

obtained a very abundant supply. And what a rapid progress did he not make in this holy science! From ordinary mental prayer he was soon raised to contemplation, where the soul finds itself inundated with delights by the simple remembrance of God or holy things, without reasoning or reflection—in which she ascends to God and he descends to her by a most admirable communication. This is a gift which God does not bestow, but upon those who, like Bessard, dispose themselves for it by faithfully exercising ordinary meditation and practising mortification.

He had read many excellent treatises on prayer. He was well acquainted with those of St. Teresa, and that of John Aumont, peasant of Montmorency. But that which he studied most assiduously was his own heart; thence he generally drew the subject of his meditations.

As he never lost sight of the obligation all Christians are under to be holy, so there was not a moment in which he did not tend to perfection. Annihilated in the presence of God, whom his lively faith rendered in some sort visible, he sometimes for hours remained in a species of ecstasy. When interrogated on the fruit of his prayer, he answered, "O! my God, how good you are to those who love you; how sweet to those who seek you." But knowing that it was necessary to keep "the secret of the Prince," he sometimes said it was impossible to declare what the heart of man feels when it is wholly given to God, and occupied with him alone—Some holy persons in Paris, worthy of his confidence, said, that in prayer John Bessard experienced wonderful effects of grace and received most sublime communications.

The altars and oratories were not the only scenes of his fervour: always oc-

cupied with God, he prayed in all places. In the fields, tilling the ground, or pruning the vines in his vineyard, he was as recollected as in the sanctuary of the Lord or the retirement of his chamber. He said that his mortal occupations greatly helped to raise his mind to God, and gave him sufficient matter for prayer.

But it was not on his personal wants alone he conversed with God, the necessities of others were also his, and he never failed to ask for them the graces which they appeared to want. The villagers of Staines testify how much he loved peace and harmony; these say, that he made it a rule to reconcile all who were at variance in the neighbourhood, both parents and children, masters and servants. His irreproachable life and edifying conduct, had prepossessed all in his favour, and hence his very appearance produced the most happy effects among them.

He had it often in his power to better his condition in life, by embracing the advantageous offers of marriage that were made him; but he preferred following the Gospel counsel of virginity, knowing that "the unmarried and the virgin think more freely on the things of the Lord." He was very temperate and abstemious, living on bread, milk, and a little wine. Perhaps it was on account of his great regularity in this point he attained such an advanced age.

Though poor in reality as well as in affection, he might be deemed the father of the indigent, by the abundant alms he procured them.

To the interior spirit which animated all his actions, he joined the practice of universal charity, obedience, humility and love of suffering. He was most faithful in fulfilling the duties imposed by nature and religion. When very old he continued to attend his mother, and would not yield to any one his right of