

Something About the Life and Spirit of St. Philip Neri.

(Written for the Carmelite Review by a Father of the London Oratory.)



CHAPTER I.—CONTINUED.

ORDER, fear, devotion held the witnesses in silence till the physician spoke to the Saint, asking what had happened. Philip sank down to his bed, and said: "Did you not then see the Mother of God come to visit me, and to take away all my pains?" Coming more to himself, he saw how many persons were around, and in holy confusion hid his face and burst into a flood of tears. After a while the doctor checked him, fearing he would do himself an injury: "No more, father, no more." Philip then with a bright and joyous countenance spoke openly: "I do not need you any longer now; the Madonna Santissima came to me and has cured me." They found that he was completely restored to perfect health.

In vain did the Saint implore them to keep his secret; they felt compelled to publish the glad news, and from the Sovereign Pontiff downwards all rejoiced, and yet were not surprised, for all knew his sanctity and his devotion to our Lady. We may thus claim the Blessed Virgin herself as a witness to the devotion of her servant.

In concluding these remarks on the Life of Saint Philip, it may be well to add that the many other canonized saints of the same period, and even Philip's own personal friends amongst them, have not been unmentioned through forgetfulness or lack of reverence. The aspect of St. Philip, to which we venture to draw attention, is the joy and solace that he was to the Church of God, living as he lived, in Rome, the Centre of Christianity, the very Heart of the Church. There, he revived the piety of clergy and laity, brought about a reform without mentioning the word. Earnest and zealous as Savanarola—whose likeness he kept by him, as he would a saint's—he had a gentler, meeker, more obedient, Christ-like spirit, which proved irresistible, which was caught by a S. Francis de Sales, a S. Alphonsus Liguori, which even in our own

day has guided the pen of a Faber. The Apostle of Rome inaugurated that system of bright, sensible sunshiny piety, which has won the hearts of the laity, and has ranged those who live in the world beside the religious orders in the spiritual combat for perfection. This will appear, we dare to hope, in the lessons gathered from his Life.

CHAPTER II.

SOMETHING ABOUT S. PHILIP'S SPIRIT.

S. Philip's View of the World.

The first striking fact about S. Philip is this—he had no personal quarrel with the world. It never harmed him, it never worsted him in fight, nor forced him to flee from it for security as so many saints have done. He always spoke of himself as of one who had not left the world—for want of courage, he would playfully pretend—but we know that in reality he was instructed miraculously what was the will of God about his state of life. He was not to quit the world. As a child, he was in it innocently and joyously, a chosen vessel of gravity and sweetness. He could enjoy a game, as well as any boy. "He had a quick intelligence, a pleasing, gentle disposition, he was well made, and of attractive manners." He had his nick-names, "Good Pippo," when little, "Good Philip" after that, till the time came when people only knew him as "Father Philip." Neither from circumstances, nor from character was he compelled to hate and avoid the world; and yet, for all that, no saint ever more thoroughly despised it. That is to say, he despised its riches, honors, pleasures—all its vain trickeries and delusions, utterly, supremely, but with good-humored, fearless contempt, which was better than sermons to open peoples' eyes. Not out of harshness or sternness did he feel thus, but simply because he had better, and brighter, and more beautiful things to care about. What was the world to one who could say with meaning such as his: "Paradise! Paradise!"

He despised riches. His uncle offers the youth a large fortune, with the prospect of a splendid start in life and a prosperous career; but he scarcely endures to talk about it, while instantly declining the proposal. His wealth is in the Cross; and instead of book-keeping and money-making, he is out on the lofty mountains which overlook the Tyrrhenian Sea, not gazing on its blue