

The Beaten Road to Heaven.

ST. FRANCUS SHOWS THE WAY.

DID the thought never strike you when reading about some sublime saint, that such exalted sanctity was unattainable for common mortals and the attempt a useless one? There is another class of saints who did not have rays of the Sun of Justice and Holiness hovering o'er them from the cradle to the moment of their triumphal entry into glory. The former class we can gaze at, as it were, only through the obscured glass of a sin bedimmed conscience; the brilliancy is too intense for the naked eye of our soul, we cannot endure it, we tire of it. Not so with those of the second class, which is made up of men and women, who, like very many of us, have wandered astray from the Good Shepherd in the course of their lives, and have been enfolded in the shrouds of sinful darkness but, unlike most of us, have heroically overcome all impediments. One thing there is common to us all, the same human nature, inclined to evil from our youth; the same temptations, the same obstacles to surmount and the same heroic effort to make.

An illustrious example of one who did attain the goal in this strife is placed before us in the saint whose office the Carmelite Order recites on December 17th—Blessed Francus. He was born in a small village of Sinigaglia, in the province of Ancona, Italy, of pious parents. Before his birth his mother dreamed that she was about to give birth to an uncanny monster which was gradually changed into a man. The event proved the truth of the vision. After the death of his parents Francus forgot all the pious examples and admonitions which they had given him, and his delight now was to revel in crime and gratification of passions. But such are the inscrutable ways of a loving Providence—whilst Francus closed his eyes to the divine light, God struck him with corporeal blindness, in order to bring him back to the true light that "enlighteneth every man coming into the world." This punishment of God brought him to his senses, and he hastened on a most troublesome pilgrimage to the church of St. James at Compostella, more frequently called Santiago. He there recovered his vision. Thence he journeyed to many other illustrious churches, chiefly

to the church of Rome. Whilst there he obtained a plenary remission of his sins from Pope Gregory. After he had completed his pilgrimage, in the course of which he fasted on bread and water during Lent, and ate nothing on Fridays, he returned home where he led a most austere life of the strictest penance in solitude, and thus moved numbers of sinners, by his example, to do likewise. But the arch-enemy of man could not endure to see a soul snatched from his clutches and therefore tried every possible enticement to win back the servant of God. In this sore trial Bl. Francus was comforted by the Blessed Virgin, who, showing him the Carmelite habit, bade him to be clothed therewith. Francus gladly obeyed, and when at his reception in the Carmelite Chapel, the Prior was about to put the habit on him, it is said that an angel appeared before the whole assembly and brought the habit Francus was to wear. Henceforth the life of Bl. Francus was one continuous chain of mortifications and penance. His body he subdued by cruel chains of iron; prayer (especially mental prayer) was his nourishment. Once in the course of his meditation our Divine Saviour appeared to him hanging on the Cross, the crown of thorns encircling His sacred brow, and an abundance of precious blood oozing from his adorable wounds. He thus addressed Francus: "Behold, Francus, what I have endured for the man who has been so ungrateful for such suffering." Francus burst into a flood of tears and scourged his flesh till the blood flowed and from that time he was wont to carry the image of the crucified in his hand. He was favored by apparitions of the glorious Queen of Carmel, but this made him only the more humble. He sought the vilest menial offices to perform, and cold, hunger, thirst and sufferings were the means he used to keep himself in subjection. He was endowed with the gift of prophecy, and when, finally, the hour of his happy dissolution arrived, he breathed forth his heroic soul gladly and cheerfully. Miracles proved the sanctity of this servant of God before, during and after his death, which took place on the 11th of December, 1291. His last words were: "Peace to you, my brothers, and thou, O, Lord Jesus Christ, receive my spirit. Immediately the singing of angels was heard, who carried off his soul heavenwards, whereupon the heavenly light which had illuminated the