

the money, I am not capable of such a charge, being already dead to the world." The favor of the great of this world which he had voluntarily renounced could not tempt the noble soul of Arsenius. The Saint had been tutored in the austere school of Saint John the Dwarf, under whose care the ancients of the desert had placed him. It happened that when Arsenius first presented himself to be admitted among the brethren, St. John sat down in the evening with the rest to take their repast, but left Saint Arsenius standing, and, as if this were not enough humiliation, in the middle of the repast he threw before him a loaf of bread, bidding him, with an air of indifference, eat it, if he would. Arsenius fell on the ground and thus took his meal. His master immediately recognized in him a fit subject for the religious life. Would to God that these examples found more imitators! St. Arsenius was not made much of on account of the position he had occupied in the world; on the contrary, as we see by this example, he was specially humbled. The same is done now-a-days in fervent religious communities.

St. Arsenius would seldom see strangers who came to visit him; and he made exception for none, Theophilus, the patriarch of Alexandria, came one day, in company with a certain highly placed personage and others, to pay him a visit, and begged he would entertain them on some spiritual subject. The saint inquired whether they would follow his directions. On receiving an affirmative reply, he said: "I entreat you, then, that whenever you are informed of Arsenius' abode, you would leave him to himself, and spare yourself the trouble of coming after him." On another occasion when the same patriarch sent to inquire whether he would be received, the saint replied, that if he came alone he would, but that if he brought others with him he would seek out some other place, and stay there no longer. Melania, a noble Roman lady, travelled all the way to Egypt only to see Arsenius. Having met him as he came out of his cell, she threw herself at his feet. The saint said to her: "A woman ought not to leave her house; you have crossed these great seas that you may be able to say at Rome that you have seen Arsenius, and raise in others a curiosity to come and see me."

She begged that he would always remember and pray for her. The answer: "I pray that the remembrance of you be blotted out of my mind."

He treated his brethren no better. He never visited them, and contented himself with meeting them at spiritual conferences. The abbot, Mark, having asked him one day why he so much shunned their conversation, he answered: "God knoweth how dearly I love you all; but I find I cannot be both with God and men at the same time; nor can I think of leaving God to converse with men." He often said: "I have always something to repent of after having conversed with men; but have never been sorry for having been silent." Such a man we might, now-a-days, feel inclined to call a crank, but we ought not to forget that God calls some of His saints to walk in admirable ways. If He gave to Vincent de Paul, and Francis de Sales, that sweetness which rendered them amiable, others he called to live in complete seclusion from the world.

We must not, however, imagine that the life of St. Arsenius was a morose and melancholy one; for the contrary was manifested by the serenity of his countenance, which appeared to have something angelical or heavenly. He shunned the company of men, says St. John Chrysostom, that he might not lose something more precious, which was God.

The best time to judge of life is when that life is approaching its end. The echo of such a judgment has come to us through the lapse of ages. A contemporary of Arsenius was the active patriarch of Alexandria, Theophilus, whom we have mentioned. He it was who had most contributed to the destruction of idolatry in Egypt. By order of Theodosius he had destroyed the magnificent temple of Terapis at Alexandria, together with the sanctuaries of the gods. The people seeing their deities thus demolished, without avenging themselves, turned to Christianity, and idolatry was overthrown. This same Theophilus, on whose reputation there exists more than one stain, became, through the hatred of one man, a persecutor of the monks of Nitria, and of the Holy Patriarch of Constantinople, St. John Chrysostom.