

## THE LETTERS OF MGR. DE SEGUR.

(From the French for the Catholic Weekly Review.)

24th August, 1869.

MY DEAR SON,—Let me begin by blessing and congratulating you, and then proceed at once to offer you a solution of the two little difficulties you mentioned. The first relates to the trouble you find in combating your daily faults. Alas, my poor child, that trouble is inseparable from the combat; we all suffer from it, and shall suffer from it all our lives! It is the heaviest branch of the cross which our Lord wishes us to carry each day without losing heart. Our defects being almost invariably the quasimaterial consequence of the influence of the physical temperament on the soul, and inasmuch as that temperament does not depend on us, the result is, that our defects are continually cropping up; and just as we do not weary with beginning over again each day the work of washing and dressing and eating, so must we combat our defects from day to day, without anger, and never for a moment fancying that our labour is lost because the tares we cut down spring up again forthwith.

I would advise you to deal with your faults one by one; to fight one of them especially, say for ten days or a fortnight, and to that end think of it four or five times each day, collecting your thoughts interiorly for a few moments, and renewing your good resolutions. This you can do walking or driving, or wheresoever you may be.

Your second difficulty relates to the exercise of prayer. As regards vocal prayer, you may, if you like, confine yourself to the four great Catholic prayers: The Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Creed, and the General Confession or *Confiteor*. Say them with great piety four or five times each day, so that your day may be sanctified at intervals by the exercise of prayer, but not to the extent of wearying yourself. Always combine with this some good, hearty aspiration or elevation of your heart, in order to adore a good God, whom you bear in your soul, to thank Him for His goodness, to tell Him your wants, to call Him to your help, and to blot out and expiate your sins. Adopt the excellent habit of pronouncing from time to time the two saving names: Jesus, Mary.

Lastly, dear child, you must most faithfully, each day, spend a few moments in pious reading, though it be but a single page of the Gospel, or of the Following of Christ. Nor must you omit your communion on Sundays and Festivals, so that you may more easily preserve your chastity and the spirit of faith. As to your studies, and as to the future, do not, I implore you, lose sight of my recommendations.

I bless you with all my heart.

September 25th, 1878.

MY DEAR, GOOD CHILD,—I thank you for your most interesting letter and for all the good news you send me.

In reply to your questions I would say:—

1.—As regards vocal prayer, as well as purely interior prayer, each one must follow his own leaning and pray as he prefers. What is meant by meditating on a mystery or a virtue while saying a decade of the beads or rosary, is not that you should think or recite all in one, stop for a few moments before saying the decade and let your mind and heart be filled with the special grace which flows from the mystery or virtue on which you are to meditate, and then recite as piously as you can the "Our Father" and ten "Hail Marys," with the intention of obtaining that grace through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin. Those who prefer to think only of the meaning of these beautiful prayers themselves as they repeat them, can and should follow their own leaning.

2.—The psalm *De profundis* ("Out of the depths I have cried unto Thee, O Lord.") The leading sentiment of this psalm is humiliation and contrition of heart, joined with an immense trust in the Divine mercy. This admirable psalm is applied by the usage of the Church to the souls in Purgatory, because they more than all other creatures, are filled with the two-fold sentiment of contrition and hope.

We can most usefully apply the psalm *De profundis* for ourselves as an act of contrition.

Lastly, as to the holy sacrifice of the Mass. The more we unite ourselves directly with the prayers and intentions of the Celebrant, that is to say, with Jesus Christ, offering the sacrifice through his priest, the better we hear Mass; but provided we pray and adore in general union with the prayer and adoration of the celebrant, it is sufficient to satisfy the duty of hearing Mass. Moreover, when you pray in any way before an altar at which the sacrifice is being offered, you receive the special graces and blessings which the Church asks for in behalf of all who are present.

SUNDAY, 18th July, 1875.

MY DEAR M,—There is no getting out of it; we must sanctify ourselves in earnest during these few little moments which are still between us and our eternity. Whatever does not contribute to that is lost, useless, and often worse than useless. May the grace and love of our Lord fill your thoughts, your affections, your will, your whole life.

L. G. DE SEGUR.

August, 1869.

MY DEAR DAUGHTER,—I would have you beware of the seductive tinsel of the world. It is more dangerous than people think, for it glides and insinuates itself into the heart through the ever open doors of vanity, of vain complacency, of self-love, of false liberty, and of the senses. Remember this: do not dance unless you receive a *command* to do so; answer clearly and firmly, that while you do not blame those who do it, you think it is better for a Christian girl not to dance. During these two balls deprive yourself of every species of refreshment and eating; you cannot imagine how this little act of mortification neutralizes the sugared venom of a ball. Let nothing induce you to waltz; that I absolutely prohibit you from doing, in the name of our Lord and of the Blessed Virgin. Strive to get away as soon as possible from a place to which our Lord is not invited, and where things are conducted not only without Him but against Him. During the whole time you must peacefully and gravely bear in mind the holy presence of God, and be there like the Blessed Virgin Mary at the marriage feast of Cana.

These, my daughter, are the counsels of experience (for I myself in former days have attended balls in obedience to duty), which I urge you to follow most faithfully. On the day after the party banish from your conversation all chat about dress and about the ball, just as though you had not attended it. It is bad enough to have been obliged to go, without debasing the memory and imagination with such chatter, so unworthy of our holy baptism and of the Eucharist!

20th Sept., 1865.

TO A YOUNG GIRL,—Here, my child, is a great secret which will enable you to enjoy great peace and to be closely united with our good Jesus. It was imparted by our Lord Himself to His spouse, Saint Catharine of Sienna, in these words: "*My daughter, think of me and I will undertake to think of thee.*" Do this and Jesus will reward you and think of you to such good purpose that He will inundate you with His lights and graces and fill you with His Holy Spirit.

TO A YOUNG GIRL WHO HAD LOST HER MOTHER.

4th May, 1866.

"MY DEAR CHILD, Keep your poor heart as peaceful as possible in the midst of this great anguish, in imitation of the Blessed Virgin when she contemplated the tears and sufferings of her beloved Jesus. In order that you may find support and consolation ask permission to receive our Lord a little oftener than usual."

L. G. DE SEGUR.

5th June, 1865.

MY GOOD LITTLE GIRLS,—Enter into your own hearts. You will there find Jesus who can alone enable His little