

THE SERAPH

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Resurrection of Life

Bishop Giles, OFM

The Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ is an assurance that our faith is not in vain. It is also an encouragement for us to follow Him. To rise with Him, we must die with Him.

Our life, here and now, is given to us for only one purpose – to merit the eternal happiness of Heaven by following Jesus through death and into eternity. We must all die. Some will die quickly and others will go slowly and gradually. In the end, every one of us must let go of this life. If we willingly accept the death that God has destined for us, we may hope to rise in glory in the next life. If we resist the death of this body or the death that God has chosen for us, we will ultimately fail. We will die to this world nonetheless; but in rejecting God and His plan, we reject the glory of Heaven in the next life.

This life and this present time are very precious for us if we will only truly understand that our eternity depends on what we do with what we now have. Our lives are spent, and our time is spent – one way or another. God

desires that we live our lives here on earth, spending them in following Jesus Christ.

We must die to this world. As our legs fail and we lose our balance or mobility, a part of this life dies within us. As our hearing and sight fade away, another part of this life dies. One by one everything is taken from us in sickness or old age. In the end, we must give back all that we have been given of this life and this world. Jesus has instructed us not to fear this, but rather to embrace it. This is the means of entering into eternity.

If we die well, we are permitted to enter into Heaven. If we do not die well (without God's grace) we will be forever excluded from the joy of Heaven. In order to die in God's grace, we must always be preparing for this moment. It is the most important moment of our entire lives. Or, rather, it is the most important moment of all of our eternity.

Whatever time we have on this earth is short compared to eternity. Our time here and now is precious and we should strive

to truly appreciate this. Now is the acceptable time. We do not have yesterday, nor are we promised tomorrow. If God were to end our mortal lives at this moment, would we leave this world in His grace, or without it? We must strive to spend every remaining moment of our lives, living in His Grace – fulfilling His Will in our lives.

We must never grow tired or weary in this constant striving to live our lives fulfilling God's Holy Will. Our daily prayer should be that we may persevere to the end in loving God. Final perseverance is the key that will open the gates of Heaven for us. We may fall, and we may stray, but we should always strive to return to and remain with Jesus. As long as we are still breathing the air of this life, we may repent of our sins and return to the true love of God.

We must not become pre-sumptuous in thinking that we do not have to worry about how we are living now, as long as right before the end we repent and return to God. We have not been promised that we will live to see the next moment. It is truly foolish to put off loving God. The life that we live is indicative of the death that we

will most likely die. The man who lives in sin will most likely die in sin. The man who strives to live every day in the grace of God will most likely die in His grace.

The Resurrection of Jesus is the grounds for us to set aside all fear and anxiety for the things of this earth. Knowing that all these things must pass away, or must be taken away from us, we should not worry or trouble our souls when this is done. Instead of weeping as our bodies fail and fade away, we should be rejoicing. We should be thankful that we have the opportunity to follow Jesus in death. Sickness, injury, and old age are all blessings from God if we will only faithfully understand them as opportunities rather than obstacles to our goal.

May we truly rejoice with the Resurrection of Our Lord, by living out the remainder of our days in this life following Him (taking up our daily cross) – looking forward to one day being eternally united with Him, as we too may rise gloriously on that Last Day.

The Prayer of the Good Thief

St. Maximus, Bishop and Father

Synopsis:

In this feast of Christ's Resurrection, we especially rejoice that, by the Mystery of this new sacrament, our sins are taken away; heaven given back to us, paradise restored. The faith of the Good Thief upon his cross has helped the whole world. The Prayer of Christ for His executioners.



Most fittingly does the world rejoice, with great gladness, upon this day; for with Christ returning from the dead the hope of resurrection has everywhere been awakened in the hearts of men. For it is but right that when the Lord of creation triumphs, the creatures He has made should also rejoice. This day the heavens rejoice, for now at length they see the earth, defiled by sin, made clean in the Blood of the Lord. The multitudes of the hosts of heaven rejoice, for their king has overthrown in battle the hosts of the prince of evil. The sun rejoices, and now with unceasing thankfulness

holds back by its joyful beams that woeful darkness that overshadowed it as Christ was dying. And together with them we too above all others must rejoice, for whom the Only-Begotten Son of God, Who also is True God, clothed Himself in our flesh, that through that flesh He might come to the Cross, by the Cross suffer death, and through death despoil the kingdom of hell. Should we not rejoice: we whose sins the mystery of this new sacrament has taken away, to whom heaven is given, paradise restored?

And as He drew near His end, the Lord Himself says to the Thief then hanging on his cross: he whose faith, neither Christ's torment, nor his own, had weakened: *Amen, I say to you, this day thou shalt be with Me in paradise.* For the Thief had said to Him: *Lord, remember me when Thou shalt come into Thy kingdom* (Lk. xxiii). How admirable this faith, Brethren: that a thief who had been judged unworthy of this life, should amid his torments nourish the hope of life eternal, and believe,

that this could be given to him by One Who also was being crucified? And how justly does the believing Thief receive the favor of such a promise: he who, in that hour when the Apostles scattered in fear, had confessed the Kingdom of God? And the merit of this one confession wipes away all his past sins; in that brief moment whatever crimes he had committed, throughout all the years of his life, were now forgiven.

Nor did the blood he shed in his robberies condemn him before God: for he believed that the Blood of Christ was shed for a Kingdom, not for a punishment. And that this death was a gain for all men, there can, Beloved Brethren, be no possible doubt. For who can despair of God's grace, when the Thief was forgiven; should he unite the faith of the Thief with his own humble prayer for pardon?

We have yet another shining example of the Lord's most loving kindness, and because of it, let us, putting away all fear, and all deadly despair, place our trust in the unspeakable generosity of Our Redeemer. For when, condemned by the Godless, Christ hung upon the Cross, and the Jews in their

evil rage mocked at Him they had crucified, in the midst of His agony, this kind Petitioner prayed to His Almighty Father for His executioners, and said: *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*

And though in His hands was the judgment of both the living and the dead, He implored pardon for those who were then perishing in sin; and this, I believe, that He might show us beyond any manner of doubt, that He forgave them their awful crime, and that His Father would also spare them, if they, putting away their unbelief, would come together in Christ's Name. For who can doubt the effect of that prayer, where He Who is Goodness asks help for those in misery? *They know not*, He says, *what they do.* The Jews knew well that they were shedding the blood of an innocent man; but they did not know that the guilt of all men was being washed away in that Blood. They knew they were punishing Christ by this most bitter torment of the Cross; but they did not know that it was through this Cross the Son of God would triumph. They knew He would die; but they did not know He would rise again. So, well might the Lord declare:

They know not what they do.

For they knew not, the Jews, of what immense goodness their very wickedness was the instrument. But the Lord, in the knowledge of His own majesty, has compassion on their human errors, and knowing how great the joy that would follow these torments, while He yet endured them, forgives the crime of those who were crucifying Him: willing that His death would give life to His slayers, and be the condemnation of those who would perish. Returning from hell, He seeks His Apostles so

that He might show them, that within Him there was both the power of divinity, and the reality of our flesh.

Because of this, Brethren, let us rejoice in Christ, now risen from the dead. Let us hold firmly, that He has recalled this Flesh from the sepulcher that we may merit to have part in that wondrous common heritage: namely, the grace of the Apostles, and the Resurrection of the Lord, by the help of this Same Lord Who with the Father and the Holy Ghost lives and reigns world without end. **Amen.**

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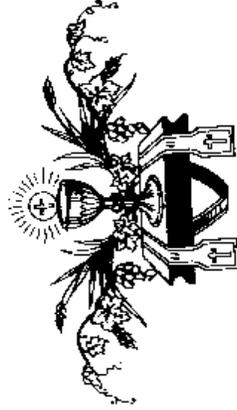
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St. Francis' Spiritual Revolution

Brother Anthony Lentz, O.F.M.

Part Three

We now come to the third and final part of this series of articles about *St. Francis' Spiritual Revolution*. Remember that this was not a revolution based off of a whim but rather it was inspired by the Gospels. St. Francis professed this truth in his last will and testament, “*And after the Lord had given me brothers, no one showed me what I was to do, but the Most High Himself revealed to me that I should live according to the pattern of the Holy Gospel.*” (*Testament of the Holy Father St. Francis*) Since St. Francis was called to the Apostolic life, he was not meant simply to achieve spiritual perfection for only himself; he was called to help in the sanctification of others. St. Francis concisely stated: “*Sanctify yourself and you will sanctify society.*” An individual focusing on advancing in his own spiritual life cannot but have a positive effect on society in general.

The topic of this last article is about arguably his most revolutionary ideal - perfect joy!

There was a hypothetical story that St. Francis would often tell his brothers that deals directly with this topic. It has at least two variations, but its lesson is the same. Here is one example taken from the book *The Second Life of St. Francis* by Thomas of Celano:

“I return from Perugia and arrive here (at the friary) in the dead of night; and it is wintertime, muddy and so cold that icicles have formed on the edges of my habit and keep striking my legs, and blood flows from such wounds. And all covered with mud and cold, I come to the gate and after I have knocked and called for some time, a brother comes and asks: ‘Who are you?’ I answer: ‘Brother Francis’ and he says, ‘Go away; this is not a proper hour for going about; you may not come in.’ and when I insist, he answers: ‘Go away, you are a simple and a stupid person; we are so many and we have no need of you. You are certainly not coming to us at this hour.’ And I stand again at the door and say, ‘For the love of God, take me in tonight.’ and he answers: ‘I will not. Go to the

Crosier's place and ask there. I tell you this: *If I had patience and did not become upset, there would be true joy in this, and true virtue and the salvation of the soul.*" Here St. Francis gives us the meaning of perfect joy. It is **patiently accepting whatever suffering that God allows or directly wills us to endure, and the joy that follows comes from the knowledge that God's will is done within us.**

You may recall, my dear readers, that Franciscan spirituality is based upon Christ crucified, and so we find the essence of St. Francis' perfect joy must lie within the doctrine of the Cross. "*If any man wishes to come after me,*" Our Lord said, "*let him deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow me.*" (St. Luke 9: 23) The source of St. Francis' perfect joy, and ours, is found in the sufferings that Christ endured during His Dolorous Passion. By imitating Christ, we learn how we should act in our own sufferings and the joy which we could experience from it. Yes, it is true, even in Our Lord's greatest suffering He found joy. St. Francis understood this truth, and so can we by following the *Stations of the Cross*. In one version the Second Station reads

that when Our Lord beheld His cross, "*He willingly embraced it and tenderly kissed it and placing it on His bruised shoulders, joyfully carried.*" Christ joyfully carried His cross because it was the will of His Heavenly Father, and nothing pleased Our Lord more than seeing His Father's Will fulfilled. If Our Lord could find joy in His ignominious suffering, why should we not be able to find some in our slight crosses? St. Francis did this even before God spoke to him at the Chapel of San Damiano!

You may recall, my dear readers, that in his youth, Francis Bernardino desired nothing more than to obtain wealth and fame as a knight. Between the years 1202 and 1203 he received his chance, for war broke out between Assisi and the neighboring city of Perugia. Francis enlisted and joined his fellow citizens in battle. Assisi lost the war and her soldiers were imprisoned for a whole year. They were left in the most hellish of conditions. Experience shows that this would drive most men to despair, but we find that even then Francis was not like most men, for he would not let the gloom of prison life ruin his high spirits. He would

laugh and sing so loud that he was heard by all the prisoners. It was during one such joyful merry-making that a fellow prisoner was getting annoyed and chided him for it, thinking him a fool. To this Francis responded happily: *“You may think me foolish, but one day all the world would come to respect me.”* Do we react to our trials with such a spirit? Do we at least control our anger and accept our crosses with patient resignation? These are important questions which have a direct bearing on our advancement in the spiritual life. So the focus for the rest of this article is going to be helping to develop within us a deeper understanding and appreciation of the virtue of patience by means of Franciscan spirituality. St. Bonaventure explains to us patience’s important role in the life of a Catholic: *“Patience perfects the virtue of humility. For there can be no true humility that is not accompanied by patience. St. Augustine brings this out excellently. ‘It is easy, he says, to veil your eyes, to wear mean and tattered clothing, to go about with bowed head. But patience proves true humility, as Ecclesiasticus says (2.4): In thy humiliation keep patience.”*

Since patience’s opposing vices are anger and impatience, it would be practical and efficient to explain how the practice of patience helps to overcome these vices. There are four simple and practical helps that many spiritual writers suggest that can aid us when dealing with the first moments of anger and acquire patience.

A Quick Word on Anger

Anger is defined as *“a disorderly outburst of emotion connected with the inordinate desire for revenge.”* As a disorderly outburst of emotion, anger is only a venial sin, provided that a person does not deliberately fly into such a rage that one could be thought to have lost his reason. Anger can become a mortal sin if we start to willfully entertain uncharitable thoughts against our neighbor, and desire evil upon him. The man who does not learn to control his temper is not the master of his own life, but rather a slave to this vice.

Meditating on the Meekness and Patience of Christ

The first help is to remember the meekness and patience of Christ. How could anyone give way to anger if they were to meditate

upon Christ's meekness and patience during His Passion? He did not grow angry at those who were falsely accusing Him of blasphemy. He did not seek revenge on those who were scourging Him. Our Lord did not curse those who were crucifying Him, rather He prayed for them. Did He not say, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do?"

St. Francis takes forgiveness a step further by reminding us in imitating the meekness and patience of Christ, we will grow to love. Yes! We will have a love for our enemies: "*The Lord says: 'Love your enemies [do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who persecute and blame you]' (Matt. 5: 44). That person truly loves his enemy who is not upset at any injury which is done to himself, but out of love of God is disturbed at the sin on the other's soul. And let him show his love for the other by his deed.*" (*The Admonitions, IX*)

Praying for the Grace of Patience

The second help is to ask God for the grace of Christian patience. Remember the words of Christ, "Ask and you shall

receive." We must earnestly beseech our Lord to grant us this supernatural virtue. This is most certainly a gift of the Holy Ghost, one which we are unable to procure by any other means. We must throw ourselves humbly before the throne of God and beseech Him to grant us this Christ-like patience, so we may become pleasing to Him. St. Francis confirmed the necessity of praying for patience when he said: "*The highest gift and grace of the Holy Spirit that Christ concedes to His friends is to conquer oneself and, out of love of Christ, to endure willingly sufferings, injuries, insults, and discomfort. We cannot glory in all the other gifts of God because they are not ours but they are of God, because of which the Apostle says, 'What do you have that does not come from God? If you have had it from God, why do you glory in it as if it were your own?'*"

Avoiding the Occasions of Sin

The third help is to be on our guard against the occasions in which we might give way to anger, and then firmly resolve, with God's grace, not to yield to temptation when it comes. We must do our best to avoid the

unnecessary occasions of sin. If we are morally certain that a particular situation will cause us to grow angry and could possibly lead us to commit a mortal sin, we should avoid it at all costs. If the situation is unavoidable we must resolve, with God's grace, not to yield to temptation.

There are times when we can feel troubled because we are tempted to give way to anger; thus despairing and neglecting patience. St. Francis gave comfort to Brother Leo who was so burdened by his temptations; we too may find comfort and strength in his words: *“Do not be troubled because you have temptations. For I consider you more of a servant and friend of God and love you more, the more you are attacked by temptations. Truly, I tell you that no one should consider himself a perfect friend of God until he has passed through many temptations and tribulations.”*

Immediately Resisting Anger

The fourth help is to resist immediately when there is a danger of giving into anger and impatience. It is easy to extinguish a spark, but hard, or impossible, to subdue a

conflagration. We must be careful not to feed the fire by dwelling upon either an injustice or our hurt pride. How we respond to such a situation can tell us how far and to what degree we have acquired patience. In his *Admonitions* St. Francis says: *“The servant of God cannot know how much patience and humility he has within himself as long as everything goes well with him. But when the time comes in which those who should do him justice do quite the opposite to him, he has only as much patience and humility as he has on that occasion and no more.”* When trials become seemingly unbearable and everything seems to be going wrong, remember these words of St. Francis: *“And we ought rather rejoice when we would fall into every sort of trial and would have to put up with all kinds of afflictions or tribulations of soul or body in the world for the sake of life eternal.” (The Rule of 1221, Chapter 17)*

Conclusion

We have covered a lot of information in these three articles, but we have only scratched the surface of St. Francis' Spiritual Revolution. It

would take volumes of books to do the subject any real justice! It seems though that one final quote, one final thought from our Seraphic Father would be most appropriate. Here is a sobering, but also an encouraging quote from his *Letter to All the Faithful* that applies to all Catholics: “*We must also fast and abstain from vice and sins and from any excess of food and drink, and be Catholics. We must also visit churches frequently and venerate and show respect to the clergy, not so much for them personally if they are sinners,*

but by reason of their office and their administration of the most holy Body and Blood of Christ which they sacrifice upon the altar and receive and administer to others. And let all of us firmly realize that no one can be saved except through the holy words and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ which the clergy pronounce, proclaim and administer.”

God give you peace! – *The opening to all of St. Francis’ sermons.*

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Sister Agnes' Favorites

For the Eve of Communion Day



Jesus, Jesus come to me,
Oh, how much I long for Thee!
Come, Thou, of all friends the best,
Take possession of my breast.

Comfort my poor soul distressed,
Come and dwell within my breast;
Oh! How oft I sigh for Thee,
Jesus, Jesus, come to me.

Empty is all worldly joy,
Ever mixed with some alloy;
Give me my true Sovereign Good,
Jesus thy own Flesh and Blood

Comfort my poor soul distressed,
Come and dwell within my breast;
Oh! How oft I sigh for Thee,
Jesus, Jesus, come to me.

On the Cross three hours for me
Thou didst hang in agony;
I my heart to Thee resign,
Oh, what rapture to be Thine!

Comfort my poor soul distressed,
Come and dwell within my breast;
Oh! How oft I sigh for Thee,
Jesus, Jesus, come to me.

Hope in the Midst of Chaos

Fr. Joseph Noonan, OFM

The Easter Season is the most joyous of all holy seasons. One understands this truth easily when he contemplates the Passion and Death of Our Lord and His glorious Resurrection. This joy should supersede all other natural or worldly joys in this life. This joy has its cause in the victory of Christ over sin and death.

All Catholics ought to share in this joy for they are the recipients of Our Lord's love for us through His Passion and Resurrection. The joy of this season is very much connected to the virtue of hope. Catholics are joyous in this holy season because they have been given hope through the Resurrection.

People generally don't speak of hope unless they are in a situation when there is little or no hope. They may have a desire to be hopeful but are unable to know how to accomplish this. Simply put, when one has no supernatural faith there is no hope. Without hope, there can be no true joy.

Men have lived in a number of different circumstances. Some have been pleasant with times of peace, others have varied from civil uprisings to declared and horrendous wars. There have been times when all seems to have been lost, for nations have been destroyed, kingdoms have disappeared and families have been murdered. Catholic churches have been sacked and burned to the ground; monasteries have been raided and monks murdered; convents of women religious have been raped and murdered; Catholics, both lay and religious have suffered persecutions and been put to death in some of the most inhumane ways devised by Hell and carried out by Satan's human agents.

Satan is the cause of all chaos and division in this world. Yes, man does have a free will, but the aforementioned examples of societal upheaval are almost always situations where men are driven to do such evil deeds over a period of time that one understands them to be inspired and pursued by devils.

These agents of Hell desire the damnation of all souls and will do anything to accomplish it.

Another area of concern is that of the personal lives of people. Too often these troubles are the result of poor decisions or bad judgments. It is truly astounding that so many make some of the worst decisions all the while thinking they are making good and wise choices.

It is so easy to have a life of misery with one bad judgment. There is really “nothing new under the sun.” Today, so many make wrong decisions with little or no thought of the serious, long-term consequences to their souls that it is utterly unthinkable in the mind of the person who soberly considers his salvation. This country is currently experiencing extreme behavior, i.e., shootings, rioting and civil unrest in ways that have not been seen previously. Time will tell how these actions will affect the nation.

Through all of this misery, many have lost hope and given up. Some have despaired and become mentally unstable while others have taken their life. These are examples that are

the goals of devils, for if a man gives up all hope he will likely lose his soul.

When Our Lord rose from the dead two-thousand years ago He changed the course of history. This miracle gave men hope when there was none previously. It enabled men to see their way through any and all troubles in life, knowing the only true guide for them was Our Lord Jesus Christ and His Church.

The significance of the Pascal Candle should not be overlooked. This candle, blessed on Holy Saturday and placed in the sanctuary each year until Ascension Thursday symbolizes Christ, the Light of the World, Who was present among us from His Resurrection to His Ascension.

This Light pierces the darkness of this world, i.e., all of the division and chaos, wars, fighting, and evil intentions of men. The Light of Christ provides hope to men. This hope allows men to accept their cross and work out their salvation, knowing that the graces needed for this eternal goal are only possible if one places his trust and, therefore, hope in Christ and the message of the Resurrection.

One must understand the connection between the virtues of faith and hope. Those who practice the virtue of hope will have a supernatural faith in some degree. In other words, faith is the foundation and reason for hope. In what does one have hope if he has no belief? Herein lies the importance of knowing the Catholic Faith. The greater knowledge of the Faith usually brings with it a more significant hope in Christ, the true Light of all men.

The present situation in today's society illustrates this connection with faith and hope. There is an increasing number of people who do not believe in the True Faith. The Great Apostasy continues to this day. When there are fewer people who believe, there will be fewer who have hope. When one does not have hope, spiritual chaos ensues. Over a period of time, the personal loss of faith has its effect on society. Law and order are undermined. The general peace is greatly disturbed. Morality is forgotten and denied. Barbarism begins to take over society.

The destruction of the Faith by the Modernists has not only undermined Holy Mother

Church, but has for some time destroyed the moral underpinnings of society. One witnesses the effects today with legalized divorce, abortion, pornography and homosexuality, transgenderism and other errors.

Through all of this one must remain filled with a supernatural hope in Christ, the Light of the World. A part of this is to maintain a positive spiritual attitude in the midst of this present day darkness and chaos. Place your hope in Christ and the Light which comes from Him, not men and his errors.

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TWO WORLDS UNITED IN CHARITY

“And the greatest of these is
Charity . . .” St. Paul

The closer I drew to these
homeless waifs, the more I
recognized how really fine
they were. Generosity lay deep
within their young hearts. To
know them was to love them.

God had permitted their heavy
crosses, but at the same time,
He had bestowed upon them the
strength with which to cope with
and to overcome the hardships
of their everyday life. Only this
fact could explain why so large
a number of them were still
basically good and performed
acts that might have been called
heroic.

But man cannot live alone in the
world and children in particular,
under the law established by
God, must be sustained and
helped by those who are older,
especially by those who, in
the absence of parents, must
substitute for them.

In the immediate period after the

war, this had been misunderstood
or forgotten. The backing and
the aid the children needed was
not forthcoming. On the other
hand, the influences and bad
examples met with in lives spent
in roaming the streets had been
strong and had led them slowly,
but surely, astray.

Talking with them, especially
with the older ones, I felt that
although a longing for better
things was still alive in their
hearts, their will was being
weakened by their disordered
existence. More and more urgent
became the necessity of saving
the younger ones. There we
could still hope.

This was not easy, as even the
youngest had lost contact with
the decent things of life. Their
perceptions had been starved,
deadened by the constant, de-
manding struggles for survival.
Comprehension, trust, faith were
the needed virtues with which to
conquer and win them back.

“Get them off the streets!”

This was our oft-repeated cry.

The greatest obstacle with many

of them, even greater perhaps than the lack of shelter, was the difficulty of persuading them to enter and live within closed doors. Complete freedom and the unlimited possibilities of acting just as they pleased had made them suspicious of any bait that might hide a curtailment of their privilege of wandering at will. This was especially true of those who most needed this curtailment. It was imperative that a place be found near enough their favorite haunts to persuade them little by little that a change might be to their advantage.

Toward the end of 1945, a young Salesian priest, Father Giorgi, spoke to me of the cellar of a school building where it might be possible to start. Father Giorgi was gifted with that unusual quality that attracts boys, combined with the keen intelligence of the born teacher. The place he suggested was a good choice as it was close to the main station, where it was not hard to find customers for the new venture. It could be the beginning of a stable shelter.

We set to work. Walls were whitewashed, floors scrubbed, showers installed. Bunk beds from our storehouses gave the cellar rooms the appearance of

the cabin on a ship. Appropriate frescoes painted by an artist friend added a cheerful note.

The boys began to drift in the first evening, a few at first, more later. Waking up in the morning, they could see the sun rising behind green hills. At night, lying in their bunks, they looked at the moon and counted stars. The sun, the moon, and the stars were only painted on walls and ceiling, but they looked real and very cheerful.

My room, situated near the dormitory, did not boast of any murals, but in compensation, my small window looked out on the yard built below street level and, by craning my neck, I could glance up at a tiny patch of sky.

In a short time, we had one hundred guests. Little by little, they grew accustomed to the daily routine. To some of them, I might even say to all of us, the cellar seemed a paradise.

The very young ones adapted themselves so quickly to the new life that it was a source of amazement to me. In the morning they went to school, taking with them their midday lunch. An older boy accompanied them.

Some of the older boys went to

a trade school, others got jobs, while the rest continued for a time at their former varied occupations. Gradually, they as well would fall into line.

I gave the name of Shoeshine Hotel to the new venture, as a kind of guarantee that their just liberty would be respected. There was one rule, however, that had to be obeyed without question and that none of them had great difficulty in accepting. They all had to be home at five-thirty in the evening.

A little before that time most of them would have come clattering down the stone staircase, bubbling over with news of the day's activities. A freshening-up in the bathroom and then down to the business of putting everything in order and preparing for the evening meal. At first, it was a cheerful confusion of amateur cooks. Then a group of the older boys was appointed to attend to the kitchen and, after that, woe betides anyone who disturbed the sacred quiet of the "chefs." The younger ones took turns at peeling potatoes, setting the tables, while they looked on in awe at the bosses of the kitchen, who took knowing sips from the big cauldron to taste the "minestrone." Our traditional

dish was the *bacalá* — we had been given more than a plentiful supply of this nutritious dried cod — and at first, we had *bacalá* undercooked, overcooked, tough, dry, or mushy, each evening until I, myself, developed a marked aversion for cod in any shape or form. Then our cooks gradually improved their style, food became a little more plentiful as the police came round each day with packages of spaghetti, bread, cheese, and other delicacies, confiscated during the raids on the black market. Under this novel diet, cheeks rounded, became rosy. Many of the boys began to look healthy.

Among the more than one hundred boys (they had kept on coming), we had a young French acrobat, the child of circus folk. He had wandered with his father from fair to fair, had slept in the shadow of circus tents, and had idled among the stands where the customers gambled with their money or shot with air guns.

The circus had been an air-raid casualty. His father died. Pierre, an orphan, lived on his own until the Allies took Rome.

We found him one night and took him with us. The smell of *bacalá* was a heavenly aroma

to him and the sound of music and singing revived him, both in body and spirit. It reminded him of the old days, under the big top.

Very soon he was entertaining us with the French songs he knew, sung with the alternating brio and languishing air of the real cafe artiste. He accompanied the words with the language of hands, shoulders, and eloquent dark eyes. "Sing, Pierre . . ."

Pierre needed little coaxing. He was always the center of a wide circle, the recipient of wild applause, especially when, in the enthusiasm of artistic triumph, he ended his performance with tumblers and cartwheels.

Under the laughter, the scars of old wounds that had not as yet healed were often hidden.

One evening, Saverio, a round-faced, laughing boy, the picture of serenity and happiness, was standing with us in a group.

"What date is tomorrow?" he asked one of the boys. "The third of February," replied the other.

Saverio's face froze. I happened to be looking at him. He went pale and seemed about to faint. Then he recovered himself.

"Don't you feel well?" I asked.

"I'm fine," he replied.

"What happened to you last night?" I asked him the next day. He burst into tears.

"My mother died two years ago today."

And so I learned to respect those little worlds hidden in the hearts of each one of them, sanctuaries of sacred memories that could not be touched or spoken of. The boys seemed to have forgotten, but the wounds of loss and the longing for the love and tender care of the years that were gone still remained.

The youngsters of the streets were like tender saplings that had been bent by harsh winds and bitter cold, but the roots had kept strong. It was up to me, to us, to foster and nurture whatever was left of that strength and by understanding and affection bring them back to a normal, useful existence.

At night in the chapel, we felt very close, close to God and to one another. The stories of the Gospels, the episodes in the life of Christ never failed to touch in them a feeling of kinship with Our Lord.

Late one evening, a boy was brought in to us by the

police. He was fair-haired and delicately featured. Obviously dead with fatigue, he could hardly keep his eyes open. His story was the usual one: home in the Abruzzi destroyed, father and mother dead, a vagabond life, arrival in Rome. His story was so authentically detailed that its very fullness made me suspicious. Then I noticed his oversocks of rough Abruzzi wool and his undeniably mountain boots and I decided that after all there was no reason why his story should not be true. The boys as well were satisfied and they had noses like a fox terrier's for scenting out deception.

One evening, several weeks later, we discovered the truth. He was not an orphan as he had stated and his privations had been of his own choosing. Led by a spirit of adventure, he had run away from home to see exactly how the world was made. We found it out when an automobile drew up at our cellar door. His father stepped out. He had been sent to us after a description of his lost son had reached the Roman police. His son emerged from the kitchen with a potato in one hand and a knife in the other. He was glad to see his father and willingly went home with

him. I do not know for certain, but perhaps the memory of the warmth and the cordiality of the boys who had welcomed him in their midst lingered for many a year as a pleasant thought in his mind.

The room I slept in was damp and a period of rain did not improve matters much. I developed a stubborn cough and the doctor gave me the unpleasant news that I had contracted bronchial pneumonia.

To my great disappointment, I had to leave the house, rather the cellar, in the Via Varese and my boys and betake myself to the hospital.

I missed the boys during the month I was away from them and I missed the Salesian Brothers who shared my work each night when they came to help me after their own day of study was over.

In the doctor's opinion — he was a good friend of mine and did not mince matters — I was the worst patient he had ever had. Whenever he came in unexpectedly, he found my bed and the table near it covered with papers and projects. My recovery was slow. Afterwards, I regarded my sickness as providential, for it had at least given me the

opportunity of pondering over the various problems facing me and of making plans for the future.

The best medicine during my sickness was receiving the simple letters and notes sent me by the boys in the Via Varese. Many of them walked daily the three miles that separated us to inquire about me.

As soon as I was allowed to get up, I went to a specialist for an X-ray. His studio happened to be located near the railroad station. While I was inside the house, my car was seen and recognized. No sooner had I stepped out again than I was surrounded by a group of the young *sciaccia* who still plied their trade in the square. I knew them all . . . George with his eyes still sore . . . he had probably neglected to keep up his visits at the eye clinic . . . Andrea, shy and quiet, holding himself in the background. The others made up for his silence. They talked all at once and it was hard to get all they were trying to say. Each one had a piece of news to tell. Giovanni had been picked up by the cops and was in jail. Gino had gone to Milan. Suddenly, one of them pulled out a tiny bunch of flowers they

had hurriedly bought and offered it without a word. "Thank you, son."

Suddenly the world was sunny and misty all at once.

I patted one dark head and jumped into my car.

The crippled children, whom I went to see the next day, greeted me even more effusively. They were being cared for in one of the wings of the Quirinal, the former royal palace.

"We prayed for you every day," said Marco, taking my hand between the two stumps that had been left to him in place of arms and hands.

"Thank you, Marco, you can see the little Jesus you prayed to answered your prayers . . ."

There were so many like him — far too many. And with the maimed and the crippled, there were thousands of little ones who had been blinded. Fifteen thousand mutilated children in Italy alone! What about the thousands in other lands? What about the thousands killed? The millions orphaned? This is war, heroic war that can sound so fine in the pages of a history book or in the news bulletins over the air.

One day the previous summer, I had taken these children into the country on a picnic. They had clung to my hand, they had romped and skipped and shouted their joy at the air, the warm sun, a flower they had held, the song of a bird on the wing.

“Is it pretty, Monsignor?”

Happiness! Joy! An eager face uplifted, lips parted in expectancy . . .

“Very, very pretty, Vittorio.”

On Christmas Day, they came to my home for a party and a puppet show.

“Listen to Punch . . . he is giving Judy a terrible lecture . . . wait, the alligator is going to swallow him. . . .”

The blind ones in the audience laughed more uproariously than all the rest. They jumped up and down with excitement as they heard the stick beating on the poor wooden head of Punch.

After my convalescence, my visits to the mutilated children became fewer and fewer. No longer could I see them daily. I was living now at my Boys’ Town outside of Rome and only came into the city a couple of times a week. I wondered what value my short visits could have.

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Only to cause tears and mutual regrets at each parting. I would continue to work for them and beg for them . . . that was the best thing I could do.

I was wrong. I knew it, when, after three long years, I went back to visit them with an American friend who had helped them so much. By now, I thought they would have forgotten me.

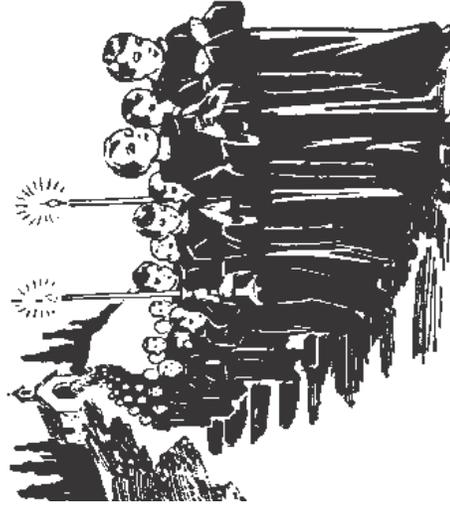
“We have waited for you so long, Monsignor,” was the first thing Vittorio said. He was blind and I had not spoken to him. I had merely touched his cheek inadvertently as I used to do years before when he was tiny. “I’m so glad you have come back!”

They had many things to say.

“Do you remember Gino and the orangeade? Wasn’t it lovely that day? Remember the beating Punch got?”

“They are still talking about that show,” the Sister in charge informed me.

To be continued.



Franciscan Saints

APRIL 1

THE SERVANT OF GOD

CAESAR OF SPEYER

Confessor, First Order

Caesar was born in Speyer on the Rhine and had already been ordained a priest when he entered the Order of Friars Minor. A sermon of Brother Elias that he had once heard made such an impression on him that he joined the order. When he came to Assisi to the Holy Father Francis, he felt strongly attracted to him, because he beheld him so full of love for meditation and for holy poverty. Our Seraphic Father, on the other hand, held his new disciple in great esteem, not only because of his extraordinary talent and his ability for the task of preaching but especially because of his exemplary efforts to observe the rule of the order even in the smallest details. Full of holy joy he once said to him: "Thou art a priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech, and

all the promises that Christ has given me will be fulfilled in you and in all those who will observe our holy rule to the letter and with holy readiness."

When the general chapter of the order was held at the Portiuncula in 1221, St. Francis expressed his intention of again sending brethren into Germany, where on two previous occasions the undertaking had proved unsuccessful. The brethren did not understand the German language and had met with such ill-treatment that the mere name of Germany struck terror into their hearts. But the holy Founder, who applied to himself the words of the Lord to His Apostles: "Teach all nations," and who had often been edified by the Germans who had come as pilgrims to the holy

places in Italy, encouraged the brethren anew to volunteer for the German missions, which he could now place in charge of the German, Caesar. Ninety of the brethren volunteered, prepared to suffer all for the name of Christ. At the command of St. Francis, Caesar chose twenty-five of this number, twelve priests and thirteen lay brothers, with whom he set out after being fortified with the blessing of their Seraphic Father.

In Trent, they were graciously received by the bishop. Amid great hardships, they then crossed the Alps. Nevertheless, in October 1221, they arrived safely at Augsburg. From here Caesar sent his brethren into the various parts of Germany. John of Plano-Carpine and Barnabas the German went to Wuerzburg, Speyer, Worms, and as far down the Rhine as Cologne. Others were sent to Salzburg, others to Saxony, where convents that formed the commencement of the Saxon province, which still exists, were soon founded at Magdeburg and Halberstadt. In the year 1222, so many convents had been founded, and so many novices from Germany had been received, that Caesar, as first provincial of Germany, held a

chapter at Worms for the purpose of organizing the individual convents and the brethren.

After this had been accomplished, he ardently desired to return to Italy to his holy Father Francis. He appointed Thomas of Celano as his vicar, and then set out again across the Alps for Assisi, where he appeared in 1223 at the Pentecost chapter to report about his mission. At his earnest request he was now released from his obligations as provincial, and remained in Italy, where he lived for many years after the death of St. Francis as the head and support of the true observers of the holy rule. He died in the odor of sanctity in 1239.

ON FIDELITY IN LITTLE THINGS

1. "He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in that which is greater" (Luke 16:10). These words of Jesus Christ we see verified in His servant Caesar. He observed his rule so faithfully even in the smallest points that he merited the special praise of St. Francis. In consequence, when he was commissioned with the great responsibility of the mission in Germany, he proved himself loyal and executed his charge

successfully. Fidelity in little things will also be very profitable to us, since the little things occur daily, such as the opportunities to practice patience, charity towards our neighbor — and they provide us with occasions of doing good, the essence of virtue. The little things also enable us to gain merit, which when daily accumulated, becomes great. In such wise is it necessary to win the heavenly reward, as the Judge Himself will one day say: “Because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things” (Matt. 25:21). Have you hitherto valued the little things according to their true merit?

2. Consider how many a person while committing transgressions and sins disregards trifles as though they were of little consequence. “Oh, those are but trifles,” one says lightly. The Holy Spirit speaks otherwise: “He that contemneth small things, shall fall by little and little” (Ecclus. 19:1). Is not that a daily experience? If distracting thoughts are not warded off, evil thoughts will soon follow. He who makes light of useless conversations soon indulges in frivolous and uncharitable ones. He who does not avoid venial

sins will soon fall into mortal sins. Temptation becomes stronger, man becomes weaker, and like a building whose many small defects are disregarded, he falls as soon as a violent storm arises. Therefore, if you love your soul, guard yourself against minimizing small faults.

3. Consider that the Holy Ghost does not say: He who commits small transgressions will fall, but: He who contemneth them. Therefore, do not lose courage if you still frequently fail in small matters, possibly relapse into the same faults despite good resolutions. At any rate, do not desist from chastising yourself for them and practicing the good deeds that are opposed to these failings. “Strive manfully,” says Thomas a Kempis (1:21), “habit is overcome by habit.” Almighty God will look graciously upon your faithful efforts, and His all-powerful grace will assist you.

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH
(Third Sunday after Epiphany)

Almighty and eternal God, graciously look upon our weakness and stretch forth the right hand of Thy Majesty for our protection. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE PRUDENT CHRISTIAN

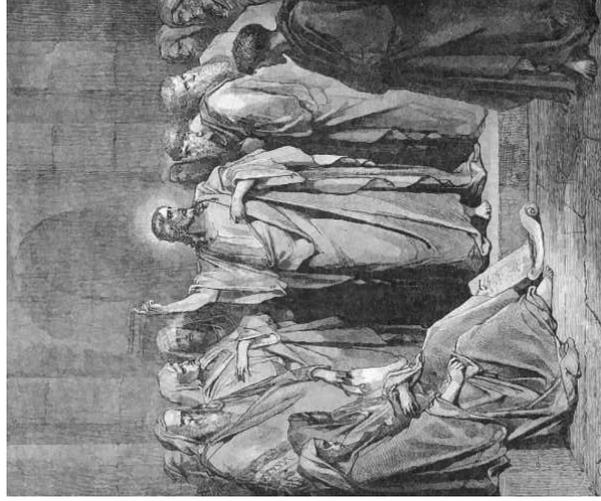
OR,

CONSIDERATIONS ON
THE IMPORTANCE, AND
HAPPINESS, OF ATTENDING
TO THE CARE OF OUR
SALVATION.

BY THE REV. J. FLETCHER, D.D.

“Give me understanding, and I
shall live.” — PSALM cxix.

1834.



CONSIDERATION XXI. ON THE SHORTNESS OF HUMAN LIFE.

OUR whole conduct, in regard to the business of our salvation, is nearly replete with inconsistencies; and full of contradictions. But, on no occasion, perhaps, nor in any of our actions, is it more so, than in the manner, in which we, for the most part, employ our time. Thus, we look upon our time, as extremely short. We are forever complaining, how rapidly it runs away: and we dread the hour, that will arrive, and take it from us. And yet, behold, — we lose it: we squander it away in folly; and are pleased, if anyone, by any idle or trifling amusement, will come and rob us of it.

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In like manner, we feel, and acknowledge the value of our time. We own, that it is more precious and important than a thousand worlds; because it is given to us as the means, and instrument, by which we may attain a whole eternity of happiness. And yet, again, by a piece of inconsistency, alike frightful, as it is absurd, we continue to live on heedlessly, sinful and indifferent, just as if this life were never to have an end or eternity never to begin.

Yes; it is indeed true: — Our time is extremely short; and infinitely valuable. So very rapid is our transit across the theatre of this world, that we do little more than just show ourselves upon the stage, and vanish, — just appear,

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and disappear. Such as these are the images, under which we find, that the Scriptures often represent to us the shortness of human life. They compare it to the meteor, that darts rapidly athwart the sky, and is seen no more; — to the arrow, that, passing through the air, leaves not a trace behind it; — to the flower, that blooms in the morning, and that fades at night; — to the cloud, that soon melts into thin vapor, and is lost. Such as these are the images of human life; and such the rapidity, with which we are hurried across the theatre of this treacherous, and transitory, world.

And neither is the value of our time, although so much neglected, less striking than its shortness. It is, in fact, if well considered, more striking still. For, provided only that we spend it well, it is the purchase, and the price, of a whole eternity of happiness. There is not even so much as a single moment of it but what, if piously employed, will increase our future comforts, and add a fresh pearl to our crowns of glory: — whilst also, in like manner, there is not one instant of it, which, if sinfully employed, will not augment our future misery, and add a fresh torment to our sufferings. Under these circumstances, we cannot but feel its vast importance; and the extreme imprudence of losing

it in sin, or squandering it away in trifles.

I. If we compute the years of this life by the years, and ages, of the next, we find them just absolutely as nothing, — fewer on the scale of calculation, than a few particles of dust compared with the grains of sand, that strew the shores of the ocean; — fewer than a few atoms, if measured by the mass of substances, that compose the universe. However, without thus computing the duration of our days by the length of eternity, let us merely measure it upon the scale of time itself. And what, even when thus calculated, do we find it? Suppose, for example, that we live, sixty, eighty, or even a hundred years, — what, after all, are sixty, eighty, or a hundred years, if we compare them only with a thousand? Considered thus, they appear to us, almost as nothing. Yes, and if our lives, — like the fabulous longevity of the stag, — were lengthened out to ages; — or if like the venerable oaks, under which our ancient ancestors have reposed; and which still spread the shade of their branches over us, — if our lives were prolonged like these, still again, even in the order of time, they would be but short. The ancient patriarchs, whose lives were protracted through the duration of so many centuries, considered this world as a mere

place of passage, in which it was not worth their while to fix any permanent abode; or to erect any durable habitation. Impressed with these ideas, and with the endless length of the life to come, — they lived, for the most part, only beneath the wide canopy of the heavens; or under the slender shelter of their tents. Wherefore, if such as this is the shortness of human life; and if the patriarchs, with all their length of days, still deemed it, trifling, and beneath their care, — what, then, ought we to think of it, whose whole, and longest, residence in this world is limited to the brief, and even very uncertain, space of a few years at most, or perhaps only of a few days, or hours?

II. But, giving to our lives, as in the present order of things, they may, perhaps, be permitted to continue, — giving to them their utmost duration, — supposing this eighty or a hundred years, — still, what an immense portion must, after all, be subtracted from these: for, we can, by no means, be properly said to live the whole length of time, that we continue to reside in this world. Thus, for example, what is the season of our infancy in which we neither understand, who, or what, we are; or what that thing is, which we denominate human life? In like manner, can the winter of old age, — the season

of decrepitude, languor, and infirmity, — be justly reputed life? Is it not rather a relapse into the state of a second infancy? So that our lives may thus, not incorrectly, be considered as confined to the trifling, narrow space that intervenes between the twofold states of infancy and infancy. And ought we not again to subduct even from this interval the hours, and days, that are spent in sleep; and consumed in indolence? Or, why not also the weeks, and months, which we, many of us, pass in grief, in care, in troubles, and distress? We cannot, with any propriety, call this, “living.” It certainly is not enjoying life. And yet, such as all this is the general character of our existence here; — ignorant during one portion of it; and not so much as knowing what we are; — involved in the midway course, in solitudes, and agitations; — and at the close of it, pining away in infirmity, or oppressed with illness.

We have made the supposition that our lives may be protracted to what we now look upon as a considerable length of years, — that is, to the term of old age. But alas, this is a point of which we are by no means certain. Any hour may call us away. At any moment, the contagion of sickness may breathe upon us; and, — although we may be today nerved with vigor;

or blooming in youth, and health, — may tomorrow consign us to the grave. There is really nothing more uncertain than life. The paper castles, which the simplicity of children erect with cards, are not more easily overturned than this feeble, trembling, fabric. We have not even any real assurance, that we shall outlive the present day. At all events, this is certain, that there are, everywhere, immense multitudes now standing upon the very brink of the grave, who, with pleased, but unhappy confidence are looking ages almost beyond it, — multitudes, on whose constitution the worm of death has nearly completed its work of destruction, but who still foolishly flatter themselves with the prospect, and assurance, of many long years to come. This is a delusion, which is, every day, cheating, and imposing upon, thousands.

III. From the circumstance, then, of the shortness of our time, we ought, if wise, to deduce this inference, — that it is extremely imprudent to spend it ill, — to squander it away in pleasure, or to devote it to the too eager pursuit of the trifling advantages of this world. Had we ages to live, this would still be a piece of folly, both because ages are not too long to purchase immortal happiness; and

because ages, when compared with eternity, are not even so much as moments. Placed, then, as we are here, only to prepare for the life to come; and knowing, as we do, that we are situated between two eternities, — between an eternity of joys, and an eternity of misery; and sensible, that either the former, with its unspeakable delights; or the latter, with its inexpressible torments, must, in the course of a few days, be our unalterable doom, — how can we, with these convictions upon our minds, help feeling, both as Christians and as rational beings, that, therefore, to lose any portion of our time, but above all, to prostitute it to sin or pleasure, is the very extreme of human folly? Good God! to sacrifice everlasting happiness; and plunge ourselves willfully into never-ending misery, for the sake of a few momentary satisfactions here, — although they are not real satisfactions; — what is folly, — or rather, what is downright madness, — if this be not *the day* — the dreadful day — will soon, very soon arrive, when we shall too sensibly feel this; — when our bitterest regret will be, that having once had the opportunity of securing our salvation, we were so thoughtless and unwise as to suffer the favorable occasion to slip away, — devoting to trifles or to trifling interests, days which

were worth more to us than the value of ten thousand worlds. But, alas! so it is: — Notwithstanding the evidence of these truths, there are few amongst us, that regard or heed them. To the young, they are a language, which they will not understand. To men in the mid-career of life, immersed in pleasure, or absorbed in business, they are a theme, which they carelessly disregard: whilst even to the aged, although they are actually tottering upon the border of the grave, they are a subject, to which, because it alarms their feelings, they are unwilling to lend an ear. Strange insensibility! for, while we are trembling, lest our glass should be run, — the little time and the few hours, we have, we foolishly throw away.

IV. In like manner, from the consideration of the uncertainty of our lives, we ought to convince ourselves of the necessity of being always carefully guarded against the dangers of surprise. “*You know not*,” our Blessed Savior has forewarned us, “*the day, nor the hour*.” This is a secret, — a dark, deep abyss, which no mortal eye can penetrate; no human sagacity pretend to fathom. The wisdom of God has reserved the dispensation of our time entirely to Himself. As, therefore, any day, or any hour, according to the divine admonition, may possibly prove

our last, so does it manifestly behoove us to be always prepared to meet the alarming summons, — watchful over all our actions; and attentive to all our duties; remembering even that there is not so much as “an idle word,” which we shall not have to account for to our Sovereign Judge.

We are with extreme imprudence and presumption forever calculating upon the assured prolongation of our lives. Flattered by the present, perhaps flourishing, state of our health; or by the supposed strength of our constitution, we are, almost every day, saying to ourselves, or to those around us: — “I will, next year, or in the course of a few years, execute such and such a project. I will, ere long, visit such a friend; go to such a place,” — and so on. But, ah! in reply to all these visionary schemes, how often does the great Arbitrer of life and death reply? “No; you shall do nothing of the nature: you shall neither do this, nor that: *you shall die*: and, long before the time, when you propose executing your airy projects your bodies shall be already moldering in the grave.” These indeed — we know it by experience — are not uncommon events. They are, rather, extremely common. Thus, we see everywhere and every day fresh graves laid open for the young, the healthy,

and the vigor — for thousands who, flattered and cheated by the above illusions, had confidently promised themselves long years of delight, and pleasure. They saw not the grave, which was actually open at their feet. They were cut off as unexpectedly as the bird, that is shot in the very act of singing its song of joy to the groves around it. Such as this, and so great, is the imprudence of placing any fixed reliance upon so weak, and uncertain, a thing as the duration of human life.

V. If we compare our conduct in regard to our spiritual interests, with that, which we observe in relation to our temporal concerns, we cannot but feel the very striking contrast. When we have upon our hands any business, that we deem important — for example, the success of a lawsuit; the purchase of an estate; the danger of any loss — and so on — in such cases, we are not only full of solicitude and care, but we have the prudence to appreciate well the value, and the uncertainty of time. We watch every favorable moment, and occasion — aware, that such opportunities once lost, may perhaps never recur again. We find time to study; to take counsel and advice. If invited to amuse, or to recreate ourselves we reply — that “we have no leisure for such trifles; — that we

have something else to do.” Such as this is the importance, which, on occasions like the above, we prudently attach to the value of our time. And behold, when there is question of our immortal interests, — although here the value of our time is infinite; and there is not so much as an hour, that we can call our own — we thoughtlessly neglect, and forfeit, all its benefits; squander it away on trifles; and then only appreciate its value, when its value is no longer of any avail to our salvation.

Wherefore let us, ere it is too late, begin to consider well; and feelingly sensible, both of the shortness, and uncertainty, of our lives, let us carefully employ the few days, which, it may be, the goodness of God may still continue to allow us for the security of our future happiness. Let us no longer waste our time in running after shadows, which fit so soon away; and deceive us. Let us sigh, and labor for those substantial things — those unspeakable blessings — which will flourish and subsist forever. The whole length of our lives is not too long to prepare for an eternal life; neither is the whole ardor of our industry too much to merit an immortal crown.

GENERAL INFORMATION

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