

'Thus saith the Lord: In an acceptable time I have heard thee, and I have preserved thee, that thou mightest say to them that are bound: Come forth; and to them that are in darkness: Be enlightened.' *Isaiah xlix. 8, 9.*

LITERATURE.

From *Maxims and Examples of the Saints.*

PERFECTION.

To be perfect in our vocation is nothing else than to fulfil the duties and offices which our condition and state of life obligeth us to perform; and to accomplish them well, and only for the honour and love of God, referring them all to his glory. He who thus acteth, may be said to be perfect in his state of life, and a man according to the heart and the will of God.—*S. FRANCIS OF SALIS.*

In the lives of the Holy Fathers we read of the Abbot Paphurgius, a man famous for his sanctity, that one day he begged to know from our Lord if he possessed any merit in his sight: and our Lord replied to him that his merit was equal to that of a certain gentleman, a baron of a territory, which he named to him. The saint set off immediately to find him, and the baron received him right courteously, and entertained him well, and as soon as supper was ended the saint begged of him to make known unto him the tenor of his life. The baron excused himself, saying that he did not possess any virtue, but afterwards being entreated by the other with great importunity, he said to him, that he was most attentive to afford lodging to the pilgrims, and to provide them with as much as was necessary for their journey: that he never despised the poor, but succoured them in their wants: that he caused justice to be administered rightly, and always gave a just sentence, never departing from what was obviously right, either on account of recommendations or of his own feelings: that he was never guilty of any oppression of his subjects: that he allowed all, who wished, to sow their grain on his lands, and never took beyond the just rent: that no one could complain of having ever received any injury or trouble from any one of his family, or from his cattle: that he had never grieved any one, nor ever spoken ill of another: but that he honoured all, and loved all, and helped all, in whatever he could, and studied to keep all in peace and concord. On hearing this the Holy Abbot was greatly consoled, and understood that true perfection does not consist in so many practices, but in the fulfilling each one of us the duties of our state,

In a territory of the province of Lecca, there was a certain nun who was held in great reputation for her sanctity about the time that S. Joseph of Cupertino lived, and he being one day in the house of the marquis of that place, and being asked by him concerning his opinion of the report which was circulated of the sanctity of that nun, he replied, 'One you have here who is indeed a saint, who is not known;' and forthwith he named to him a certain

poor widow, concerning whom there had never been any talk. The marquis made inquiries concerning the qualities of this one, and he found that she always remained at home shut up in her little cottage along with her little daughters, continually working in order to maintain them, and that she never suffered herself to be seen out of doors except once a day which was very early in the morning, when she went to church to hear Mass.

Although he who hath entered into religion, and is careful not to offend his God, may imagine that he hath done all, yet, O how many little defects remain, which conceal themselves until they have gnawed away our virtues! as pride, self-esteem, judging others, although for the most part it be only in little matters, and want of charity towards our neighbour, since, if even by dragging ourselves as it were, we satisfy our obligations, we do not yet do so with that perfection which God requires of us.—*S. THOMAS.*

It was to one of these defects, that of self-esteem, that Bishop Palafox attributed the cause of his relaxing after his conversion, and of his having very nearly lost himself for ever: since, says he, although I was but little humble, I suffered myself to believe that I was really humble; and at the time that I did my endeavour, and was earnestly desirous to be good, I was wont to presume that I was already really good: and this hidden pride obliged the divine goodness to instruct me, to the end I might see, that I was not good, but wicked and weak and miserable and full of pride, of sensuality, of infidelity, and a prodigal contemner of the blessings of divine grace. We read in the lives of the Holy Fathers, that two holy souls had received the gift of beholding a certain mark of the presence of divine grace in one another. It happened once, that one of them went out of his cell early one Friday morning, and finding a monk eating at that time contrary to the custom of the monks, he regarded it as a failing, and took him to task for it; when he afterwards returned to his cell, his companion did not perceive in him the accustomed mark of divine grace, and asked him what he had done; but as he did not recollect any thing: 'Consider,' said his friend, 'whether you may not have spoken some idle word.' Upon which he bethought him of his rash judgment, and told him what had passed; on account of which they both fasted together for two whole weeks; at the end of which time, there again appeared in the faulty monk the accustomed sign.

LETTERS FROM BELGIUM.

Continued.

LETTER IV.

Belgium, ———, 1842.

My dear old Thomas,

I have just received a letter from Mrs Wernet, in which she says she carried my letter to you herself, and read it to you. I was glad to hear it arrived at such an acceptable time, and that, instead of finding it too long, you declared I had not told you half you wished to know. And you have sent me so many questions to answer, that I think were I to answer