

required... She was ever most careful to purify herself from her trivial faults in the sacrament of penance, and the holy Eucharist, in which she often participated, was to her a source of the most precious graces.

God having by a happy death, recompensed the virtuous life of her parents, Mary determined to give herself wholly to him. She distributed to the poor the little means she possessed, with a generosity that evinced her unbounded confidence in Providence, and shortly after set out for Avila, where she entered into the service of a lady of rank and fortune. Simple as the dove, she soon became an object of scorn to her fellow-servants: they loaded her with injuries and contempt, and often pushed their malice so far, as to refuse her the portion of food which was allotted her. They gathered even from her piety, new motives for treating her with cruelty.

The poor creature bore their unkindness and injustice with unalterable sweetness and patience, and never betrayed the least symptom of ill-humour or discontent. Affable and mild towards her persecutors, she suffered all the pain they occasioned, in silence, for the love of Christ; so that six years passed in this manner before her mistress became acquainted with her sufferings. This seems extraordinary; but the like often happens among ourselves. Many of our modern matrons, though pious in appear-

ance, are often very careless of their servants, and negligent about their domestics; such was the case with this lady, but as soon as she was reminded of her duty, she speedily remedied the evil, and gave Mary sensible marks of esteem and confidence.

This series of afflictions acquired great merits for the generous Mary, for the true Christian draws from his sufferings advantages the most precious. They became, indeed, for this daughter of the cross, a source of abundant graces. Long before this period, she had consecrated herself to God, by the vow of chastity; she now wished to draw the knot still closer, by making the vows of obedience and poverty.* She was most submissive to, and candid with her Confessor; revealing to him all the views and designs with which she was inspired. He approved of all, but was unwilling to receive her vow of obedience; however, this did not hinder her from practising it in the greatest perfection: no person could be more obedient than she was. Thus she evinced the solidity of her devotion, and preserved herself from the many dangers to which self-will conducts in the spiritual life.

Feeling that our Lord called her to closer retirement, and anxious to correspond with the sweet attractions of grace, she begged and ob-

* None of these vows should be made without consulting our director. — 525