

PERFECTION.

Perfection consists in one only thing, which is to do the will of God; since, according to the declaration of God, it is necessary to deny ourselves, to bear our cross and to follow him, if we would be perfect, who can be said to deny himself better, to bear his cross better, or to follow Christ better, than he who never studies his own will, but always that of God? See, then, how little is necessary, in order to become a saint? Nothing else than to habituate oneself on every occasion to desire that which God willeth.—S. VINCENT OF PAUL.

In this respect more than in any thing else it was that the same saint showed the purity and solidity of his virtue, in studying always to follow and fulfil the will of our Lord. This was the great principle on which he founded all his resolutions, and with which he faithfully and constantly executed what he had resolved; trampling under foot all self-interest, and always preferring the divine will and the glory and service of God to any thing else whatsoever, without any exception. Of David, says our Lord, that he was the man after his own heart; and what does God declare the foundation of all this great sanctity? 'Because, said he, he will fulfil my will.' S. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi was so attached to this, that she used frequently to say, that she never could have resolved to do even the most trifling action, such as to go from one room to another, if she had not thought that it was in conformity to the divine will, and that she would never omit doing any thing which she believed was pleasing to the Divine Majesty; and that if, having began any action, the thought should have suggested itself to her, while she was about it, that it was contrary to the will of our Lord, in that same instant, she would have immediately abandoned it, even though the not accomplishing it should have cost her life. Thauletius makes mention of a certain learned and holy man, who being at the point of death was begged by his friends to leave them some good piece of advice; his answer was this, 'The summary and the substance of all doctrine is, to take all things that happen, from the hand of God, and not to desire aught but to accomplish in all things his divine will.' The venerable mother Seraphina, had such an affection for the will of God, that she often asked her director to manifest it to her, saying, 'Tell me, reverend father, what I ought to do, and suffer me not to do any thing of myself; in order that I may please his Divine Majesty, because to behold him though ever so little displeased, would be enough to annihilate a thousand worlds.' And one day being seized with a great desire to do nothing of her own will, but the will of God alone, with the consent of her director, she made a vow to that effect.

The words "servant of God," meaneth, to have a great charity towards our neighbours, and an inviolable resolution to follow in all things the divine will, to confide in God with simplicity and humility, to bear up against our defects, and to endure with forbearance the imperfections of others.—S. FRANCIS OF SALAZAR.

The whole life of this saint, as also that of S. Vincent of Paul, was nothing else but a faithful and

continual exercise of these acts of virtue on the occasions which every day present themselves; by which means both the one and the other became great servants of God. In the lives of the Western Fathers it is related of S. Fintanus, that every day he was visited by an angel, and that this having ceased for several days, when the saint had the happiness of seeing him again, he asked him why he had deprived him for so long a time of his most sweet presence; Because, replied the angel, I was sent to be present at the death of a matron who was a great servant of God, and better than thou, because she hath done things that thou hast not done; she has never offended any one who was present by her words, nor murmured against any one absent, nor ever hath she complained of the weather, however hot or cold it may have been, nor of any thing else, whatever it might have been, or however it might have happened; but always entirely conformed herself unto the will of God, in whose hands are all things. One day as S. Gertrude was grieving over a little defect into which she was wont to fall from time to time, she begged our Lord that moment to deliver her from it; but Jesus said to her with a sweet and mild look, You would wish then that I should be deprived of a great honour and yourself of a great reward? know that as often as any one acknowledgeth his failing, and proposeth to avoid it for the time to come, he gaineth a great reward for himself; and as often as he abstaineth from falling into it again for the love of me, he rendereth me the same honour that a brave soldier to his king when he fighteth manfully against his enemies and overcometh them.

LETTERS FROM BELGIUM.

LETTER I.

Belgium, ——— 1842.

My dear old Thomas,

I hope you have received the messages I have sent you by several friends, to whom I have written, for I wish you to know I have not forgotten you. I thank you very much for your proofs of attachment to me, and wish to reward it by showing that I remember you. I am sure it will give you pleasure to have a letter from me, telling you something about Belgium and the people I am living amongst. Besides, I am afraid lest you should be made unhappy by the strange things which have happened since I left home, as I hear a great many people are much frightened lest England should become Roman Catholic: and I wish to show you what Roman Catholics are, that you may see there is nothing to be afraid of, should that take place. I am not going to write like a sermon is written, or a book of 'Essays,' though I know you used to love such dry books better than any thing, and always begged to keep them longer and longer to read over and over again. No, I am going to tell you about old men just like yourself, and old women just like old Mary; and sometimes I shall tell you about young per-