

liberty is one of the most dangerous passions of the mind ; and it happens with this, as with the rest of the passions, it deceives those who follow it ; and, instead of true liberty, it reduces them to the hardest and most infamous servitude ; for what else can we call the life of worldly men ? What do they endure to obtain and preserve the good opinion of those whom at the same time they despise ? What trouble have they to stifle those passions which they would control, and gratify those which they would indulge, to hide their inward vexations, and save appearances ? Is this the liberty we are so fond of, and which we are so unwilling to sacrifice to God ? Where is this liberty to be found ? I perceive nothing but constraint, but base and unworthy subjection, but a wretched necessity of disguising ourselves ; we refuse ourselves to God who is willing to receive us that we may be saved, and we give ourselves up to the world, which can only enslave and ruin us.

2. It is thought the men of the world do nothing but what pleases them, because they have a relish for the passions they indulge ; but those who think thus do not consider the irksomeness, the loathings and disappointments, inseparable from a pursuit of pleasure and the many contradictions and mortifications which attend the greatest preferments. The outside appears pleasing, but within is vexation and disquiet. Men think freedom consists in depending on no one but one's self ; this is an extravagant mistake ; there is no such state, there is no condition wherein a man does not depend on many others, wherein he is not more obliged to follow their fancies than his own. All the commerce of life is a perpetual constraint to the laws of good breeding and the necessity of humouring others ; and, besides, our own passions are the worst of tyrants ; if you obey them but by halves, a perpetual strife and contest exist within ; and if you entirely give up yourself to them, it is horrid to what extremities they will lead. May God preserve us from that fatal slavery which the mad presumption of man calls liberty ! Liberty is to be found only in Him. "His truth shall set us free," and make us experience that to serve him is to reign.

TWENTY-FIFTH DAY.

*Of the perfect devoting of ourselves to God.*—1. "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do ?" was St. Paul's inquiry, when he was struck to the earth by a miracle, and converted by the grace of that Jesus whom he had persecuted. Alas ! how often have we persecuted him by our infidelities, our humours, and our passions, which have withstood the works of his mercy in our hearts ! At last he has struck us down by tribulation ; he has crushed our pride ; he has confounded our worldly wisdom ; and put self-love into consternation. Let us now, therefore, say to him with perfect resignation, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do ?" Hitherto my return to thee has been very defective. I have used many evasions, and endeavoured to save all I could from the total sacrifice which I ought to make to thee. But I am now better disposed, and desire that thou mayest become the absolute master of my life and actions.

2. Nor is it sufficient that the oblation we make to God be universal ; it is of no service while it continues wavering and uncertain ; it must descend to particulars, and be ratified by practice. Good purposes avail nothing, and are worth nothing, if we do not put them in practice. We must desire perfection with greater earnestness than we ever sought a temporal good, and not do less for God than we have already done for the world. Let us search our hearts. Am I determined to sacrifice to God my strictest friendships, and my most confirmed habits, my most prevalent inclinations, and most agreeable amusements ?

TWENTY-SIXTH DAY.

*Of the terms men would make with God.*—1. "How long will ye halt between two opinions ?" 1 Kings xviii. 21. "No man can serve two masters," Matt. vi. 24. We know, if we would be saved, we must love and serve God ; but we would fain separate from that love, and that service, whatever is burdensome ; and leave only what is pleasing to us. We would serve him on the terms of giving him only words and ceremonies, and of those ceremonies only such as are not too long and tedious. We would love God on the terms of loving, with him, and perhaps above him, things which he has forbidden and condemned. We would love him on the terms of diminishing nothing in that blind self-love whereby instead of referring ourselves to God, by whom, and from whom, we exist, we, on the contrary, refer God to ourselves, and betake ourselves to him only as a source of comfort when the creatures fail us. We would serve him and love him on the terms of being sometimes ashamed of him, and not venturing to give him any more than the world shall allow and approve of. What kind of love and service is this ?

2. God will admit no other terms with us but those which we covenanted in our baptism, wherein we promised to renounce the world for his sake. His first and great commandment requires that we should love him unreservedly with our whole heart, and mind, and strength. Can he be said truly to love God, who pays great deference to the world, his adversary, against which he has denounced so many judgments ? Can he be said to love God who is afraid of knowing him too much, lest he should be too far engaged in his service ? Can he be said to love God, who satisfies himself with not affronting him, and takes no pains to please him, nor is zealous for an opportunity to serve him ? God sets no limits to his love toward us, and therefore, our returns to him should be of the same nature.

TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY.

*Of spending our time well.*—1. "Let us do good while we have time," Gal. vi. 10. "The night cometh in which no man can work," John ix. 4. Time is precious, but we know not its true value ; nor will we learn it till it is too late. Our friends ask it of us, and we bestow it as if it were nothing worth ; nay, sometimes we consider it as a burden we want to get rid of ; yet the day will come when we shall think one-quarter of an hour more valuable than all the