eyes, to wit, if he beheld aught in the Brethren that was not wholly in accord with poverty. He himself, verily, from his entrance into the Religion until his death was content with, and counted himself rich with, a tunic, a cord, and breeches. Ofttimes with tears he would recall unto mind the poverty of Christ Jesus, and of His Mother, declaring Poverty to be the queen of virtues inasmuch as she shone forth thus excellently in the King of Kings and in the Queen His Mother. And when the Brethren in council asked of him which virtue would render a man most pleasing unto Christ, he answered, as though laying bare the secret thought of his heart, "Ye know, Brethren, that poverty is an especial way of salvation, being as it were the food of humility, and the root of perfection, and her fruits are manifold, albeit hidden. For poverty is that treasure hid in a field of the Gospel, which to buy a man would sell all that he hath, and the things that cannot be sold are to be despised in comparison therewith."

2. He also said, "He that would attain this height must needs in all ways renounce, not alone the wisdom of the world, but even knowledge of letters, so that, dispossessed of such an inheritance, he may go in the strength of the Lord, and give himself up naked into the arms of the Crucified. For in vain doth he utterly renounce the world who keepeth in the secret places of his heart a shrine for his own senses." Ofttimes indeed would he discourse of poverty, impressing on the Brethren that saying of the Gospel, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have

necks, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His Head." Wherefore he would teach the Brethren that, after the fashion of the poor, they should build poor little houses, wherein they should dwell, not as their owners, but as pilgrims and strangers dwell in other men's houses. For he said that the rules of pilgrims were to abide under a strange roof, to thirst for their fatherland, and to pass on their way in peace. More than once, he bade houses that had been built be pulled down, or the Brethren removed thence, if he saw in them aught that by reason of ownership or of magnificence was opposed unto Gospel poverty. Poverty he declared to be the foundation of his Order, and, with this first laid as a basis, he said the whole edifice of the Religion would so rest upon it as that, while it stood firm, the Religion stood firm; were it overthrown, that other likewise would be overthrown from the foundations.

3. Furthermore, he taught, as he had learnt by revelation, that the entrance into holy Religion must be made through that saying of the Gospel, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor;" and accordingly he would admit none into the Order that had not dispossessed themselves, keeping absolutely naught back, both because of the saying of the Holy Gospel, and that there might be no treasure-chests laid up to cause scandal. Thus, when a certain man, in the March of Ancona, sought to be received into the Order, the true patriarch of the poor made answer, "If thou art fain to be joined unto the poor of Christ, part thy goods among the poor of this world." Hearing this, the man arose, and, led by carnal affection, bequeathed his goods unto his own kin, and naught unto the poor. But when the holy man heard of this from his own mouth, he chid him with stern reproofs, saying, "Go thy way, brother fly, for thou hast not yet gotten thee out from thy kindred and from thy father's house. Thou hast given thy goods unto thy kin, and hast cheated the poor, thou art not meet for the holy poor. Thou hast begun in the flesh, and hast laid but a shaking foundation for a spiritual edifice." Then that carnal man returned unto his kin, and sought again his goods, the which he was not minded to bequeath unto the poor; thus quickly he abandoned his virtuous intent.

4. At another time, there was in the place of Saint Mary of the Little Portion such scarcity as that they could not provide for the guest Brethren as their needs demanded. Accordingly, his Vicar went unto the man of God, pleading the destitution of the Brethren, and begging that he would permit some portion

of the novices' goods to be retained on their entrance, so that the Brethren might resort thereunto for their expenditure in times of need. Unto whom Francis, instructed in the heavenly counsels, made reply, "Far be it from us, dearest Brother, to act wickedly against the Rule for the sake of any man whomsoever. I had liefer that thou shouldst strip the altar of the glorious Virgin, when our need demandeth it, than that thou shouldst attempt aught, be it but a little thing, against our vow of poverty and the observance of the Gospel. For the Blessed Virgin would be better pleased that her altar should be despoiled, and the counsel of the Holy Gospel perfectly fulfilled, than that her altar should be adorned, and the counsel given by her Son set aside."

5. When on a time the man of God was passing, with a companion, through Apulia, and was nigh unto Bari, he found in the road a great purse, swelling as though full of coins, such as in the common speech is called *funda*. The poor man of Christ was exhorted, and earnestly besought, by his companion, to lift the purse from the ground, and distribute the money among the poor. But the man of God refused, declaring that there was some devilish contrivance in the purse that they had found, and that what the Brother was proposing was no good deed but a sin, to wit, taking goods not their own and giving them away. They left the spot, and hastened to complete the journey on which they had entered. Howbeit, that Brother would not hold his peace, deceived by an empty piety, but still vexed the man of God, as though he were one who cared naught for relieving the destitution of the poor. At length the gentle Francis consented to return unto the spot, not to fulfil the desire of the Brother, but to unmask the wiles of the devil. Accordingly, returning where the purse lay, with the Brother and with a youth who was on the road, he first prayed, and then bade his companion take it up. The Brother trembled and was adread, now presaging some devilish portent; nevertheless, by reason of the command of holy obedience, he conquered the doubts of his heart, and stretched forth his hand unto the purse. Lo! a serpent of no mean size leapt forth from the purse, and at once vanished together with it, showing that it had been a snare of the devil. The wiles of the enemy's cunning being thus apparent, the holy man said unto his companion, "Money, O my brother, is unto the servants of God naught else than the devil and a poisonous serpent."

6. After this, a wondrous thing befell the holy man while that,

at the call of a pressing need, he was betaking him unto the city of Siena. Three poor women, alike in all respects as to height, age, and countenance, met him on the wide plain between Campiglio and San Quirico, proffering a new greeting by way of gift: "Welcome," said they, "Lady Poverty!" At these words, that true lover of poverty was filled with joy unspeakable, inasmuch as there was naught in him that he would so lief have saluted by men as that whereof they had made mention. On a sudden the women vanished, whereupon the Brethren that were his companions pondered on their wondrous resemblance each unto the other, and on the newness of their greeting, their appearing, and their vanishing, and deemed, not without reason, that some mystery was thereby signified concerning the holy man. Verily, by those three poor women—for such they seemed—with such resemblance in countenance, that met him, that gave him such unwonted greeting, and that so suddenly vanished, it was fittingly shown that the beauty of Gospel perfection—touching chastity, to wit, and obedience, and poverty—shone forth perfectly in kindred form in the man of God; howbeit, he had chosen to make his chief boast in the privilege of Poverty, whom he was wont to name now his mother, now his bride, now his lady. In this, he was greedy to surpass others, he who thereby had learnt to think himself of less account than all others. Accordingly, if ever he saw any man who, judging by his outward appearance, was poorer than himself, he would forthwith blame himself, and stir himself up unto the like, as though, striving jealously after poverty, he feared to be outdone by that other.

It chanced once that he met a poor man on the road, and, beholding his nakedness, was stricken to the heart, and said with a sighing voice unto his companion, "This man's destitution hath brought on us great reproach, for we have chosen Poverty as our great riches, and lo! she shineth forth more clearly in him."

7. By reason of his love for holy Poverty, the servant of Almighty God had far liefer partake of alms begged from door to door than of food set before him. Thus, if ever he was invited by great folk, who would fain honour him by a well-spread board, he would first beg crusts of bread from the neighbouring houses, and then, thus enriched in his poverty, sit down at the board. Once he did thus when he had been invited by the lord Bishop of Ostia, who loved the poor man of Christ with an especial affection, and when the Bishop complained that it brought shame upon

him that a guest at his table should go forth for alms, the servant of God made answer, "My lord, I have done you a great honour, while honouring a greater Lord. For poverty is well-pleasing unto the Lord, and that before all which is a free-will beggary for the sake of Christ. This royal dignity—that the Lord Jesus took upon Him when for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich, and that He might make them that be truly poor in spirit kings and heirs of the Kingdom of Heaven—I am not minded to abandon for a fee of deceptive riches lent unto you for an hour."

8. Ofttimes when he was exhorting the Brethren to go forth for alms, he would speak on this wise, "Go forth," saith he, "since at this eleventh hour the Brothers Minor have been lent unto the world, that the number of the elect may be in them fulfilled; wherefore they shall be praised by the Judge, and shall hear those most delectable words, 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.'" Accordingly, he would say it was a delightful thing to beg under the name of Brothers Minor, since the Master of Gospel truth had with His own mouth thus spoken of that name—"the least"—in the rewarding of the just.

Moreover, on the chief Feasts, when opportunity offered, he was wont to go begging, saying that in the holy poor was fulfilled that prophecy, "Man did eat Angels' food." For he said that bread was truly Angels' food that was begged for the love of God, and with the aid of the blessed Angels, and that holy Poverty gathered from door to door, where it was bestowed for love of her.

9. Accordingly, when he was once sojourning on the holy Easter Day in an hermitage so distant from the dwellings of men as that he could not conveniently go forth to beg, mindful of Him Who on that day had appeared unto the disciples going unto Emmaus in the guise of a pilgrim, he, as a pilgrim and beggar, did ask alms from the Brethren themselves. And, having humbly received them, he taught them in holy discourse that while passing through the wilderness of the world as pilgrims and strangers, and Israelites indeed, they might celebrate continually, as those poor in spirit, the Lord's Passover, to wit, His departure from this world unto the Father. And since in asking alms he was moved, not by desire for gain, but by a free spirit, God, the Father of the poor, seemed to have an especial care of him.

10. It chanced once that the servant of the Lord had been

weighed down by sickness in the place called Nocera, and was being brought back unto Assisi by an honourable escort, sent for this purpose by the devotion of the people of Assisi. And they, escorting the servant of Christ, reached a poor little hamlet, Satriano by name, whither, since their hunger and the hour demanded it, they went to seek food, but, finding naught that they could buy, returned empty handed. Then the holy man said unto them, "Naught have ye found, for that ye put more trust in your flies than in God"—for he was wont to call money *flies*. "But go back (saith he) among the houses that ye have visited, and, offering the love of God as your payment, humbly ask an alms. And do not by a false reckoning esteem this a thing shameful or base, since the great Almsgiver hath in His abounding goodness granted all things as alms unto the worthy and unworthy alike, after we have sinned." Then those knights laid aside their shamefastness, and of their own accord asked for alms, and bought more for the love of God than they had been able to for money. For the poor inhabitants of the place, stricken to the heart by a divine impulse, freely proffered not only their goods, but their very selves. Thus it befell that the necessity, which money had not availed to relieve, was supplied by the rich poverty of Francis.

II. On a time when he was lying sick in an hermitage nigh Rieti, a certain physician did oft visit him with welcome ministries. And since the poor man of Christ was unable to give him a recompense meet for his toil, the most bountiful God, on behalf of His poor, rewarded his kindly service by this singular benefit, that he might not depart with no immediate fee. The house of the physician, which he had at that time built anew with the whole of his savings, by a gaping cleavage of the walls from top to bottom threatened so speedy a collapse as that it seemed impossible that any mortal skill or toil should avert its fall. Then the physician, entirely trusting in the merits of the holy man, with great faith and devotion besought from his companions the gift of some thing that that same man of God had touched with his hands. Accordingly, having with much importunity of pleading gained a few of his hairs, he laid them at even in the cleavage of the wall; then, rising next morn, he found the opening so firmly sealed as that he could not withdraw the relics he had placed therein, nor find any trace of the former cleavage. Thus it came to pass that he who had diligently tended the frail body of God's servant was able to avert the danger from his own frail house.

CHAPTER VIII

OF THE KINDLY IMPULSES OF HIS PIETY, AND OF HOW THE CREATURES LACKING UNDERSTANDING SEEMED TO BE MADE SUBJECT UNTO HIM

1. THAT true godliness which, according unto the Apostle, is profitable unto all things, had so filled the heart of Francis and entered into his inmost parts as that it seemed to have established its sway absolutely over the man of God. It was this piety that, through devotion, uplifted him toward God; through compassion, transformed him into the likeness of Christ; through condescension, inclined him unto his neighbour, and, through his all-embracing love for every creature, set forth a new picture of man's estate before the Fall. And as by this piety he was touched with kindly feeling for all things, so above all, when he beheld souls redeemed by the precious Blood of Christ Jesus being defiled by any stain of sin, he would weep over them with such tenderness of compassion as that he seemed, like a mother in Christ, to be in travail of them daily. And this was with him the chief cause of his veneration for the ministers of the word of God, to wit, that with devout care they raise up seed unto the Brother which is dead, that is, unto Christ crucified for sinners, by converting such, and cherish the same seed with careful devotion. This ministry of compassion he maintained was more acceptable unto the Father of mercies than all sacrifice, in especial if it were performed with the zeal of perfect charity, so that this end might be striven after by ensample rather than by precept, by tearful prayer rather than by eloquent speech.

2. Accordingly, he would say that that preacher should be deplored as one without true piety, who in his preaching did not seek the salvation of souls, but his own glory, or who by the sins of his life pulled down that which he built up by the truth of his teaching. He would say that the Brother simple and unready of speech, who by his good ensample inciteth others unto good, should be preferred before such an one. That saying, moreover, "The barren hath borne many," he would thus expound, "The barren (saith he) is the little poor Brother, who hath not the function of begetting sons in the Church. He in the Judgment shall bear many, for that those whom he now converteth unto Christ by his secret prayers shall be then added unto his glory by the Judge. And 'she that hath many children

is waxed feeble,' for that the empty preacher of many words who now boasteth in many begotten, as it were, by his power, shall then perceive that there is naught of his own in them."

3. Since then with heartfelt piety and glowing zeal he sought after the salvation of souls, he would say that he was filled with the sweetest fragrance and anointed as with precious ointment whensoever he heard of many being led into the way of truth by the sweet savour of the repute of the holy Brethren scattered throughout the world. Hearing such reports, he would rejoice in spirit, heaping with blessings most worthy of all acceptance those Brethren who, by word or deed, were bringing sinners unto the love of Christ. In like wise, those who were transgressing against holy Religion by their evil works, fell under the heaviest sentence of his curse. "By thee," saith he, "O Lord most holy, by the entire company of heaven, and by me, Thy little one, be they accursed who by their evil ensample do bring unto naught and destroy that which through the holy Brethren of this Order Thou hast built up, and dost not cease to build." Ofttimes he was affected by such sadness, by reason of the stumbling-block unto the weak brethren, that he thought his strength would have failed him, had he not been sustained by the comfort of the divine mercy.

But when once on a time he was disquieted because of evil ensamples, and with troubled spirit was beseeching the merciful Father for his sons, he obtained an answer on this wise from the Lord, "Why dost thou fret thee, poor little mortal? Have I set thee as shepherd over My Religion that thou shouldst forget I am its chief Protector? I have appointed thee, simple as thou art, for this very end, that the things that I shall perform through thee may be ascribed, not unto man's working, but unto grace from above. I have called this Religion, I will keep it and feed it, and, when some fall off, I will raise up others in their place, yea, so that, were none born, I would even cause them to be born. And by whatsoever shocks this little poor Religion may be shaken, it shall alway abide unscathed under My guard."

4. The vice of slander, hateful unto the fount of goodness and grace, Francis would shrink from as from a serpent's tooth, declaring it to be a most hateful plague, and an abomination unto the most holy God, forasmuch as the slanderer feedeth on the blood of those souls that he hath slain by the sword of his tongue. Hearing once a certain Brother blacken the repute of another, he turned unto his Vicar, and said, "Rise, rise,

many times to escape, it did alway return unto the Father's bosom, as though by some hidden sense it perceived the tenderness of his heart; wherefore at length, by his command, the Brethren carried it away unto a safer and more remote spot.

In like manner, on an island of the lake of Perugia, a rabbit was caught and brought unto the man of God, and, albeit it fled from others, it entrusted itself unto his hands and bosom with the confidence of a tame creature.

As he was hastening by the lake of Rieti unto the hermitage of Greccio, a fisherman out of devotion brought unto him a water-fowl, the which he gladly received, and then, opening his hands, bade it depart; howbeit, it would not leave him. Then he, lifting his eyes unto heaven, remained for a long space in prayer, and, after a long hour returning unto himself as though from afar, gently bade the little bird depart, and praise the Lord. Then, having thus received his blessing and leave, it flew away, showing joy by the movement of its body.

In like manner, from the same lake there was brought unto him a fine, live fish, which he called, as was his wont, by the name of *brother*, and put back into the water nigh the boat. Then the fish played in the water nigh the man of God, and, as though drawn by love of him, would in no wise leave the boat-side until it had received his blessing and leave.

9. On another time, when he was walking with a certain Brother through the Venetian marshes, he chanced on a great host of birds that were sitting and singing among the bushes. Seeing them, he said unto his companion, "Our sisters the birds are praising their Creator, let us too go among them and sing unto the Lord praises and the Canonical Hours." When they had gone into their midst, the birds stirred not from the spot, and when, by reason of their twittering, they could not hear each the other in reciting the Hours, the holy man turned unto the birds, saying, "My sisters the birds, cease from singing, while that we render our due praises unto the Lord." Then the birds forthwith held their peace, and remained silent until, having said his Hours at leisure and rendered his praises, the holy man of God again gave them leave to sing. And, as the man of God gave them leave, they at once took up their song again after their wonted fashion.

At Saint Mary of the Little Portion, hard by the cell of the man of God, a cicada sat on a fig-tree and chirped; and right often by her song she stirred up unto the divine praises the servant of the Lord, who had learnt to marvel at the glorious

CHAPTER IX

OF HIS ARDENT LOVE, AND YEARNING FOR MARTYRDOM

1. OF the ardent love that glowed in Francis, the friend of the Bridegroom, who can avail to tell? He seemed utterly consumed, like unto a coal that is set on fire, by the flame of the love divine. For, at the mere mention of the love of the Lord, he was aroused, moved, and enkindled, as though the inner chords of his heart vibrated under the bow of the voice from without. He would say that it was a magnificent largesse to offer such wealth in exchange for alms, and that those who esteemed it of less worth than money were verily fools, for that the priceless price of the divine love alone availeth to purchase the kingdom of heaven, and His love Who hath loved us much is much to be loved.

That he might by all things be stirred up unto the divine love, he triumphed in all the works of the Lord's hands, and through the sight of their joy was uplifted unto their life-giving cause and origin. He beheld in fair things Him Who is the most fair, and, through the traces of Himself that He hath imprinted on His creatures, he everywhere followed on to reach the Beloved, making of all things a ladder for himself whereby he might ascend to lay hold on Him Who is the altogether lovely. For by the impulse of his unexampled devotion he tasted that fountain of goodness that streameth forth, as in rivulets, in every created thing, and he perceived as it were an heavenly harmony in the concord of the virtues and actions granted unto them by God, and did sweetly exhort them to praise the Lord, even as the Prophet David had done.

2. Christ Jesus Crucified was laid, as a bundle of myrrh, in his heart's bosom, and he yearned to be utterly transformed into Him by the fire of his exceeding love. By reason of his chief and especial devotion unto Him, he would betake him unto desert places, and seclude himself in a cell, from the Feast of the Epiphany until the end of the forty days following, to wit, for the space of time wherein Christ had sojourned in the wilderness. There with all the abstinence from food and drink that he might compass, he devoted himself without interruption unto fasting, prayer, and the praises of God. With such glowing love was he moved toward Christ, yea, and with such intimate love did his Beloved repay his, that it seemed unto the servant

of God himself that he felt his Saviour almost continually present before his eyes, even as he once revealed unto his companions in intimate converse.

Toward the Sacrament of the Lord's Body he felt a glowing devotion that consumed the very marrow of his bones, marvelling with utmost amazement at that most loving condescension and condescending love. Oft did he communicate, and so devoutly as to render others devout, while, as he tasted of the sweetness of that Lamb without spot, he became like one inebriated in spirit, and rapt out of himself in ecstasy.

3. He loved with an unspeakable affection the Mother of the Lord Jesus Christ, forasmuch as that she had made the Lord of Glory our Brother, and that through her we have obtained mercy. In her, after Christ, he put his chief trust, making her his own patron and that of his Brethren, and in her honour he fasted most devoutly from the Feast of the Apostles Peter and Paul until the Feast of the Assumption. He was bound by ties of inseparable affection unto the Angelic spirits that do glow with wondrous fire to approach God, and in the kindling of elect souls, and out of devotion unto them he would fast for forty days from the Assumption of the glorious Virgin, remaining instant in prayer throughout that time. Unto the Blessed Michael Archangel—inasmuch as his is the ministry of bringing souls before God—he cherished an especial love and devotion, by reason of the ardent zeal that he had for the salvation of all such as should be saved. When he called to remembrance all the Saints, he was kindled afresh, as if they had been stones of fire, with the flame of heavenly love; he regarded with the utmost devotion all the Apostles, and in especial Peter and Paul, by reason of the glowing love that they bore toward Christ, and out of reverence and love for them he dedicated unto the Lord the fast of an especial Lent. The poor man of Christ had naught save two mites, to wit, his body and soul, that he could give away in his large-hearted charity. But these, for the love of Christ, he offered up so continuously as that at all seasons, through the rigour of his fasting, he made an offering of his body, and through the fervour of his yearnings, of his spirit, sacrificing in the outer court a whole burnt-offering, and within, in the Temple, burning sweet incense.

4. Now this exceeding devotion of love uplifted him into the divine in such wise as that his loving goodwill extended unto those that had received with him a like nature and grace. For it is no wonder if he, whose affectionate heart had made him

kin unto all created things, was by the love of Christ drawn into yet closer kinship with such as were sealed with the likeness of their Creator, and redeemed by the Blood of their Maker. He esteemed himself no friend of Christ did he not cherish the souls that He had redeemed. He would say that naught was to be preferred before the salvation of souls, proving this chiefly by the fact that the Only-Begotten Son of God deigned to hang on the Cross for the sake of men's souls. Unto this end he wrestled in prayer, this was the theme of his preaching, and this the cause of his exceeding zeal in setting an ensample. Wherefore, whensoever some excessive austerity was blamed in him, he would make answer that he had been given as an ensample unto others. For albeit his guileless flesh had already voluntarily subjected itself unto his spirit, and needed no chastisement by reason of transgressions, nevertheless, for the sake of ensample, he was ever renewing in it punishments and penances, walking in hard paths for the sake of others. For he would say, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of Angels, and have not charity, I shall set no ensample of virtues unto my neighbours, I shall profit others little, and mine own self naught."

5. He emulated, with an ardent flame of love, the glorious victory of the holy Martyrs, whose burning love could not be quenched, nor their constancy broken down. Accordingly he too, kindled by that perfect love that casteth out fear, yearned to offer himself up as a living sacrifice unto the Lord in martyr flames, that he might pay back somewhat in his turn unto Christ Who died for us, and might stir up others unto the love of God. Wherefore, in the sixth year from his conversion, burning with desire for martyrdom, he was minded to cross unto the regions of Syria to preach the Christian faith, and penitence, unto the Saracens and other infidels. When he had embarked on a ship that he might voyage thither, contrary winds prevailed, and he had perforce to land on the coasts of Slavonia. When he had delayed there some time, nor could find any ship that was then crossing the sea, feeling himself cheated of his desire, he besought some sailors that were making for Ancona to take him aboard, for the love of God. When they persisted in their refusal because of his lack of money, the man of God, putting all his trust in the goodness of the Lord, embarked secretly on board the ship with his companion. A certain man was present—sent, as is believed, from God on behalf of His poor one—and he took with him the necessary

and the camps of both armies were pitched each over against the other in the plain, so that none might pass from one unto the other without peril of death. Moreover, a cruel edict had gone forth from the Soldan that any who should bring the head of a Christian should receive a gold bezant as reward. Nevertheless, the undaunted soldier of Christ, Francis, hoping that he was shortly about to gain his end, determined to continue on his way, not dismayed by the fear of death, but urged on by his yearning therefor. And as he prepared himself by prayer, he was strengthened of the Lord, and boldly chanted that verse of the Prophet, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me."

8. Then, taking the Brother that was his companion, Illuminato by name, a man verily of illumination and virtue, they started on their way. And, meeting two lambs, the holy man was gladdened at the sight, and said unto his companion, "Put thy trust, Brother, in the Lord, for in us that saying of the Gospel is fulfilled: Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves." When they had gone on further, the bands of the Saracens met them, and they, like wolves making haste to fall upon sheep, brutally seized the servants of God, and cruelly and despitefully dragged them along, casting abuse at them, vexing them with stripes and binding them in fetters. Thus in manifold wise tormented and beaten down, they were brought before the Soldan, the divine counsel so disposing as the holy man had desired. When that prince demanded of them from whom, and for what purpose, and after what manner they had been sent, and how they had come thither, the servant of Christ, Francis, made answer with undaunted heart that he had been sent not by man, but by God Most High, that he might show unto him and his people the way of salvation, and might preach the Gospel of truth. With such firmness of mind, with such courage of soul, and with such fervour of spirit he preached unto the Soldan aforesaid God Three in One and the Saviour of all, Jesus Christ, that in him was manifestly and truly fulfilled that saying of the Gospel, "I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist." For, as the Soldan beheld the marvellous fervour of spirit and valour of the man of God, he heard him gladly and did right earnestly invite him to tarry with him. Then the servant of Christ, taught by the heavenly counsel, said, "If thou, together with thy people, wilt be converted unto Christ, for the love of Him I will right gladly tarry among you."

But if thou art hesitating whether to give up the law of Mahomet for the faith of Christ, do thou command that a great fire be kindled and I will enter the fire with thy priests, that even thus thou mayest learn which faith is the surer, and holier, and most worthy of being held. Unto whom the Soldan made answer, "I do not believe that any of my priests would be ready to expose himself unto the fire in defence of his faith, or to undergo any sort of torture." For he had seen that, so soon as mention of this was made, one of his priests, an aged man and one in authority, had fled from his presence. Unto whom the holy man replied, "If thou wilt promise me, on behalf of thyself and thy people, that thou wilt embrace the faith of Christ, if I come forth from the fire unscathed, I will enter the fire alone; if I am burned, let it be set down unto my sins, but if the divine might protect me, ye shall know that Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God, is the true God and the Lord and Saviour of all." Howbeit, the Soldan replied that he dare not accede unto this proposition, for that he feared a revolt of his people. But he offered him many costly gifts, all of which the man of God, hungering, not for worldly goods, but for the salvation of souls, contemned like mire. The Soldan, perceiving the holy man to be so absolute a despiser of worldly things, was moved with amazement and conceived a greater devotion for him. And, albeit he would not, or perchance dared not, go over unto the Christian faith, he did nevertheless devoutly pray the servant of Christ to receive the gifts aforesaid, for his own salvation, and to bestow them upon Christian poor folk, or on churches. But Francis, for that he shunned the burden of money, and could not see in the soul of the Soldan any root of true piety, would not agree thereunto.

9. Seeing, then, that he could neither make progress in the conversion of that people, nor attain his purpose, warned by a divine revelation, he returned unto the regions of the faithful. Now the mercy of God so ordained, and the virtue of the holy man merited, and mercifully and marvellously it befell, that the friend of Christ—who with all his might sought a death for His sake, and yet in no way could find it—nevertheless did not lose the coveted merit of martyrdom, and was reserved to be signalled out unto posterity by an especial distinction. Thus it befell that that divine fire glowed ever more hotly in his heart, so that afterward it was openly manifested in his flesh. O truly blessed man, whose flesh, albeit not stricken by the tyrant's steel, was nevertheless not left without the likeness of

the Lamb that was slain! O fully and truly blessed, I say, whose life, albeit not cut off by the sword of the persecutor, did yet not lose the palm of martyrdom!

CHAPTER X

OF HIS ZEAL AND EFFICACY IN PRAYER

1. FRANCIS, the servant of Christ, feeling himself in the body to be absent from the Lord, had now through the love of Christ become wholly untouched by earthly desires, wherefore—that he might not be without the consolation of his Beloved—he prayed without ceasing, striving ever to manifest a spirit present with God. Prayer was a consolation unto him in contemplation, while, being already made a fellow-citizen with the Angels in the circle of the heavenly mansions, with ardent yearning he sought his Beloved, from Whom the wall of the flesh alone parted him. It was, moreover, a defence unto him in his labours, while in all that he did, distrusting his own working, and relying on the heavenly goodness, he cast all his care upon the Lord in earnest prayer.

He would confidently affirm that the grace of prayerfulness should be more desired than all others by the religious man, and—believing that without it no good could be wrought in the service of God—he would stir up his Brethren unto zeal therefor by all means that he could. For, whether walking or sitting, within doors or without, in toil or at leisure, he was so absorbed in prayer as that he seemed to have devoted thereunto not only his whole heart and body, but also his whole labour and time.

2. Nor was he ever wont to pass over heedlessly any spiritual visitation. When it came unto him, he followed after it, and, for as long as the Lord granted it unto him, he rejoiced in its proffered sweetness. If, while absorbed in thought on a journey, he felt some breathings of the divine Spirit, he would let his companions go on before, and would himself stay his steps, and turn the new inspiration into fruitfulness, not receiving the grace in vain. Ofttimes he was rapt in such ecstasies of contemplation as that he was carried out of himself, and, while perceiving things beyond mortal sense, knew naught of what was happening in the outer world around him.

Thus, when he was passing on a time through Borgo San Sepolcro, a very populous town, riding on an ass because of his

bodily weakness, he met crowds of folk that ran together out of devotion unto him. Yet albeit they touched him, and delayed his progress, crowding round him and in many ways pressing upon him, he seemed as one that felt naught, and, even as though he had been a dead body, perceived no whit what was being done around him. Accordingly, when they had long since passed through the town and left the crowds behind them, and had come unto a certain leper settlement, that contemplator of heavenly things, like one returning from another world, anxiously enquired when they would draw nigh unto Borgo. For his mind, intent on heavenly glories, had not perceived the changes of place and time, nor of the folk that met them. And that this oft befell him, the repeated experience of his companions attested.

3. Moreover—as he had experienced in prayer that the longed-for presence of the Holy Spirit vouchsafed itself by so much the more intimately unto suppliants as it found them removed from the noise of worldlings—he would seek lonely places, going to pray by night in solitudes and in deserted churches. There oftentimes he endured dire assaults from demons, who, struggling with him in perceptible form, strove to disturb him in his exercise of prayer. But he, furnished with heavenly arms, the more desperate his enemies' attack, was rendered by so much the more strong in might and fervent in prayer, saying with confidence unto Christ, "Hide me under the shadow of Thy wings, from the wicked that oppress me." But unto the demons he would say, "Do unto me aught that ye can, evil and false spirits. For ye have no power, save that which is granted you from the divine hand, and here am I, ready to bear with all gladness all things whatsoever that has decreed to inflict upon me." Then the proud demons, not able to brook this constancy of mind, retreated in confusion.

4. But the man of God, remaining alone and at peace, filled the woods with his sighing, bedewed the ground with his tears, and beat his breast with his hands, and, like one who hath gained a secret and hidden thing, spake familiarly with his Lord. There he made answer unto his Judge, there he made supplication unto his Father, there he held converse with his Friend, there too he was at times heard by the Brethren, who out of filial piety watched him, to invoke the divine mercy for sinners with cries and wailings, yea, and to lament aloud as though the Lord's Passion were set before his eyes. There he was beheld praying by night, his hands stretched out after the manner of

a Cross, his whole body uplifted from the earth, and wrapt in a shining cloud, as though the wondrous illumination of the body were a witness unto the wondrous enlightenment of his mind. There, moreover, as is attested by sure signs, the unknown and hidden things of the divine wisdom were laid bare unto him, albeit he did not publish them abroad, save in so far as the love of Christ constrained him, and the profit of his neighbours demanded. For he would say, "For a trifling gain, one may chance to lose a priceless thing, and may easily provoke him that gave it to give no more."

When he returned from his private prayers, in the which he became changed almost into another man, he endeavoured with all diligence to make himself like unto others, lest perchance that which was shown outwardly should by the breath of popular applause depart from the gain within. Whensoever he was rapt on a sudden in public, and visited of the Lord, he would alway make some pretext unto them that stood by, lest the intimate visitations of the Spouse should be published abroad. When that he was praying among the Brethren, he utterly avoided coughings, groanings, hard breathing, and outward gestures, either because he loved secrecy, or because, shutting himself up within himself, he was wholly borne away unto God. Oft-times he would speak on this wise unto his intimate companions, "When the servant of God is visited of God in prayer, he ought to say 'This comfort, O Lord, Thou hast sent from heaven unto me, a sinner and unworthy, and I commit it unto Thy care, for that I feel me to be a thief of Thy treasure.'" When, therefore, he returneth from praying, he ought thus to show himself as a little poor one and a sinner, not as one who hath attained unto any new grace."

5. Once when the man of God was praying in the place of the Little Portion, it chanced that the Bishop of Assisi came to visit him, as was his wont. He at once on entering the place betook him unto the cell wherein the servant of Christ was praying, with more boldness than was seemly, and, knocking at the door, was about to enter; but, as he thrust in his head, and beheld the Saint in prayer, a sudden trembling gat hold of him, his limbs became rigid, and he lost the power of speech; then suddenly he was driven forth by force, by the divine will, and with returning steps was led afar off. All astonished, the Bishop hastened unto the Brethren with all the speed he might, and, God restoring unto him his speech, with his first words he declared his fault.

It befell on a time that the Abbot of the Monastery of Saint Justin in the diocese of Perugia met the servant of Christ. Beholding him, the devout Abbot with all speed alighted from his horse, that he might both do reverence unto the man of God and hold some converse with him concerning his soul's welfare. At length, their sweet conference over, the Abbot, as he departed, humbly besought that prayers should be offered on his behalf. Unto whom the man dear unto God made answer, "I will pray for thee with goodwill." Accordingly, when the Abbot had departed a little space, the faithful Francis spake unto his companion, "Tarry for me awhile, Brother, for I am minded to pay the debt that I have promised." While, then, he was praying, on a sudden the Abbot felt in his spirit an unwonted glow and a sweetness hitherto unknown, in such wise as that he was carried out of himself in an ecstasy, and wholly loosed from himself and absorbed in God. This lasted but for a brief space, after which he came unto himself again, and recognised the efficacy of the prayer of Saint Francis. Thenceforward he did alway burn with greater love toward the Order, and recounted this event unto many as a miracle.

6. The holy man was wont to say the Canonical Hours before God not less reverently than devoutly. For albeit he suffered from infirmities of the eyes, the stomach, spleen, and liver, yet would he never lean against an outer or inner wall, while he was intoning them, but alway said the Hours standing upright, and without his hood, not letting his eyes roam about, nor cutting short his words. If he were on a journey, he would, when the time came, stay his steps, nor would he omit this reverent and holy habit for any storm of rain. For he would say, "If the body needeth quiet when it partaketh of the bread that, like itself, shall become food for worms, with how much peace and calm doth it behove the soul to receive the Bread of Life?" Grievously did he consider himself to have stumbled if ever, while giving himself unto prayer, his mind was led astray of empty fantasies. When anything of the like happened, he made mention thereof in confession, that he might forthwith atone for it. This earnestness he had so turned into an habit that right seldom did he suffer from flies of this sort.

One Lent, he had made a little vase, that he might fill up his spare moments, and they not be utterly wasted. But forasmuch as while saying Tierce this came into his memory and a little distracted his mind, he, moved by the fervour of his spirit, burnt the little vase in the fire, saying, "I will sacrifice it unto the

Lord, Whose sacrifice it hath hindered." It was his wont to say the Psalms with mind and spirit as attent as though he saw God present before his eyes, and when the Name of the Lord occurred therein, he seemed to refresh his very lips with the savour of its sweetness. He was fain that that same Name of the Lord, not alone when it was meditated upon, but also when it was uttered or written, should be honoured with an especial reverence, and at times he would prevail on the Brethren to collect all papers with writing upon them, wheresoever they might find them, and to lay them in some seemly place, lest perchance that sacred Name might happen to be written thereon, and so trodden underfoot. And when he uttered or heard the Name of Jesus, he was filled with an inward rejoicing, and seemed all transfigured outwardly, as though some honey-sweet taste had soothed his palate, or some melodious sound his ear.

7. Now three years before his death it befell that he was minded, at the town of Greccio, to celebrate the memory of the Birth of the Child Jesus, with all the added solemnity that he might, for the kindling of devotion. That this might not seem an innovation, he sought and obtained licence from the Supreme Pontiff, and then made ready a manger, and bade hay, together with an ox and an ass, be brought unto the spot. The Brethren were called together, the folk assembled, the wood echoed with their voices, and that august night was made radiant and solemn with many bright lights, and with tuneful and sonorous praises. The man of God, filled with tender love, stood before the manger, bathed in tears, and overflowing with joy. Solemn Masses were celebrated over the manger, Francis, the Levite of Christ, chanting the Holy Gospel. Then he preached unto the folk standing round of the Birth of the King in poverty, calling Him, when he wished to name Him, the Child of Bethlehem, by reason of his tender love for Him. A certain knight, valorous and true, Messer John of Greccio, who for the love of Christ had left the secular army, and was bound by closest friendship unto the man of God, declared that he beheld a little Child right fair to see sleeping in that manger, Who seemed to be awakened from sleep when the blessed Father Francis embraced Him in both arms. This vision of the devout knight is rendered worthy of belief, not alone through the holiness of him that beheld it, but is also confirmed by the truth that it set forth, and withal proven by the miracles that followed it. For the ensample of Francis, if meditated upon by the world, must needs stir up sluggish hearts unto the faith of Christ, and the hay that was kept back

from the manger by the folk proved a marvellous remedy for sick beasts, and a prophylactic against divers other plagues, God magnifying by all means His servant, and making manifest by clear and miraculous portents the efficacy of his holy prayers.

CHAPTER XI

OF HIS UNDERSTANDING OF THE SCRIPTURES, AND
OF HIS SPIRIT OF PROPHECY

1. UNTO such a tranquillity of mind had his unwearied zeal for prayer and continuous practice of virtue brought the man of God that—albeit he had no instruction or learning in the sacred writings—yet, illumined by the beams of eternal light, he searched the deep things of the Scriptures with marvellous intellectual discernment. For his genius, pure from all stain, penetrated into the hidden places of the mysteries, and, where the learning of a theologian tarrieth without, the feelings of the lover led him in. At times he would read in the sacred books, and whatsoever had once been presented unto his mind became indelibly imprinted on his memory, for it was not in vain that he comprehended by hearing and by an attent mind that which he ever meditated upon with the love of an unceasing devotion. Once when the Brethren asked whether it were his will that the clerks that had been already received into the Order should devote themselves unto the study of Holy Scripture, he made answer, "It is indeed my will, yet for so long alone as they follow the example of Christ, Who, we read, prayed more than He read, and for so long as they do not lose their zeal for prayer, nor study only that they may know how they ought to speak; rather let them study that they may be doers of the word, and, when they have done it, may set forth unto others what they too should do. I am fain (saith he), that my Brethren should be learners of the Gospel, and thus make progress in knowledge of the truth, that they should grow in the purity of guilelessness, so that they sever not the harmlessness of the dove from the wisdom of the serpent, which twain the greatest Teacher hath joined together with His blessed mouth."

2. Being asked at Siena by a certain devout man, a doctor of sacred theology, concerning sundry problems hard of understanding, he laid bare the hidden things of the divine wisdom with such luminous exposition that that learned man was

mightily astonished, and exclaimed in amazement, "Verily, the theology of this holy Father, borne aloft by purity and meditation as though by wings, is as a flying eagle, while our learning creepeth on its belly on the earth." For, albeit he were unskilled in speech, yet, full of learning, he unravelled the knots of problems, and the thing that was hid he brought forth into the light. Nor was it unfitting that the holy man should receive from God an understanding of the Scriptures, seeing that by the imitation of Christ he fulfilled and set forth in his deeds their perfect truth, and by the abundant anointing of the Holy Spirit had within him, in his own heart, an instructor therein.

3. So mightily did the spirit of prophecy shine forth in him that he both foreknew what was to come, and beheld the secrets of men's hearts, and perceived absent things as though they were present, and in wondrous wise manifested his own presence unto them that were absent. For on a time when the Christian army was besieging Damietta, the man of God was present, fortified not by arms but by faith. When on the day of battle the Christians were preparing them for the conflict, and the servant of Christ heard thereof, he groaned bitterly, and said unto his companion, "If they essay to join battle, the Lord hath shown me that it will not fare well with the Christians; but, if I say this, I shall be accounted a fool; if I keep silence, I shall not escape the reproaches of my conscience. What, then, dost thou advise?" His companion replied, "Brother, do thou esteem it but a light thing to be judged of men, for that thou dost not now make a beginning of being accounted a fool. Unburden thy conscience, and fear God rather than men." Hearing this, the herald of Christ hastened forth, and approached the Christians with salutary warnings, forbidding the battle, and prophesying its issue. The truth was unto them as a vain tale, they hardened their hearts and would not turn back. They went into the field, they joined battle, they fought, and the entire Christian host was put to the rout, thus winning shame, not triumph, as the ending of the warfare. In this dread defeat, the Christian host was so diminished that there were about six thousand slain or captured. Thereby was it clearly made manifest that the wisdom of the poor man, Francis, had not been meet for contempt, for the mind of a righteous man is sometime wont to tell him more than seven watchmen, that sit above in an high tower.

4. At another time, when he was returned from beyond seas, and had come unto Celano to preach, a certain Knight with

things that he had heard from the narration of that other. Then Francis not only declared that he had so spoken, but also foretold by prophecy that man's own end, who was thus asking concerning another. And that he might the more surely impress this on his heart, he revealed unto him a certain hidden scruple of his conscience, which that man had never laid bare unto any living, and by thus marvellously revealing the same he explained it, and by his salutary counsels laid it low. To confirm the truth of all this, it befell that that same devout man came unto his end at the last in the manner foretold him by the servant of Christ.

8. Once, moreover, when he was returning from beyond sea, with Brother Leonard of Assisi as his companion, it chanced that, worn out and weary as he was, he was riding on an ass. His companion, as he followed him—himself no little wearied—began to say within himself, with a touch of human weakness, "This man's family was not of equal standing with mine own. And now, look you, he rideth, and I on foot lead his ass." Even as he thus reasoned, the holy man forthwith dismounted from the ass, saying, "It is not fitting, Brother, that I should ride, and thou walk afoot, for that in the world thou wert of nobler birth and more standing than I." Then the Brother was dumb with amazement, and blushed for shame, and, perceiving his fault, fell at the other's feet, which he bedewed with tears, and laid bare what had been his thought, and implored pardon.

9. A certain Brother, devoted unto God, and unto the servant of Christ, oft meditated in his heart how that one must be meet for the divine grace whom the holy man embraced with intimate friendship, yet nevertheless he thought himself considered of God as a stranger, outside the number of the elect. Being, then, oftentimes harassed by the oncoming of such thoughts, he ardently desired the intimate friendship of the man of God, yet did not lay bare unto any the secret of his heart; him the kindly Father called gently unto him, and thus addressed, "Let no thoughts disturb thee, my son, for I hold thee most dear, and amongst those most especially dear unto me I do gladly bestow upon thee the gift of my friendship and my love." Thereat the Brother marvelled, and from being devout became ever more devout, and not only increased in love of the holy man, but was also laden, through the gift of the grace of the Holy Spirit, with greater endowments.

Now while Francis was sojourning on Mount Alverna, secluded in his cell, one of his companions did mightily desire to possess

he showed himself with arms outstretched after the likeness of a Cross. This we must believe to have been wrought by the divine ruling, that by the miraculous appearance of his bodily presence it might be abundantly evident how that his spirit was present in and penetrated by the light of the eternal wisdom, which is more moving than any motion, and goeth through all things by reason of her pureness, and entering into holy souls maketh them friends of God, and prophets. For the most exalted Teacher is wont to reveal His mysteries unto the babes and simple, as was first seen in David, the most lofty of the Prophets, and afterward in the Prince of the Apostles, Peter, and lastly in Francis, the little poor one of Christ. For these, albeit they were simple, and unskilled in letters, were made famous by the teaching of the Holy Spirit; the first a shepherd, to feed the flock of the Synagogue that was brought forth out of Egypt; the second a fisher, to fill the great net of the Church with a multitude of believers; the last a merchantman, to buy the pearl of Gospel life, when that he had sold and disposed of all things for the sake of Christ.

CHAPTER XII

OF THE EFFICACY OF HIS PREACHING, AND OF HIS GIFT OF HEALING

I. THE truly faithful servant and minister of Christ, Francis, that he might faithfully and perfectly fulfil all things, strove most chiefly to exercise those virtues that he knew, by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, were most pleasing unto his God. Wherefore it came to pass that he fell into great striving with himself by reason of a doubt, the which that he might end—on his return after many days of prayer—he set before the Brethren that were his intimates. “What,” saith he, “do ye counsel, Brethren, what do ye commend? Shall I devote myself unto prayer, or shall I go about preaching? Of a truth, I that am little, and simple, and rude in speech have received more grace of prayer than of speaking. Now in prayer, there seemeth to be the gain and heaping up of graces, in preaching, a certain giving out of the gifts received from heaven; in prayer, again, a cleansing of the inward feelings, and an union with the one, true, and highest good, together with a strengthening of virtue; in preaching, the spiritual feet wax dusty, and many things

distract a man, and discipline is relaxed. Finally, in prayer, we speak with God and hear Him, and live as it were the life of Angels, while we converse with Angels; in preaching, we must needs practise much condescension toward men and living among them as fellow-men must think, see, say, and hear such things as pertain unto men. Yet one thing is there to set against these, the which in God's sight would seem to weigh more than they all, to wit, that the only-begotten Son of God, Who is the highest wisdom, left His Father's bosom for the salvation of souls, that, instructing the world by His ensample, He might preach the word of salvation unto men, whom He both redeemed at the cost of His sacred Blood, and cleansed in a laver and gave them to drink, keeping back naught of Himself, but for our salvation freely bestowing all. And forasmuch as we ought to do all things after the pattern of those things that was shown us in Him as on the lofty mount, it seemeth that it might be more acceptable unto God that, laying aside leisure, I should go forth unto the work." And albeit for many days he pondered over such sayings with the Brethren, he could not of a surety discern whether of the twain he should choose as more truly pleasing unto Christ. For albeit he had known many wondrous things through the spirit of prophecy, he was not able thereby to resolve this question clearly, the providence of God better ordaining, so that the merit of preaching might be made evident by an heavenly oracle, and the humility of Christ's servant be kept intact.

2. He, true Brother Minor, was not ashamed to ask little things from those less than himself, albeit he had learnt great things from the greatest Teacher. For with an especial zeal he was wont to enquire after what way and manner of life he might most perfectly serve God according unto His will. This was his highest philosophy, this his highest desire, so long as he lived, so that he would enquire of wise and simple, of perfect and imperfect, of young and old, in what wise he might with most holiness attain unto the summit of perfection. Therefore, calling unto him twain of the Brethren, he sent them unto Brother Silvester—he that had seen the Cross proceeding from his mouth, and was at that time giving himself up unto continuous prayer in the mountain above Assisi—that he might seek an answer from God concerning this doubt, and announce it unto him from the Lord. This same bidding he laid upon the holy virgin Clare, that through some of the purer and simpler of the virgins that were living under her rule, yea, and through

her own prayers united with those of the other Sisters, she might ascertain the will of the Lord touching this matter. The reverend priest and the virgin vowed unto God were marvelously in agreement concerning this, the Holy Spirit revealing it unto them, to wit, that it was the divine will that the herald of Christ should go forth to preach. When, therefore, the Brethren returned, and, according unto what they had heard, pointed out the will of God, Francis forthwith rose and girded himself, and without any delay set forth on his journey. And with such fervour did he go, to fulfil the divine behest, and with such speed did he hasten on his way, that he seemed—the hand of the Lord being upon him—to have put on new power from heaven.

3. When he drew nigh unto Bevagna he came unto a spot wherein a great multitude of birds of divers species were gathered together. When the holy man of God perceived them, he ran with all speed unto the place and greeted them as if they shared in human understanding. They on their part all awaited him and turned toward him, those that were perched on bushes bending their heads as he drew nigh them, and looking on him in unwonted wise, while he came right among them, and diligently exhorted them all to hear the word of God, saying, "My brothers the birds, much ought ye to praise your Creator, Who hath clothed you with feathers and given you wings to fly, and hath made over unto you the pure air, and careth for you without your taking thought for yourselves." While he was speaking unto them these and other like words, the little birds—behaving themselves in wondrous wise—began to stretch their necks, to spread their wings, to open their beaks, and to look intently on him. He, with wondrous fervour of spirit, passed in and out among them, touching them with his habit, nor did one of them move from the spot until he had made the sign of the Cross over them and given them leave; then, with the blessing of the man of God, they all flew away together. All these things were witnessed by his companions that stood awaiting him by the way. Returning unto them, the simple and holy man began to blame himself for neglect in that he had not afore then preached unto the birds.

4. Thence, while going among the neighbouring places to preach, he came unto a town named Alviano, where, when the folk were gathered together and silence had been bidden, he could yet scarce be heard by reason of the swallows that were there building their nests, and twittering with shrill cries. The

reason, a mighty moving of men's hearts at the hearing of his words, a learning given him of the Holy Spirit beyond all human teaching, licence to preach granted him by the supreme Pontiff as the result of a revelation, yea, and the Rule too, wherein the manner of the preaching was set forth, confirmed by that same Vicar of Christ, and, finally, the signs of the King Most High imprinted on his body after the manner of a seal; these gave unanswerable evidence unto the whole world, as it were by ten witnesses, that Francis the herald of Christ was worthy of reverence in his ministry, was of authority in his teaching, and was to be marvelled at in his saintliness, and that through these virtues he had preached the Gospel of Christ like one that was indeed a messenger of God.

CHAPTER XIII

OF THE SACRED STIGMATA

1. It was the custom of that angelic man, Francis, never to be slothful in good, but rather, like the heavenly spirits on Jacob's ladder, to be ever ascending toward God, or stooping toward his neighbour. For he had learnt so wisely to apportion the time granted unto him for merit that one part thereof he would spend in labouring for the profit of his neighbours, the other he would devote unto the peaceful ecstasies of contemplation. Wherefore, when according unto the demands of time and place he had stooped to secure the salvation of others, he would leave behind the disturbances of throngs, and seek a hidden solitude and a place for silence, wherein, giving himself up more freely unto the Lord, he might brush off any dust that was clinging unto him from his converse with men. Accordingly, two years before he yielded his spirit unto heaven, the divine counsel leading him, he was brought after many and varied toils unto an high mountain apart, that is called Mount Alverna. When, according unto his wont, he began to keep a Lent there, fasting, in honour of Saint Michael Archangel, he was filled unto overflowing, and as never before, with the sweetness of heavenly contemplation, and was kindled with a yet more burning flame of heavenly longings, and began to feel the gifts of the divine bestowal heaped upon him. He was borne into the heights, not like a curious examiner of the divine majesty that is weighed down by the glory thereof, but even as a faithful and wise servant, searching out the will of

God, unto Whom it was ever his fervent and chief desire to conform himself in every way.

2. Thus by the divine oracle it was instilled into his mind that by opening of the Book of the Gospels it should be revealed unto him of Christ what would be most pleasing unto God in him and from him. Wherefore, having first prayed very devoutly, he took the holy Book of the Gospels from the altar, and made it be opened, in the name of the Holy Trinity, by his companion, a man devoted unto God, and holy. As in the threefold opening of the Book the Lord's Passion was each time discovered, Francis, full of the Spirit of God, verily understood that, like as he had imitated Christ in the deeds of his life, so it behoved him to be made like unto Him in the trials and sufferings of His Passion before that he should depart from this world. And, albeit by reason of the great austerity of his past life, and continual sustaining of the Lord's Cross, he was now frail in body, he was no whit afear'd, but was the more valorously inspired to endure a martyrdom. For in him the all-powerful kindling of love of the good Jesu had increased into coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame, so that many waters could not quench his love, so strong it was.

3. When, therefore, by seraphic glow of longing he had been uplifted toward God, and by his sweet compassion had been transformed into the likeness of Him Who of His exceeding love endured to be crucified—on a certain morning about the Feast of the Exaltation of Holy Cross, while he was praying on the side of the mountain, he beheld a Seraph having six wings, flaming and resplendent, coming down from the heights of heaven. When in his flight most swift he had reached the space of air nigh the man of God, there appeared betwixt the wings the Figure of a Man crucified, having his hands and feet stretched forth in the shape of a Cross, and fastened unto a Cross. Two wings were raised above His head, twain were spread forth to fly, while twain hid His whole body. Beholding this, Francis was mightily astonied, and joy, mingled with sorrow, filled his heart. He rejoiced at the gracious aspect wherewith he saw Christ, under the guise of the Seraph, regard him, but His crucifixion pierced his soul with a sword of pitying grief. He marvelled exceedingly at the appearance of a vision so unfathomable, knowing that the infirmity of the Passion doth in no wise accord with the immortality of a Seraphic spirit. At length he understood therefrom, the Lord revealing it unto him, that this vision had been thus presented unto his gaze by the

divine providence, that the friend of Christ might have foreknowledge that he was to be wholly transformed into the likeness of Christ Crucified, not by martyrdom of body, but by enkindling of heart. Accordingly, as the vision disappeared, it left in his heart a wondrous glow, but on his flesh also it imprinted a no less wondrous likeness of its tokens. For forthwith there began to appear in his hands and feet the marks of the nails, even as he had just beheld them in that Figure of the Crucified. For his hands and feet seemed to be pierced through the midst with nails, the heads of the nails showing in the palms of the hands, and upper side of the feet, and their points showing on the other side; the heads of the nails were round and black in the hands and feet, while the points were long, bent, and as it were turned back, being formed of the flesh itself, and protruding therefrom. The right side, moreover, was—as if it had been pierced by a lance—seamed with a ruddy scar, where from oftentimes welled the sacred blood, staining his habit and breeches.

4. Now the servant of Christ perceived that the stigmata thus manifestly imprinted on his flesh could not be hidden from his intimate friends; nevertheless, fearing to make public the holy secret of the Lord, he was set in a great strife of questioning, to wit, whether he should tell that which he had seen, or should keep it silent. Wherefore he called some of the Brethren, and, speaking unto them in general terms, set before them his doubt, and asked their counsel. Then one of the Brethren, Illuminato by name, and illuminated by grace, perceiving that he had beheld some marvellous things, inasmuch as that he seemed almost stricken dumb with amaze, said unto the holy man, "Brother, thou knowest that at times the divine secrets are shown unto thee, not only for thine own sake, but for the sake of others also. Wherefore, meseemeth thou wouldst have reason to fear lest thou shouldst be judged guilty of hiding thy talent, didst thou keep hidden that which thou hast received, which same would be profitable unto many." At this speech, the holy man was moved, so that, albeit at other times he was wont to say, "My secret to me,"¹ he did then with much fear narrate in order the vision aforesaid, adding that He who had appeared unto him had said some words the which, so long as he lived, he would never reveal unto any man. Verily we must believe that those utterances of that holy Seraph marvellously appearing on the Cross were so secret that perchance it was not lawful for a man to utter them.

¹ Isa. xxiv. 16 (marg. A.V.).

dared to deem the divine counsels concerning me meet for blame." And albeit he was wholly worn out by the long continuance of his grievous sickness, he cast himself on the ground, jarring his frail bones in the hard fall. And, kissing the ground, he cried, "I give Thee thanks, O Lord God, for all these my pains, and I beseech Thee, my Lord, that, if it please Thee, Thou wilt add unto them an hundredfold; for this will be most acceptable unto me if laying sorrow upon me Thou dost not spare, since the fulfilling of Thy holy will is unto me an overflowing solace." Thus he seemed unto the Brethren like another Job, whose powers of mind increased even as his bodily weakness increased. But he himself knew long before his death when it should be, and, when the day of his departure was at hand, said unto the Brethren that he was about to put off the tabernacle of his body, even as it had been revealed unto him of Christ.

3. When, therefore, during the two years after the impression of the sacred stigmata, to wit, in the twentieth year from his conversion, he had been shaped by many trial blows of painful sicknesses, like unto a stone meet to be set in the building of the heavenly Jerusalem, and as it were an hammered work that under the mallet of manifold trials is brought unto perfection—he asked to be borne unto Saint Mary of the Little Portion, that he might yield up the breath of life there, where he had received the breath of grace. When he had been brought thither—that he might give an ensample of the truth that he had naught in common with the world—in that most severe weakness that followed after all his sickness, he prostrated himself in fervour of spirit all naked on the naked earth, that in that last hour, wherein the foe might still rise up against him, he might wrestle in his nakedness with that naked spirit. As he lay thus on the ground, his habit of haircloth laid aside, he lifted his face, as was his wont, toward heaven, and, wholly absorbed in that glory, covered with his left hand the wound in his right side, that it might not be seen, and said unto the Brethren, "I have done what was mine to do, may Christ teach you what is yours."

4. While the companions of the Saint were weeping, stricken with keen pangs of pity, one of them, whom the man of God had said should be his Warden, knowing by divine inspiration his wish, rose in haste, and taking an habit, with the cord and breeches, brought it unto the little poor one of Christ, saying, "These I lend unto thee, as unto a beggar, and do thou receive them at the bidding of holy obedience." At this the holy man rejoiced, and exulted in gladness of heart, for that he saw that

he had kept faith with the Lady Poverty even unto the end, and raising his hands unto heaven, he glorified his Christ for that, freed from all burdens, he was going unhindered unto Him. For all this he had done in his zeal for poverty, being minded to possess not even an habit, unless it were lent him by another. He was verily minded in all things to be made like unto Christ Crucified, Who had hung on the Cross in poverty, and grief, and nakedness. Wherefore, as at the outset of his conversion he had stood naked before the Bishop, so in the ending of his life he was minded to quit the world naked. He charged the Brethren that stood around him, on their loving obedience, that when they saw that he was dead, they should leave him lying naked on the ground for so long time as a man would take leisurely to compass the distance of a thousand paces. O truly Christ-like man, who strove alike in life to imitate the life of Christ; in dying, His dying; in death, His death, by a perfect likeness, and was found worthy to be adorned with an outward likeness unto Him!

5. Then, as the hour of his departure was fast approaching, he made all the Brethren that were in the place be called unto him and, consoling them for his death with words of comfort, exhorted them with fatherly tenderness unto the love of God. He spake long of observing patience, and poverty, and fidelity unto the Holy Roman Church, placing the Holy Gospel before all other ordinances. Then as all the Brethren sat around him, he stretched his hands over them, crossing his arms in the likeness of the Cross, for that he did ever love that sign, and he blessed all the Brethren, present and absent alike, in the might and in the Name of the Crucified. He added, moreover, "Be strong, all ye my sons, in the fear of the Lord, and abide therein for ever. And, since temptation will come, and trials draw nigh, blessed are they who shall continue in the works that they have begun. I for my part make haste to go unto God, unto Whose grace I commend you all." When he had made an end of gentle exhortations after this wise, this man most beloved of God asked them to bring him the book of the Gospels, and to read unto him from the Gospel according unto John, beginning at that place, "Before the feast of the Passover." Then he himself, as best he could, brake forth into the words of that Psalm, "I cried unto the Lord with my voice, with my voice unto the Lord did I make my supplication," and went through even unto the end, saying, "The righteous shall compass me about, for Thou shalt deal bountifully with me."

6. At length, when all the mysteries had been fulfilled in him, and his most holy spirit was freed from the flesh, and absorbed into the boundless depths of the divine glory, the blessed man fell on sleep in the Lord. One of his Brethren and disciples saw that blessed soul, under the likeness of a star exceeding bright, borne on a dazzling cloudlet over many waters, mounting in a straight course unto heaven, as though it were radiant with the dazzling whiteness of his exalted sanctity, and filled with the riches of divine wisdom and grace alike, by the which the holy man was found worthy to enter the abode of light and peace, where with Christ he resteth for evermore. Moreover, a Brother named Augustine, who was then Minister of the Brethren in Terra di Lavoro, an holy and upright man, having come unto his last hour, and some time previously having lost the power of speech, in the hearing of them that stood by did on a sudden cry out and say, "Tarry for me, Father, tarry for me, lo, even now I am coming with thee!" When the Brethren asked and marvelled much unto whom he thus boldly spake, he made answer, "Did ye not see our Father, Francis, who goeth unto heaven?" And forthwith his holy soul, departing from the body, followed the most holy Father.

The Bishop of Assisi at that time had gone on pilgrimage unto the Oratory of Saint Michael on Monte Gargano, and unto him the Blessed Francis, appearing on the night of his departure, said, "Behold, I leave the world and go unto heaven." The Bishop, then, rising at dawn, related unto his companions that which he had seen, and returned unto Assisi; there, when he had made diligent enquiry, he learnt of a certainty that in that hour whereof the vision had notified him, the blessed Father had departed from this world.

At the hour of the passing of the holy man, the larks—birds that love the light, and dread the shades of twilight—flocked in great numbers unto the roof of the house, albeit the shades of night were then falling, and, wheeling round it for a long while with songs even gladder than their wont, offered their witness, alike gracious and manifest, unto the glory of the Saint, who had been wont to call them unto the divine praises,

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